



OPERATION MAYIBUYE: Joburg's historic Liliesleaf farm, which sheltered famous Rivonia trialists including Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu
Picture: MUNTU VILAKAZI

Struggle farm to live again as a museum

Mandela hid out at Liliesleaf, disguised as 'the gardener'

BENJAMIN MOSHATAMA

HISTORIC Joburg site Liliesleaf farm is being revamped as a museum and resource centre at a cost of about R50-million.

The farm, in Rivonia, northern Joburg, was the meeting place in the early 60s for ANC and South African Communist Party leaders. It was there that they hatched Operation Mayibuye with the intention of overthrowing the apartheid government.

Nelson Mandela moved into the farmhouse in October 1961 while evading security police. He pretended to be a gardener and cook named David Motsamayi.

He was in prison when the farm was raided in 1963. ANC leaders, including Walter Sisulu, were arrested and later that year stood trial in the Rivonia Treason Trial.

Now Liliesleaf is to become The Learning Centre, set to open in July.

The site boasts three new buildings, which overlook the original farmhouse.

One will be a resource centre, and will house literature and documents relating to the site and its history.

The other two buildings will form the Liberation Centre, which will include a coffee shop with a curio outlet, exhibition areas and a 66-seat auditorium that will show a short film detailing the history of the area.

Said CEO of the Liliesleaf Trust Nicholas Wolpe — whose father Harold was a member of the then-banned SACP and went into hiding

after the Liliesleaf arrests: "We wanted to create a place where people don't have to rush into the museum, where they can relax and interact with the environment at the same time."

Plans for the trust were announced in 2001. The next year the trust bought the farm, and later surrounding properties.

Funders include the National Lottery, the Department of Arts and Culture and a cigarette company.

The museum component, the original site of Liliesleaf farm, will include:

- The main house, where Arthur and Hazel Goldreich were interrogated by apartheid police during the raid;

- A thatched cottage where Umkhonto weSizwe and SACP members often met; and

- Two outhouse buildings from where Mandela and other key members of MK operated for two years.

Wolpe said that 65% of the material in the museum was from the original structures. "We brought in architects that excavated and they found up to seven types of bricks, which were used to restore some of the outbuildings," said Wolpe.

Instead of tour guides, visitors will be guided by various audio clips.

There will be speakers throughout the museum playing audio clips of different historical events, as well as speeches by the likes of President Thabo Mbeki's father, Govan, and Nelson Mandela.

