

“It’s our nation to build.”

**Opening remarks to the
Northern Cape regional championships
of the Field Band Foundation
by Field Band Foundation CEO Nicky du Plessis,
Bathlharos Stadium, Kuruman,
09:00, 11 July 2015.**

(Release on delivery)

Master of Ceremonies;

Representatives of the Department of Arts & Culture;

Operations and band leaders of the Field Band Foundation;

Judges of the Regional Championships;

Parents and family of the Field Bands;

Distinguished Guests;

Members of the Field Band Foundation.

Welcome to these Regional Championships, my fellow members of the Field Band Foundation from our operations in Kimberley, Postmasburg, Daniëlskuil, and Kuruman.

And a big thank you to Kuruman for hosting us; to the Department of Arts & Culture for sponsoring this important gathering; and to Anglo American, De Beers and PPC for their steadfast support of the bands represented here.

Today we celebrate a number of different things that complement each other:

- The showcasing of excellence in event design and performance that each Field Band has been working so hard on

- The joy of friendly competition, where we learn from each other’s inspirations and strengths, and also from our weak points – those things that are so very much part of our humanity
- A happy coming together of members of our Field Band Foundation from across the Northern Cape, one of the Foundation’s strongest regions in South Africa, and
- Being part of a Field Band family of wonderful teaching and learning - where we make “music for life”.

Indeed, the Field Band Foundation is not an empty vessel that makes a great noise. No.

Primarily our work is that of teaching and learning – about music and performance, sure, but also about respect for one another, living a life based on positive values and self-discipline, and about joyfully embracing the opportunities that our democracy gives to us all.

Since the release of Mr Nelson Mandela and the beginning of the freeing of our country in February 1990, 27 million South Africans have been born – that’s just more than half of our country’s people alive today.

Some people call you the “born frees” – and that is true enough in a formal political sense. But it can also be misleading. To be able to enjoy the freedoms that come with being able to take up life’s opportunities, there is much work that lies in our own hands.

Some of this is work that we do through the Field Band Foundation to expand the horizons of life’s opportunities in practical ways for young South Africans through the life and other skills that you learn as a Foundation member.

And we are making great progress, thanks also to your efforts in every Field Band.

The Foundation’s work over 17 years has already seen more than 40 000 youngsters pass through our programmes, 23 800 attending for a minimum of three years, in 79 600 years of developmental training.

This year the Foundation is training more than 6 500 members, our highest annual number yet.

It is practical work of building social cohesion and our nation, and we are playing our part.

We do this in partnerships with the public and private sectors across our country, including in our significant partnership with the Department of Arts & Culture.

This is part of a national effort that is needed of us all, and that was described by Arts & Culture Minister Nathi Mthethwa to the National Social Cohesion Summit in March this year when he quoted former President Nelson as saying: “The power is in our hands to create a better world.”

Minister Mthethwa added that:

“It (is) up to us to be agents of the changes that we want to see happening in our country. It is our responsibility in the positions we hold to transform the heritage landscape of this country. Above all, to improve the quality of life for all our people.

We need to remind ourselves that it is what we do in our ... organisations and communities that make this country what it is”.

That is a perfect summing up of our responsibility to be the best that we can be, to be consistent in aiming for that, and also to enjoy what we do as a free people building what the National Development Plan targets as a place of deep citizenship:

“a society where opportunity is not determined by race or birthright; where citizens accept that they have both rights and responsibilities”.

What your generation is doing is excitingly effective, and will have permanently positive effects on nation building and social cohesion.

You are South Africa and South Africa will be as you make it, and the eyes of our country, and all humanity, will watch in hope and, I am sure, in admiration.

US President John F Kennedy put it beautifully in 1961, in words that are apt for us here and now:

“History will not judge our endeavours...merely on the basis of colour or creed. Neither will competence and loyalty and stature, while essential to the utmost, suffice in times such as these. For of those to whom much is given, much is required...”

And what is needed of us, of course, is to keep steady in our work, knowing that every one of us deserves to enjoy a full and satisfying life. That is how we will make our country greater still.

And we know that we have a much better chance at this when we base our actions and decisions on the values that the Field Band Foundation’s members have identified as critical to our success:

- Honesty
- Integrity
- Respect
- Empathy
- Diversity
- Self-belief
- Equality
- Excellence

- Discipline.

I wish every one of you success in everything you do.

Thank you for your support.

Enjoy these championships, and may God bless you all.

(ends)

For more information on the work of the Field Band Foundation, and to download the Foundation's comprehensive 2014 Report to Society, please visit www.fieldband.org.za.

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