

JANINE DE VILLIERS
 Publication and Promotions

This year sees the country celebrating a major event and one of the most important documents in the formation of a true democracy for South Africa, the Freedom Charter. This historical event could be used as a theme for displays to celebrate Human Rights Day, Freedom Day, Heritage Day or a special display around the official date of origin on 26 June 1955.

Historical background

It was suggested in 1953 that a national conference, representing all cultural groups be called to draw up a freedom charter containing the people's vision for the future. The Freedom Charter was drafted in weeks prior to the congress after input in the form of thousands of written and dictated submissions from all over the country were reviewed to make the document truly representative of all South Africans.

The resulting Congress of the People held in Kliptown, Soweto on 25-26 June 1955 was

50 The Freedom Charter

attended by 2 884 delegates from all over South Africa. The drafted Freedom Charter was put to congress delegates and endorsed.

The Charter asserted rights to equality without distinction of colour, race, sex or belief within a democratic state based on universal franchise. It comprises 10 clauses, headed by a preamble which commits its adherents to strive for the achievement of a government, based on the will of all people.

The clause relevant for librarians, *The doors of learning and culture shall be opened!* is depicted on a poster produced by the Western Cape Provincial Library Service to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Freedom Charter and is also used as national slogan for Library Week by the Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA).

Assembling a display

Use the poster as focal point for the display. The main headings in the Freedom Charter (see list of references below) can be utilised to complement the poster on either side. Add photocopies from books covering this period in South African history to create a historical atmosphere. The same books can be used in the display to draw attention to the titles relating to this period in South African history that is part of the collection of your library. The photocopies can be placed on covered boxes to create depth.

References

Morris, M. *Every step of the way: the journey to freedom in South Africa*. HSRC, 2004.
 Reader's Digest illustrated history of South Africa. Reader's Digest SA, c1988.
 Weinberg, E. *Portrait of a people: A personal photographic record of the South African liberation struggle*. IDAF, 1981.
www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/charter.html

