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Department of Arts and Culture

CONCEPTUAL THEME

CHIEF ALBERT LUTHULI ANNUAL MEMORIAL LECTURE – 2017

‘Luthuli Remembered’

This is indeed Africa’s age – the dawn of her fulfilment, yes the moment when she must grapple with destiny to reach the summit of sublimity’

Chief Albert Luthuli, 11 December 1961

On the 29 July 1967, in the midst of apartheid darkness, South Africans had a glimpse of a future South Africa when they gathered in Groutville, Natal, at the funeral of Chief Albert Luthuli, who died tragically, after been reportedly hit by a goods train on his way home. All South Africans, black; white, Indian and coloured, who shared his vision of a new South Africa, defied the divisive apartheid repressive laws and drove to Groutville, a restricted ‘native location’, to attend the funeral of Chief Albert Luthuli, a ‘colossal symbol of peace and unity, far beyond the horizons of Groutville and the borders of South Africa (and) revered for his efforts to unite our people, regardless of political affiliation or race’ (Nelson Mandela, 1996).

The dawn of South Africa’s freedom on the 27 April 1994 reminded most of us of the dedication of the many before us, who like Chief Albert Luthuli, came to pass and did not see ‘freedom in their life time’. They lived a life of courage in the face of adversity; unrelenting conviction and selfless dedication to the ideals of freedom; equality and social justice. Their roles and contribution to the foundations of the freedom and democracy we relish today needs to be reflected on for a deeper and fuller understanding of how South Africa came to be as a constitutional democracy.

Indeed the dawn of South Africa’s democracy follow’s the wake of Africa’s achievement of freedom and independence in the 1960’s. At his 2005 Chief Albert Luthuli Memorial Lecture keynote address, former Zambian President Dr Kenneth Kaunda, attests that the vision of ‘heroes, liberators and leaders’ like ‘Patrice Lumumba, Julius Nyerere, Kwame Nkrumah, Seko Ture, Eduardo Mondlane, Jomo Kenyatta, Ben Bella, Amical Calbral, Samora Machel, Abdul Nasser, Nnandi Azikiwe, Oliver Tambo and Chief Albert Luthuli was that following political independence, succeeding generations would, in larger freedom, be able to move Africa to economic prosperity. According to Dr Kaunda, the continent of Africa will not be ‘developed by people from outside but by us, as Africans taking the lead to liberate ourselves’¹

¹ Excerpt from speech of Dr K Kaunda, Chief Albert Luthuli 2005 Memorial Lecture

The year 2017 marks 50 Years since Chief Albert Luthuli died on 21 July 1967 under questionable circumstances. It provides us with an opportunity to revisit and reflect on the legacy of this remarkable man, a servant of the people, a leader who during the darkest day of South Africa's struggle, became a beacon of hope for the many who aspired to attain freedom; human dignity and individual worth for all.

For Chief Albert Luthuli his struggle was not only for a free South Africa, but the continent of Africa as testified in his Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Speech on 10 December 1960 when he said that he accepts the award 'as an honour not only to South Africa, but for the whole continent ...Mother Africa, all its people, whatever their race, colour or creed'². In his lecture titled '*Africa and Freedom*' delivered in Oslo as part of the acceptance of the Nobel Peace Award, Chief Albert Luthuli 'invited Africa to cast her eyes beyond the past' and see herself as an emerging continent bursting through the shell of centuries of serfdom³.

In his ANC Presidential Address at the organisation's 47th Annual Conference in 1959, Chief Luthuli reinforces the fact that South Africa will not be free and prosperous until 'all our people in brotherhood' enjoy equal rights and opportunities. It in his speech that he expressed his appreciation of the efforts 'of all these groups, and individuals, here and outside our borders, and overseas who have given unstinted support, by word and action to our liberation struggle....their efforts should ginger us to redouble our freedom efforts'⁴.

He became South Africa's most admired political leader, both in moral stature and international acclaim as testified by the Nobel Peace Prize Award he received in 1960. 'He stood as a moral giant of no comparison at a time when white supremacy was law and his humanity influenced a leadership ideology that appealed to all races; religions and political formations'.

In his autobiography, aptly titled; '*Let My People Go*', first published in 1962, Chief Albert Luthuli not only tells his own life story, but also that of the African National Congress' struggle to free South Africa, from the Defiance Campaign; the drawing up of the Freedom Charter; the Treason Trial to the Alexandra Bus Boycott; the 1959 Potato Boycott up to the tragedies of the Sharpeville; Langa and Nyanga'; but also the vision of South Africa's 'route to freedom'! In one of the book's chapters, aptly titled, 'Which route to Freedom', Chief Luthuli writes about the 1958 All African People's Conference that took place in Accra, Ghana, and how this gathering of independent African states not only 'fulfilled a long cherished hope' but it also revived the African National Congress' interest in the Pan African ideal⁵.

While remembering Chief Albert Luthuli, 50 Years since his death, this year's lecture will address itself to the broader continental issues of democracy; development; economic prosperity; and the historical ties that bind Africa.

This year's Chief Albert Luthuli Memorial lecture will be delivered by the former President of Botswana (1998 – 2008), His Excellency Mr Festus G. Mogae, NYB, MCC, PH, MP. Amongst his numerous achievements, Mr. Mogae served as Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General on Climate Change, a role that culminated with his participation in the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen.

² Albert Luthuli Acceptance Speech , on the occasion of the Nobel Peace Prize Award in Oslo, 10 December 1961

³ Albert Luthuli Nobel Lecture , University of Oslo, 11 December 1961

⁴ Presidential Address to the 47th Annual Conference of the African National Congress (ANC)

⁵ 'Let My People Go', page 204

He was the African President-in-Residence at Boston University's African Presidential Archives and Research Center. He is a recipient of the 2008 Ibrahim Prize for Achievement in African Leadership; the French Grand Cross of the *Légion d'honneur* by awarded in 2008 for his exemplary leadership in making Botswana a model of democracy and good governance; and praised for ensuring Botswana's continued stability and prosperity in the face of an HIV /AIDS pandemic.

The Chief Albert Luthuli 2017 Memorial Lecture will take place on Saturday, 25 November 2017, 13:00 – 17:00 at the GSB & L Auditorium, Graduate School of Business Leadership, Westville Campus, University of KwaZulu Natal.

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