

Makanda Residents Unite Over Service Delivery

By Sinalo Peyi

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On 28 August 2024 in Grahamstown now also known as Makanda, residents stood up and voiced out their concerns, they organised together with the community stakeholders and leaders from Unemployed Peoples Movement (UPM), Rhodes University and the Makana Citizen Front (MFC).

Residents of Makanda finally decided to stand up as a collective to fight for service delivery. This community is known for organising together, and as a result, it produces the most politically active community members in the area. Makanda is famously known for its best university, Rhodes University, which brings students from all over the world, but yet the area is very dirty with no service delivery, there is a high rate of unemployment, crime, and unsolved cases of gender-based violence within the area.

The main reason for the community to organise this protest was the water crises in the area, the prolonged lack of water eventually led to a collective voice saying it's been too long and it's enough now. The Makanda community has been struggling with water for many years, but it does not get better for them.

Babalwa Budaza (33) a resident of Makanda, was one of the people who were at the forefront of this protest as a representative of both community stakeholders. The MCF and UPM organisations are both working closely with the community, demanding service delivery and change in this area.

Both these organisations were formed by the late Ayanda Kota to assist the community not only to fight for services but as a safe space for the community to organise food parcels, financial support for students studying at Eastcape Midlands College located in Makanda, and to assist struggling community members with burial support to bury their loved ones.

Olona Nkomonde, a former student of Midlands College said that in 2020 students were kicked out of the college and accommodations, many students (more than 50) had to share a house provided by activists from the community and organised by Ayanda Kota and Skhumbuzo Soxujwa. This initiative helped students get back to school and continue with their studies. "We have been supporting the people of Grahamstown in their fight for water and a proper sanitation system for years," said Nkomonde. We will continue to support Makanda until the struggle ends, added Nkomonde.

The people of Makanda have been fighting for a clean and decent community for years and have not given up on the struggle, even though their founding leader and activist is no more but fighting for his spirit to carry on.

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