

**Speech Delivered by Premier Sibusiso Ndebele at SASCOs National SRC
Manifesto and CD Launch**

Durban, 10 August, 2006

Greetings

Comrades, Friends, Ladies and gentlemen

All protocol observed

Today is an important occasion in the struggle of progressive students' politics in South Africa. The South African Students' Congress, SASCO is launching its national manifesto for Students Representative Councils. You are also launching your campaign CD. In your Manifesto you have approximately dedicated this year to: "Celebrating 30 years of the Heroic struggle of June 16 in Education. Appropriately more so, you have made the events of June 16, 1976, central to your campaign.

This explains why you have chosen the theme "Realise the 1976 dream ..., fight for quality students services for quality education; say never again in our life time." For the past fifteen years, since 1991, the South African Students Congress has been the voice of reason, creating contexts for tertiary education and for students politics in this country. It is not surprising therefore, that in the occasion of 30 years of the June 1976 struggle; and 50 years of commemorating the 1956 Women March, as well as 100 years of commemorating Bhambatha's Uprising against an unjust colonial system, SASCO remains the most appropriate and most relevant student organization to realistically encapsulate the collective memory of these events.

The class of 1976 was a determined class. They narrowed down the issues, as a strategy, and fought a gallant fight. They followed an epoch in the history of student politics, where roughly between 1968 and 1976, the South African Students Organization (SASO) worked very hard to fill the political vacuum created by the banning of the liberation organisations and the leadership in

the early 1960s .With SASO, and with the class of 1976 the focus of the liberation struggle shifted from veteranism to youth activism.

The youth of the 1960's and 1970s believed in action, and saw education as a vehicle to attain liberation. To deliver this desired result, education had to be good. By 1976, the students were no longer prepared to accept any shoddy type of education.

The oppressor, out of despair, committed the biggest blunder, by pushing the Afrikaans language to the centre of its oppressive political agenda. This rendered oppression of the black majority both a political and a cultural exercise .All of us know that culture ,managed badly ,can be a lethal weapon that destroys the manager ,more than the intended victim .The stigmatization of Afrikaans was unfortunate , but it proves what can happen when a ruling minority becomes disparate .

You have been born out of the politics of the 1980s where the liberation politics gained a lot of ground in the urban areas. Here again the youth ,the students movement and the underground movement worked together to produce some of the finest tactics in urban warfare. By the end of 1980s the enemy was tired ,and moving around aimlessly. Your birth in 1991 was a result of new conditions that had been created with the unmaning of liberation movements and the freeing of political prisoners from 1990 .

As an organization you have lived in the era of negotiations. As a result of the successes attained through negotiation in Kempton Park and elsewhere ,a democratic state was born in 1994 .You are the products of the era of leadership of Nelson Mandela ,Oliver Tambo ,Walter Sisulu, Thabo Mbeki , Jacob Zuma and many other men and women of integrity who lead the African Nation Congress and its Alliance partners . You are the generation of hope.You and your country represent peace and prosperity. This is your competitive advantage.

You should know, however, that at some universities, those who stood up against the class of 1976 in Soweto, Gugulethu, KwaMashu, Umlazi; and those whose very existence is owed to the very system that wanted to permanently rule over the majority; and those who were responsible for direct and violent attacks on unarmed students, such as at Ongoye in 1983, are today standing to be elected as SRCs of the liberated universities. This is the reality of the democratic state. However, this also partly explains why in some universities the culture of negotiating the conditions on campus, with management, has not taken root.

When people who went to sleep at the height of the struggle for liberation and those who joined the forces that were denying us of the very liberation that we wanted, suddenly rise up to want to be student leaders in a post liberation university, you cannot have faith in such a student leadership. For even if it can win an election in a free and fair manner, its roots in the apartheid politics represents an acceleration of backward movement in student politics. This is to be avoided at all costs.

We cannot have our campuses led by student movements who, because of their short-sighted political orientation, are unable to differentiate between the pre-1994 and the post-1994 campus politics. We cannot have our campuses led by student orators and clowns who think that their role is to ignore the gains that have come as result of the ANC running education in the country. We cannot have student leadership who, having missed the liberation era in the pre-1994 period, think that their role is to disrupt academic programmes and plunge our universities to chaos.

However SASCO must know that these things will happen, if SASCO goes to sleep and allow people whose organizational track - record in no way can be connected to the struggle for liberation to dominate their campus politics. What happened at the University of Zululand this week needs to be condemned. We have inherited a tradition of negotiation. This is the tradition that we should utilize when we deal with university leadership.

All the same, SASCO must fight vehemently to discourage those elements in university management who think that their role is to exclude poor students from gaining tertiary education. Our Universities and FET Colleges are serving students the majority of whom are poor. Management should therefore be sensitive to poverty and design plans to address this reality. This explains also the nature of the candidates we should seek when appointing people to university Management positions .

In Conclusion, ladies and gentlemen, the launch of the SASCO SRC Manifesto and its CD is an important milestone in the calendar of this organization. Its final product is that, like all our allies do wherever they are - COSATU, SADTU and others, you must dominate student politics in all campuses, so that through SASCO all our students can begin to taste fruit of liberation

Amandla!