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# African National Congress

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## OFFICE OF WALTER SISULU

15 November 1995

To: Janet Mays

Fax No: (313) 345-2600

Dear Janet,

Attached are 4 pages giving information regarding the Soweto Library Project. I hope this is sufficient for the needs of your brochure.

The Logo below, Thuto kelefa/ Infundo lilifa means in Sotho and Zulu "Education is a treasure"

## Orlando Children & Youth Library

6th Floor Khotso House  
62 Marshall Street  
Cnr. Sauer Street  
Johannesburg 2001



P O Box 62024  
Marshalltown 2107  
Tel: (011) 834-6865/6  
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The library is already functioning as a mobile library and it is hoped that it will be formally opened early next year.

I believe the books required would be to cater for the age group 4 years to 12 years - that is, pre school and primary school.

All success to your project,

Regards and best wishes

*Rica Hodgson*

Rica Hodgson  
Secretary to  
Walter Sisulu

**The People Shall Govern!**



# The Orlando West Children's Community Library

The Orlando West Children's Community Library is a project of the Joint Enrichment Project (JEP) a youth development organisation that has been working with young people in South Africa since 1986.

Children in South Africa are eager for the opportunity to learn and grow in their education. Unfortunately they have inherited the legacy of apartheid's attack on education for Africans.

The Children's Community Library is an exciting initiative undertaken by the JEP and the Orlando West Civic Association. The library is a community initiative which encourages children to read, listen to stories, write their own compositions and re-engages parents and grandparents in children's learning.

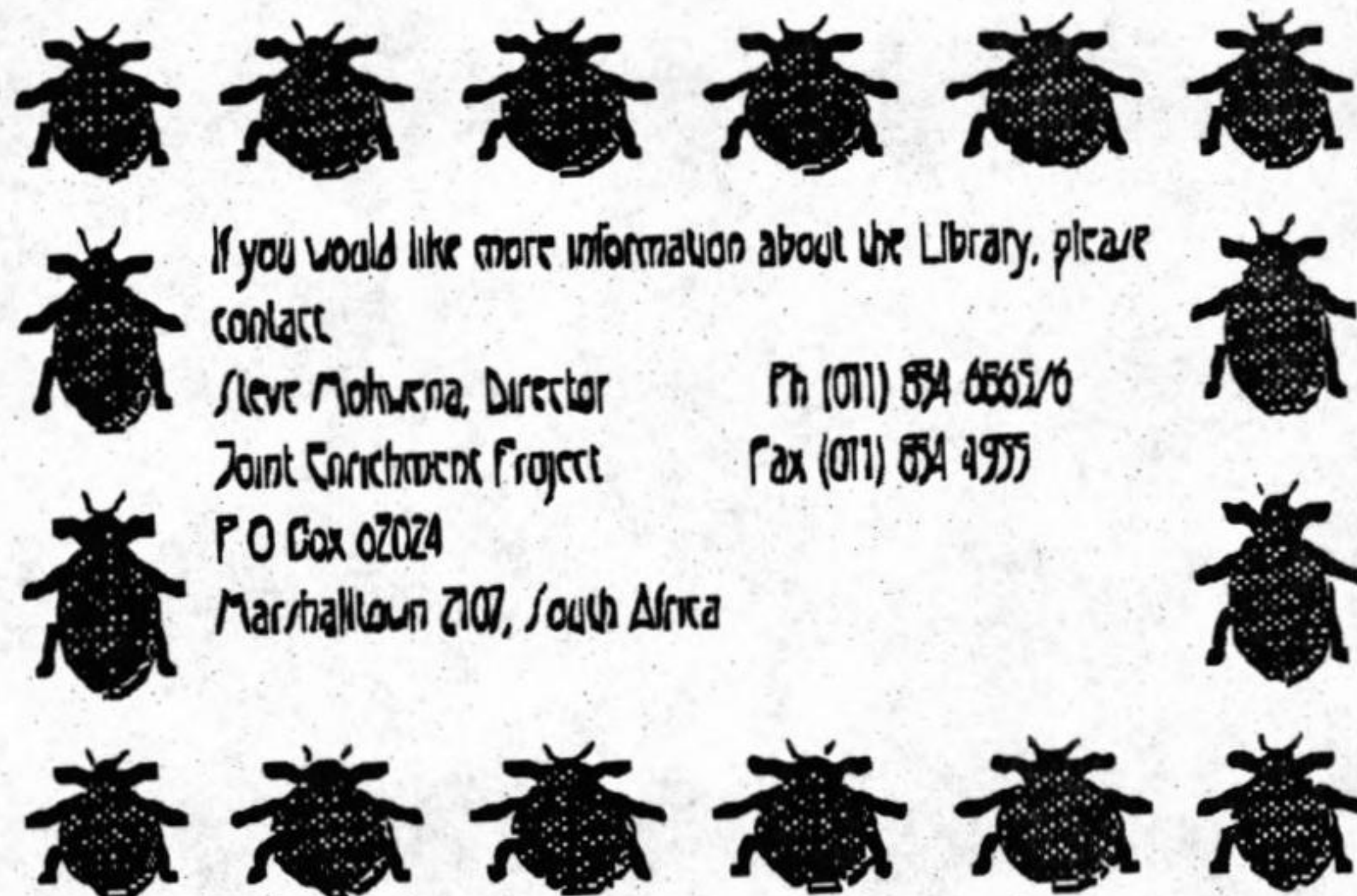
The vision of the library is to build a value for reading and to build a culture of learning within the Orlando West Community. Orlando West is part of Soweto.

The library also runs a mobile clinic to schools in the area to encourage teachers and students to use its resources.

