

# capturing the spirit in the quotes

*The Five Freedoms Forum Conference, held on the last weekend of September, was an important political milestone. In its focus on 'Whites in a changing South Africa', the conference underscored the urgency of political work to enable white South Africans to become willing partners in the transformation of their society.*

*It is always temptingly easy to romanticise such events in retrospect, particularly when they appeal to a deep-seated need to feel needed. That is not our intention.*

*We have drawn out these quotes because they capture the spirit that pervaded the conference, despite some deep differences that emerged. These words, from important political actors, reflect a real appreciation of the awesome uncertainties whites face as they move into the unknown, with no guarantees for the future except a conviction that what they do now will help to shape it.*



*Rapu Molekane, president, Soweto Youth Congress; general secretary, South African Youth Congress:*

'Many [white South Africans] reject apartheid and want to work for democracy. But many of them also find our organisations too militant. That does not mean we write them off. They have an enormous amount to contribute and we want to encourage them to stay and contribute and become involved.'

*Eric Molobi, executive member, National Education Crisis Committee:*

'We ask that you speak the truth to the white community. Tell them that there is no peace in our country and there will never be so long as our people are denied the right to determine their own future. Tell them what our people are striving for. But most of all tell them that we have no desire to perpetrate on them the injustices which we have suffered through apartheid all these years.'



*Frank Chikane, general secretary, SACC:*

'You people have legal space — you can hold this type of conference. But it could not happen in Soweto. Such privileges put a heavy responsibility on you. If you do not use it you will also take responsibility for the deaths that happen in the townships.'

*Sheena Duncan, vice president, South African Council of Churches; past national president, Black Sash:*

'Many people are on the defensive, seeking to avoid the unavoidable. We don't want them to be pushed flat on their backs so that we can walk over them. We are not seeking victories. We are seeking solutions in which all South Africans have a place.'



*Sidney Mafumadi, Assistant General Secretary of COSATU:*

'If by any chance you should happen to be a white worker, we would be quite happy to welcome you as a member of our organisation.'

*Azhar Chachalia, national executive member, United Democratic Front:*

'[We] call on all whites who are thinking of emigrating, to stay and contribute. This is the country from which you have benefitted and your commitment to this country will turn it into a secure and just place for all.'

