

MPUMALANGA PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT



DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, SPORT AND RECREATION



**Project Name: Documentation of Sites, Heroes and Heroines of the Liberation
Struggle in the Gert Sibande District Municipality**

**DRAFT SITUATION ANALYSIS REPORT
(Executive Summary Document)**

Prepared by

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following is a draft Situation Analysis Report on the District Chapter of the National Liberation Heritage Route (NLHR) focusing on the Gert Sibande District Municipality (GSDM) in Mpumalanga Province. The project is sponsored by the Mpumalanga Provincial Government through the Department of Culture, Sport and Recreation. The project seeks to preserve the memory of the liberation struggle heritage by identifying and documenting sites with liberation heritage significance. The sites will be networked with some nodes having World Heritage status, and others with local national and provincial significance.

The scope and ownership of the Project reflects its national, regional and international dimensions. The Department of Arts and Culture (DAC) plays the role of national custodian in all matters relating to Culture and Heritage. The National Heritage Council (NHC) as an agency of DAC initiated the National Liberation Heritage Route Project and is the operational vehicle. The South African Heritage Resources Authority (SAHRA) is the statutory body for the implementation of the National Heritage Resource Act (25/1999), the principal law for the management of Heritage Resources in the country. The Project is therefore managed with vertical and lateral processes incumbent with the roles of DAC and the two institutions.

The NHLR seeks recognition as a World Heritage Property in terms of the World Heritage Convention (1972). South Africa has fulfilled the initial requirement, which is to place NHLR on the National Tentative List for a Serial Nomination as required under the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Conventions of 1972*.

The *World Heritage Convention* (1972) and the *Operational Guidelines* for its implementation set the standards of practice for listing of World Heritage sites. Before a site is selected for Nomination it must be placed on the National Tentative List. This is the responsibility of the State Party to the Convention. The agency of

the State Party is the Department of Arts and Culture. As mentioned earlier, the NLHR is on the South African Tentative List as a potential Serial Nomination.¹

The NLHR adds to the growing number of sites of memory potentially eligible for listing as World Heritage. Modern sites of memory are bound by a common thread that they usually represent gross violations of human rights dubbed “crimes against humanity”. Apartheid has been cited as a classic example of a crime against humanity. On a point of comparison, it is alleged that between 2 and 4 million Jewish people perished in the network of concentration camps ran by the Third Reich² between 1939 and 1945, which have been memorialized Poland under the banner of Auschwitz (World Heritage Site No 3, inscribed 1979, Criteria: [\(vi\)](#)). China has labeled Japanese conduct of the second Sino-Japanese War 1937-1945 as a crime against humanity. In the same vein, narratives of the long running Vietnam War 1959-1975 are replete with accusations of gross crimes against humanity, accusations leveled especially against the United States forces. There are obviously no universally agreed criteria on what constitutes a crime against humanity. This is one of the issues daunting the international criminal court at The Hague.

In 2005 UNESCO and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) launched the Global Strategy to create a credible and balanced World Heritage List. At the present time it is a known fact that the List weighs heavily in favour of Europe and Asia. Africa being the least represented, the situation is seen as untenable, while a number of historical factors explain the skewed statistics of the List. Chief among them is that the Criteria which define Outstanding Universal Value do not include other pertinent factors affecting representativity such as typology, cultural theme and geographical location.

This draft situation analysis report cascades to the local municipalities to reveal in depth the features of the liberation struggle in particular locales. The report lays a good foundation for the Fieldwork Phase which will follow. The following key

¹ A serial nomination comprises several sites with an overarching them or interconnected themes.

² Germany under Adolf Hitler, 1933-1945.

features emerge from the situation analysis and reveal the heritage potential of the area.

Even if this is only intended as a synopsis, it is necessary to highlight some keynote events and sites which reveal the character of the anti-colonial struggle in South Africa. Broadly these fall under the following themes

- Economic crimes
- Forced removals
- Trial by a pro-state jury, torture and imprisonment
- Infiltration and armed struggle

We note that whilst apartheid was an ideology of racial separation, the system found itself necessarily dependent of African Labour. This means that separate development was not quite separate. Thus regulation of labour enjoyed government leverage and extrajudicial measures; it was tantamount to slavery. The Bethal area became the most notorious theatre of the ambivalent attitudes of the apartheid system regarding the desirability of African as a labour commodity and their undesirability as people with full citizen rights. These contradictions played out in Bethal in the 1940s when thousands were pressganged to work on potato farms in Bethal and for the slightest misconducts were subjected to gruesome assaults and held in informal prisons. Farm workers were recruited under ill-defined terms as labour tenants, squatters, or indentured labourers.

The economic or human crimes were exposed thanks to the enterprising journalism of the Drum Magazine and its fearless reporters, Gert Sibande, Ruth First and Henry Nxumalo. Although the Apartheid Minister of Internal Affairs, Hendrik Verwoerd played it down as media sensationalism, the international community had been alerted that a crime against humanity had been committed. This theme has Outstanding Universal Value.

