

FF Plus Calls For Freedom Park Boycott

Written by Rudi Prinsloo

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The Freedom Front Plus called for a boycott of Freedom Park in Pretoria on Friday after a new gallery at the memorial neglected to pay tribute to Afrikaner leaders.

FF Plus MP Willie Spies said the party distanced itself from the park in its current form. He called on other political parties, "specifically the ANC" to do the same in the name of reconciliation.

"The international list contains no names from Western history -- not even Abraham Lincoln who abolished slavery," Spies said.

"All South Africans who desire reconciliation and peaceful coexistence between the country's racial groups should boycott the Freedom Park."

Spies said the South Africans in the Gallery of Leaders were mostly African National Congress figures. No Afrikaner freedom fighters, such as Paul Kruger, M.T. Steyn, Christiaan de Wet and Koos de la Rey, were portrayed.

"These Afrikaner heroes were freedom fighters in every sense of the word for their resistance to British hegemony in South Africa," Spies said.

"The park that aimed to promote reconciliation in South Africa transformed into a monstrosity whereby tax money is used to glorify the ANC and to insult others."

Spies said the numerous positive statements that ANC President Jacob Zuma had made about Afrikaners would be nullified if he did not distance himself from the Park.

"It does not make sense that Zuma calls Afrikaners the only white tribe of Africa but associates him[self] with decisions to exclude Afrikaners from history."

The park, located on a 52 hectare site on Salvokop that overlooks the Pretoria central business district, opened in December 2007.

It was criticised by some at the time for including the names on its wall of remembrance of Cuban fighters who died fighting apartheid-era South African troops in the border war in Namibia and Angola in the 1970s and 1980s. The names of the SA Defence Force soldiers who died were excluded from the wall.

Spies said the park was being used to promote a one-sided viewpoint of history.

Ramsey Abrahams, who is in charge of the gallery, said each leader had been carefully chosen after wide consultation and research.

He said the 24 leaders in the gallery, who include the Argentinean born Cuban guerrilla Che Guevara and South African communist leader Braam Fischer, were chosen according to a

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principle of "emancipating the African voice".

"We looked at leaders who led struggles against enslavement and colonialism, but for all communities, not just specific communities," Abrahams said.

Afrikaner leaders were already commemorated at the Voortrekker monument, which is nearby, he said.

"Without disrespect there is a five-metre statue of Andries Pretorius (a Boer leader), there is one representing and honouring Afrikaner women and children and there is a statue of Piet Retief and of one the Voortrekkers," he said.

"All the Afrikaner perspectives are represented there fully."

Abrahams said Paul Kruger, although he had fought against the English, was known to practice a form of slavery called "apprenticeship" involving women and children who were taken and forced to work.

"Paul Kruger had quite a number of apprentices," he said.

Abrahams said the park had held dialogue with one of Kruger's great grandsons on the matter.

"We agreed that it was important to bare witness to the truth," he said.

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