



EFF STATEMENT ON THE COLLAPSE OF FUGARD THEATRE AND APARTHEID MUSEUM

Wednesday, 24 March 2021

The EFF has observed with sadness the collapse of national sites that encompass our history, culture and performance theatre, namely the Fugard Theatre in Cape Town and the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg.

In a demoralizing and culturally crippling series of events, these two institutions have ventilated their collapse to the public, with the Fugard Theatre announcing its permanent closure, and the Apartheid Museum temporarily closing as of the 1st of March 2021. The museum has cited possible permanent closure should there be no intervention at the level of funding.

The entire creative industry has been abandoned by national government, with artists periodically taking to the streets, and occupying prominent administrative buildings, demanding state intervention as their livelihoods collapse in the face of COVID-19.

The decay and under-funding of the creative industry in South Africa however did not begin with COVID-19, and it is decades of disregard for the arts, that is espoused mostly by Ministers who simply have no grasp of the role of the arts and culture in social development.

The Fugard Theatre and many other theatres in this country are the soul of the performance arts. Theatre has given black people an avenue to express the experiences of African people, culture, customs, norms and experiences. It was in theatre that Hugh Masekela, Sibongile Khumalo, Mbongeni Ngema, Gibson Kente, John Kani, were able to express in song and performance the reality of black people under the brutal grip of the Apartheid regime.

The liberation movement and the struggle against colonialism and Apartheid can never be divorced from the arts and story-telling, which has been a mode of communication and preserving history in African society not only in the continent but as well as the diaspora.

The Apartheid Museum has been a custodian of our struggle against one of the most brutal crimes against humanity for decades. The tale of the Apartheid era was narrated through imagery, artefacts and documents, for all to witness, and we were able to contextualize moments such as the birth of Apartheid, the role of liberation movements and leaders, key moments such as Sharpeville Massacre and the moments leading to the democratic dispensation lucidly.

The failure of the regime of the day to protect and sustain these institutions, represents a government that has no regard for history and culture, and whose only real function is to send condolences, organize funerals and congratulate artists for achievements they have made no meaningful contribution to.

The EFF calls for these institutions to be rescued, along with all other creative sectors as sites that preserve identity, culture and history. Nathi Mthethwa must stop playing a role of an undertaker, a toloki or otherwise known as a professional mourner, and do something meaningful in his term as a Minister.

ISSUED BY THE ECONOMIC FREEDOM FIGHTERS

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