

‘Guardian’ of WMC – Petition handed to Mayor’s office

By Karibu staff

10 October 2025

The Petition to Defend Public Spaces, the Workers Museum Cottages, was handed over formally to the Mayor’s office on Monday, 22 September 2025, in the presence of fifteen representatives of the DPSC. Fr. Mokesh Morar, chair of the Khanya College Board of Trustees handed the petition to Phumzile Sithole, director of stakeholders in the City of Joburg.

The DPSC was launched on 19 July, to stop the eviction of Khanya college from the Workers Museum Cottages, in Newtown. The campaign is demanding that Khanya be the guardian of the WMC, to ensure that communities continue to have consistent access to the facility and the City. At the meeting, Sidney.... from Casual Workers Advice Office said, I was a shopsteward in the 1990s, and Khanya played an important role to raise the education of workers, and they have continued to promote worker history and heritage.” The campaign has been broadened to include public spaces in all communities, and not only the WMC.

The petition was launched on 29 July, in support of a public partnership between Khanya College and the City, where the college is responsible for programme development and operations, and the city is responsible for the WMC’s structural maintenance and repairs.

One of the organisations in Newtown that signed the petition said, “Khanya must not leave. If Khanya leaves the Cottages, they will fall into disrepair once again. Already, the Workers Museum has been rundown, like the rest of Joburg.”

The Petition garnered significant support, from 87 organisations and 997 individuals have signed. According to South African law, a petition demands that authorities at all levels of government investigate the matter. Many want to preserve the WMC as a public space that enables everyone, including township groups and individuals to accessibly engage with the City and its history.

Sithole advised the DPSC delegation that she will set up a meeting with all stakeholders, including the DACH; and will also do a site visit of the WMC in preparation for the meeting. Khanya College’s director, Maria van Driel, requested Ms. Sithole provide the campaign with copies of existing agreements between the city and community-controlled museums such as Sophiatown, Roodepoort and the Holocaust museum; to give the DPSC concrete ideas of what a ‘guardian’ of the WMC would entail.

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