



The Gateway to Endless Opportunities

**SPEECH BY COUNCILLOR CLEMENCIA HANASES, DEPUTY MAYOR, ON
THE OCCASION OF THE FIFTH ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING OF MAY
2021**

“WOMEN ARISE”

DATE: THURSDAY, 27TH MAY 2021

TIME: 17H30

VENUE: COUNCIL CHAMBERS

Fellow Councillors,

Acting Chief Executive Officer & Officials of the Municipal

Council of Windhoek,

Windhoek Residents,

Members of the Media,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good evening,

I welcome you once again to our fifth ordinary Council meeting of the year.

The month of May this year comes with bitter-sweet nostalgia as we reminisce over the lives of our dearly departed former Mayor, Alderman, Mathew Shikongo, Strategic Executive, Reckliff Kandjiriomuini, Moses Taniseb, Operator: Digital Printing. It is also with shock and sorrow that news of yet another staff member's passing yesterday, was received: Ms. Gladys Capuyan,

who was a Co-ordinator: Product Development in the Economic Development Division, passed yesterday. To the bereaved families, friends, and co-workers, may you receive comfort and strength through our Lord and know that we mourn your loss deeply.

The month of May is also a month celebration for Africa, as a continent. It is the month in which Africa made history on 25 May 1963, with the foundation of the then Organisation of African Unity (OAU)-a precursor to the now, African Union (AU).

The day pays tribute to the fight against colonialism and apartheid, as well as the progress made by Africa, in several sectors. It is also a day to reflect on the common challenges faced by the continent. This year's theme is: *"The year of Arts, Culture and Heritage: in the year of Charlotte Maxeke"*.

In the spirit of African Heritage, I would like to focus on our heroine for the month, Charlotte Maxeke (1871-1939).

Who was Charlotte Maxeke?

She was a South African religious leader, social and political activist; the first black woman to graduate with a university degree in South Africa with a B.Sc from Wilberforce University, Ohio in 1903, where she studied under Pan-Africanist, W.E.B Du Bois, and received an education focused on developing her as a future missionary in Africa.

She was greatly influenced by the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC) and through her connections with the Ethiopian Church, AMEC was founded in South Africa. She also became the organiser of the Women's Mite Missionary Society in Johannesburg, and then

moved to the Polokwane (then Pietersburg) area and later established a school in Evaton, Witwatersrand.

Maxeke attended the launch of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC) in Bloemfontein in 1912. Although her main concerns were church-linked social issues, Maxeke also wrote in Xhosa, on the social and political situation occupied by women. In *Umteteli wa Bantu*, she addressed the 'woman question'. As an early opponent of passes for Black women, Maxeke was politically active throughout her adult life. She helped organise the anti-pass movement in Bloemfontein in 1913 and founded the Bantu Women's League of the SANNC in 1918. As a leader of this organisation, she led a delegation to then Prime Minister Louis Botha, to discuss the issue of passes for women. This was followed by a protest, the following year and subsequent protests on the Witwatersrand, about low wages. She also

participated in the formation of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) in 1920.

Maxeke was also involved in multi-racial movements and addressed the Women's Reform Club in Pretoria, which was an organisation for the voting rights of women. She also joined the Joint Council of Europeans and Bantus and was later elected as president of the Women's Missionary Society.

Finally, in 1928, she attended a conference in the USA and became increasingly concerned about the welfare of Africans. She subsequently established an employment agency for Africans in Johannesburg and was the first Black woman to become a parole officer for juvenile delinquents.

Maxeke was often honoured as *'Mother of Black Freedom in South Africa'*, and had an ANC nursery school named after her in Tanzania.

I draw on this nugget of history and heritage today as part of a clarion call to all Namibian women: to rise. Gone are the days of suffering in silence, intimidation, harassment, unabated violence against us, murder, child victimisation/trafficking, and the denial of human dignity.

I want us as women to start raising ourselves up, nurturing children with solid values and actively participating in local and international arenas be it business, education, politics, science, engineering, the medical, legal fraternities or vocational trades, manufacturing, entrepreneurship. We are the hope, salvation, and mothers of our nation. The prevailing scourge of Gender-Based Violence and abuse of children is unacceptable and whilst we look to lawmakers and enforcers, what are we as a collective doing to defend ourselves and teach our children right from wrong? What is the critical 'woman question' you want to solve?

As women, we expend unnecessary energy in pulling each other down, competing against one another, bad-mouthing, gossiping, and deriving pleasure from others' misery. I want to change that narrative, going forward. None of us is leaving this earth, alive, one day and I want to challenge each and every woman in Namibia and Africa, to start the inner work of self-reflection, meditation with God and honesty: are we as women living and being the best versions of ourselves. How many of us can truly admit that we are jealous, insecure, fake, using others for our own advantage. More importantly, how many of us are willing to acknowledge such character flaws and change for the greater good of humanity and inner peace?

We have an opportunity now as women, mothers, spiritual and community leaders to set the blueprint for a brighter, happier, safer future for our kids and leave

behind a legacy from which future generations can benefit and improve and carry forth into the next millennium.

That said, we are not islands unto ourselves and to our good men out there, we say: thank you. Thank you for protecting us, helping us, teaching us, fathering our children, and demonstrating exemplary behaviour and attitudes. We acknowledge that together we are stronger and I encourage all of us in our collective consciousness, to remain resolute towards fighting injustices of all kinds and that we see and treat each other as human beings, all with exclusive rights to freedom, food, shelter, dignity, rights of association, freedom of speech and survivors of the prevailing covid-19 pandemic. If anything, the pandemic serves as a harsh reminder that we are here on borrowed time and the sooner we optimise the quality of our human relations and collective welfare, we shall indeed be part of the global celebration of Africa. It starts and continues with the grandmothers, mothers, sisters,

girl child, women of Namibia. To you all, I say rise, for the time has come to reclaim our power, self-worth, rights to safety, choice, freedom, without fear.

With these few words, I leave you with the following by Michelle Obama who once said: *“No country can ever truly flourish if it stifles the potential of its women and deprives itself of the contributions of half its citizens.”*

So let us take care of our women and children for they are the future.

I thank you.

Source:

<https://www.sahistory.org.za/people/charlotte-nee-manye-maxeke>