

African Leaders Showcased At Park

Written by Rudi Prinsloo

Wednesday, 25 March 2009 02:55 -



The first 24 people selected for the Freedom Park Gallery of Leaders were chosen to showcase African leadership, the Freedom Park Trust said on Monday.

"The utility value of the Park is articulated in terms of being a national and international icon for freedom and humanity. It seeks to do this in a way that promotes the emancipation of the African voice, thus showcasing African history and heritage as bearers of enduring traditions and values.

"The selection of the leaders to be included in the Gallery of Leaders should thus also be viewed in this context," said Freedom Park Trust chief executive officer Willy Serote in a statement.

He said many questions had been posed with regards to Cuban combatants being honoured at The Freedom Park.

"We would like to put this matter to rest. The Battle of Cuito Cuanavale, which took place from 1987 to 1988, is regarded as one of the final battles of the Cold War. This battle is perceived to have changed the history and political landscape of the Southern African region irreversible."

He said at the previously insignificant village of Cuito Cuanavale, Angolan, Namibian and Cuban forces triumphed over the apartheid military forces, whilst South African liberation armies fighting in northern Angola managed to contain the Angolan rebel armies, thus preventing them from reinforcing the apartheid armies.

The peace negotiations that followed this battle led to the withdrawal of the South African military from Angola and Namibia, resulting in the independence of Namibia and spurring on South Africa's negotiated settlement.

"We can never forget the significance of this battle and the meaningful role that progressive internationalist commitment by Cuba played on the African continent in the emancipation of Southern Africa and Africa."

Along with the names of Steve Biko, Oliver Tambo and Moses Kotane is the name of Cuban Ernesto "Che" Guevara de la Serna.

Serote said another deciding aspect forming part of the context was that of humanity and freedom.

The Gallery of Leaders pays tribute to the achievements and represents the leadership qualities of those exceptional leaders who brought about qualitative leaps in the struggle for humanity and freedom nationally, continentally and internationally.

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"When talking about humanity and freedom, it is imperative to view these terms in the broadest possible sense accommodating humanity and freedom for all, beyond cultural, ethnical and racial confines." he said.

Source : Sapa /mm/ks

Date : 23 Mar 2009 18:04