Secondly one of the highlights of the GSDM is the attempted forced removals from Driefontein. As land acquired through purchase by Pixley ka Seme at Driefontein, Daggakraal and Driepan for the purpose of settling Africans on a freehold basis

proved to be a successful example of black empowerment through land ownership, the apartheid government sought to disrupt the programme. In the 1960s the area was declared a “black spot” meaning that it was a black area in a predominantly white area. In 1975 the government made a decision to move people. In 1982 the Swazi speaking and Zulu landowners were moved to KaNgwane and KwaZulu respectively. But the Driefontein people resisted the removals. Saul Mkhize became a champion of the anti-removal campaign. He paid with his life; on 2 April 1983 Mkhize was shot dead by a policeman. The people of Daggakraal under Chief Popo Molo also resisted removal to Qwaqwa. Forced removals were another of the economic crimes perpetrated by the apartheid government.

The third keynote theme is political trial and long term imprisonment. Trial by a biased jury and imprisonment was a recurrent theme in the struggle history in South Africa, and indeed in other countries in Southern African region. The world has celebrated a number of prisoners of political and human rights conscience such as the late Nelson Mandela (1963 – 1990) and Aung San Suu Kyi (Burma 1989 -2010) both of which received the Nobel Prize for Peace. These two serve to highlight the significance of politically biased verdicts and incarceration. Bethal was the site of two notorious trials which were shrouded in secrecy. The trial of 18 Pan African Congress (PAC) members accused of treason, began in December 1977 were charged under the Terrorism Act of 1967, amongst them Zephania Mothopeng, the President of the PAC, a banned organisation. Four of the defendants, Naboath Ntshuntsha, Samuel Malinga, Aaron Khoza and Sipho Bonaventura Malaza died in detention, while Vusumzi Johnson Nyathi survived after he was thrown out of the window.

Fourthly the secretive trial of 5 student politicians from Kagiso was also organised in Bethal: Templeton Mageza; Themba Raymond Hlatshwayo; Rodney Tsholetsane; Molathegi Thlale and Lawrence Ntlokoa and their compatriot, Mike Matsobane. They were arrested and detained and tortured until January 1977. The students and Matsobane endured severe torture from state police, which they testified to during

their trial. The Kagiso group were found guilty and served their respective sentences at various prisons across the country.³

Lastly the GSDM features a beaten infiltration/exfiltration passage of freedom fighters into Swaziland and beyond other external/rear basis. These routes were secretive and full details are yet to be investigated in order to profile them as public heritage. Connected with these infiltration routes are some of the major acts of war by the Umkhonto We Sizwe. The sabotage at Sasol installation in June 1980 exposed the vulnerability of the apartheid state. Obviously with such psychological victory for the anti-apartheid movement, the futility of defending apartheid must have forced its stubborn proponents to soften their stance.

The following is a breakdown issues emerging from the situation analysis that reveal the heritage potential of the area.

- (i) 19th century battle sites
- (ii) Early black empowerment through land acquisition
- (iii) Forced removals
- (iv) Struggle battle sites (e.g. Sasol II attacks)
- (v) Infiltration/exfiltration corridors
- (vi) Landmine sites
- (vii) ANC/MK Safe houses
- (viii) The Bethal Trials (2 trials)
- (ix) Sites of pre-election conflict 1990-1994 (e.g. houses attacked)
- (x) Sites of political murders
- (xi) Farms associated with inhuman labour practices (Bethal)
- (xii) Private farm prisons/compounds (Bethal)
- (xiii) Police stations/torture sites used by the Security Branch/SAP
- (xiv) Identification of victims (deaths and injuries)
- (xv) Survivors of Conflict

³ <http://www.popsmageza.co.za/the-bethal-trial-story/>

A number of sites have potential to meet criteria of National and Provincial sites. Grading of sites must be supported by further research and public consultations in accordance with the National Heritage Resources Act. On the basis of this preliminary report the following sites may be designated Grade 1 Sites:

- (i) Sasol II Refinery;
- (ii) Kinross Mine disaster;
- (iii) Barney Molokoane ambush site;
- (iv) Seme's Daggakraal as an early model of black empowerment;
- (v) Saul Mkhize's murder site;
- (vi) Gert Sibande's family house in Mzinoni; and
- (vii) Exfiltration/Infiltration corridors may be identified and memorialized.

As the National Liberation Heritage Route will be anchored on events and the sites at which they occurred, we begin to see areas which must be illuminated by further research:

- (i) A number of sites have been identified; but the locations of some of the sites need to be confirmed.
- (ii) The locations of a vast majority of incidents identified in this report are not known, and thus require fieldwork.

Our preliminary recommendations are that:

- (i) This Project must guide Local Municipalities to prepare heritage site registers. A site register is a critical tool in the grading of sites according to criteria set out in the National Heritage Resources Act (No 25, 1999).
- (ii) Local Municipalities must each have a memorial site to enshrine all events on the struggle some of which may not be recorded.
- (iii) Exfiltration/infiltration corridors must be identified and memorialized.