



**Speech by the Executive Mayor, Cllr. Sithole Assistance
Mshudulu at Dr. Charlotte Maxeke's Remembrance
21 August 2008**

HONOURABLE EMEBER OF PARLIAMENT: COMRADE BERTHA QXOWA

MADAM SPEAKER OF SDM: CLLR. KEDIBONE MOKGOTSI

PROGRAMME DIRECTOR: CLLR. NEVILLE FELIX

MEMBERS OF MAYORAL COMMITTEE

COUNCILLOURS

HONOURABLE GUESTS

ESTEEMEMD MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY

Comrades present here, it is notable that in African tradition, notwithstanding any conditions, when a child is born there is jubilation as we welcome the arrival of a new citizen of the earth.

Such joy may lead to tribulations as the course of our existence shape our destiny, circumstances and lives.

There is a battle of ideas on the nature of society we strive to build to change our circumstances and build a better future. This hinges on the vision to build an egalitarian society devoid of exploitation of one person by another, unemployment and starvation.

On the 7th April 1874 that child with same vision was born and that child was baptized Charlotte Makgomo Manye who later became Maxeke by matrimony.

She became a pioneer and mainstay in fighting illiteracy by empowering the people of Evaton by opening the Wilberforce Institution under the auspices of African Methodist Episcopal (AME).

Having lived in Kliptown where years later the Freedom Charter was adopted, it is by no mistake that she opened the institution long before the Congress of the people adopted a resolution that fittingly says” The doors of learning and culture shall be opened to all.”

When Oliver Reginald Tambo declared “that the country that neglects its youth does not deserve its future”, Cde Charlotte had already been caring for the youth of South Africa by imparting knowledge and skills through education.

This led to Wilberforce producing capable and disciplined students who will later be an asset to the African National Congress and the country.

Long before Hans Strydom leapt out of the window fearing the wrath of women during the Anti Pass Laws, in 1919 she led a march to then Prime Minister of the Free State. It was as if she was preempting events that will later change the course of the South African political landscape.

The struggle for the transformation of gender relations and women empowerment to free women from the chains of exploitation and patriarchy was led with zeal, discipline and dedication. It was fought from the church. This demonstrates the important role that religion is playing in the moral regeneration of our communities in building a caring society based on the values of ubuntu.

Mama Charlotte was a rock. Amidst trying and testing times, she was a nucleus that held the ANC Women’s League together. It is by no accident that she became its first President and the first African woman to obtain a Bachelor of Science degree from the USA and also the President of the Women’s Missionary Society of the AME church.

Evaton as one of the oldest townships in the country was a township that accommodated all people across racial and colour lines. That is where she wanted to live as it mirrored the nature of society she fought for and she lived there until the apartheid regime dealt her achievements a blow through forced removals and pass laws.

On Women Empowerment, we do so guided by the 52nd Polokwane Conference on Economic Transformation, we believe that since 1994 we have made substantial progress in transforming the economy to benefit the majority, but serious challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality remain.

We need to ensure that all projects benefit the people of Evaton to surmount those challenges to ensure that the Freedom Charter's clarion call that the People shall share in the Country's wealth is heard and clear.

The changes we seek will not emerge spontaneously from the 'invisible hand' of the market. People acting collectively in the spirit of human solidarity must shape the patterns of economic development. In the process the state must play a central and strategic role by directly investing in underdeveloped areas and directing private sector investment.

This confirms our commitment through the Neighbourhood Grant, Municipal Infrastructure Grant, Ward Based Projects and the Evaton Urban Renewal Project. And through this, the face of Evaton will not be the same again.

Recognizing the role that the people of Evaton have played in bringing down apartheid, the ANC led-government is deeply committed to uplift and upgrade Evaton.

As we celebrate the life of comrade Charlotte, let us reclaim our streets from criminals who with impunity main and commit heinous crimes against women. Destruction of state property through the bombing of ATM's, heists, child molestation and women abuse are inimical to the National Democratic Revolution and a reversal of its goals.

Let us build strong and effective Community Policing Forums and Street Committee as urged by the President of the ANC, Comrade Jacob Zuma in his acceptance speech in Polokwane.

Let us celebrate Women's Month with a sense of pride and dignity and condemn acts of violence in school premises where we have recently witnessed the brutal slaying of a student by his fellow mate.

As a disciplinarian, Cde Charlotte would have been very saddened by these barbaric acts. Let us emulate her life by restoring our schools as institutions of learning to keep the achievements and wishes of Cde. Charlotte alive.

As we pay tribute to her, let us celebrate the lives of many women of Evaton who collectively played a valiant role in defying the oppressive regime.

Lastly, when that child was born she never had joy but had to endure the hardships of the apartheid system.

You are welcome and I thank you