## Who Supports the Library?

The Library is supported by:

The Education and Development Trust  
The St James Church in New York, USA  
The Baring Foundation  
The people of Orlando West, Soweto



If you would like more information about the Library, please contact

Steve Mkhwenzi, Director  
Joint Enrichment Project  
P O Box 62024  
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# **ORLANDO CHILDREN AND YOUTH LIBRARY PROJECT.**

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **1. HISTORY OF THE LIBRARY PROJECT.**

The idea of a Children and Youth Library was conceived within the Joint Enrichment Project in the aftermath of the 1991 Conference on Marginalised Youth. Presentations and discussions at the Conference centred on the collapse of black education and the disintegration of the social fabric of the black community. Delegates were confronted with a stark picture of a whole generation of young people, educated in a defective and collapsing education system, raised in an environment of criminal and political violence and threatened by large scale structural unemployment.

Concern was expressed about the disastrous effects of the Bantu education system, particularly the destruction of the "culture of learning" in which children became disillusioned with school and lost interest in learning. In examining solutions to the problem, the absolute necessity of nurturing a culture of learning was emphasized and it was stressed that storytelling is very important in cultivating a culture of reading.

It was noted at the Conference that what one learns in school is only one aspect of education. Many other factors such as family upbringing, socio-economic milieu, socialization within peer groups, job-related training and work contribute to the education of an individual. It was further noted that the social environment in black townships is not conducive to learning. Apart from under-resourced and overcrowded schools, recreational facilities for black children are virtually non-existent. In this environment, children easily turn to violence and crime as a way of life.

The Conference noted that it was not enough to simply ask children to go back to school. Delegates stressed the need for creative ways of addressing the problem, drawing on the capability of black communities. In trying to identify solutions to the problem it was noted that there was an urgent need for projects which draw from and utilise the inherent strengths, style, outlook, structures and knowledge of groups or communities and build on these.

At the Conference on Marginalised Youth JEP was given the mandate to: (i) initiate and coordinate projects for marginalised youth and (ii) to initiate projects to prevent young children from becoming marginalised when they grow older.

Influenced by the above observations, the idea of a children's library, which would



foster a culture of reading, was developed.

By fostering a culture of reading such a project would support the current "back to learning" campaign. However it was felt that the project would be successful only if it was rooted in the community and members of the community have a stake in it.

In discussions on how to achieve this it was noted that one of the major survival strategies of black communities is the pooling together of resources in savings clubs (*stokvels*) and burial societies.

An important feature of *stokvels* and burial societies is their sustainability. Another significant characteristic of these groups is the high degree of accountability within the groups. These qualities stem from the fact that members rely exclusively on their own resources. These characteristics provided the inspiration for the idea of stocking the library through a type of "book *stokvel*".

The "book *stokvel*" would work as follows: members of the community are invited to donate books on occasions that are significant in that particular community eg. on birthdays, births of children, baptisms, anniversaries, memorials, graduations and historical events. Each book would contain a plaque indicating the occasion on which it was donated and the name of the donor. The books collected in this way would be used to stock the children's library. The association of books with events, individuals and families within the community would foster a feeling of involvement in the library as well as a sense of history of the community.

A draft proposal for a Youth and Children's library was circulated to a number of individuals in the field of education and community development. From the feedback it was clear that there is an urgent need for a children's library in Soweto. Because of its size it was not possible to develop a project for the whole of Soweto. It was decided therefore to focus on Orlando West because it is the oldest township in Soweto, is centrally placed and does not currently have a library.

An Ad Hoc committee had been formed soon after the 1991 Conference which included J.E.P. staff and 8 committee members, who were individuals involved in Education and Community Development, some of whom resided in the Orlando area. While the Mandate and the initial thinking behind the Library came from the 1991 Conference on Marginalised Youth, the committee has been largely responsible for the ongoing direction of the Library Project.

The Ad Hoc committee did not meet for a period of time, due to the commitments of J.E.P. However, the Ad Hoc committee has been meeting regularly for the last 6 months, and has given a priority to consulting with community groups, particularly community groups in the Orlando West area, regarding the specific services the Library should offer. Community Groups will also be invited to nominate representatives to the Formal Library Management Committee which will be formed when the Library becomes operational.



## **2. GOALS OF THE PROJECT.**

- a) To foster a culture of reading to support the 'back to learning' campaign.
- b) To promote community participation in academic and cultural activities in the Orlando West community.
- c) To record and disseminate knowledge and historical information about the community, information that would otherwise be lost.
- d) To combat Child Illiteracy.

## **3. ACTIVITIES TO BE OFFERED AT THE LIBRARY.**

Note that these activities are subject to discussion with Community Groups in Orlando West, and therefore some modifications may be made.

- a) To provide youth and children with a place to read for educational and recreational purposes.
- b) To provide youth and children with opportunities to read and learn with the assistance of specialist educational books and materials, and audio-visual equipment.
- c) To record and disseminate knowledge and historical information, particularly about the Orlando Community: information that would otherwise be lost. This information may, for example, be obtained through interviews with older members of the Orlando community and by pictorial and photographic displays.
- d) To provide opportunities for children to hear stories told by older members of the Orlando Community.
- e) To organise and facilitate Writing Workshops, e.g. opportunities for children to write stories and have them displayed and recorded.
- f) To provide study facilities for Secondary School students, particularly those undertaking their matriculation who have no appropriate study facilities in their homes.
- g) To facilitate the development and publication of original material. The Library will welcome unpublished material from people of all ages.
- h) To investigate and where necessary and possible to provide an 'Aftercare' child-minding service, e.g. for children to use during the time that their parents/carers are at work.



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313-345-2600