

2nd Archbishop Thabo Makgoba Makgoba Annual Lecture

Delivered by Tembinkosi Bonakele on 21 August 2019

Commissioner, Competition Commission of South Africa and
Chairman of the Buffalo City Metropolitan Development Agency
At the University of Fort Hare, Miriam Makeba Hall, East London

Program Director

Vice Chancellor and our Host, Professor Buhlungu, together with the leadership echelon of the University

Archbishop Makgoba

Leadership of staff, worker and student formations

Fellow Alumni and members of the Convocation

Dear Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good afternoon

During this Month of Women, I am honoured to deliver this lecture in the presence of my Mother, Inkosazana uMaDlomo, without who I would never have been able to get the education I have, I wish to honour and thank her, and through her all the Women of our country for being a pillar of strength for our families, churches, community organisations and for uplifting our society more generally. We thank you for their endless sacrifices. Women over generations have committed to building our communities themselves. I am inspired by them when I dare say we will build South Africa ourselves!

Let me take this opportunity to express my gratitude for the special invitation to address the **Makgoba Annual Lecture**. I wish to pay homage to the Archbishop for being the conscience of the nation with his leadership, and for continuing your pastor ship and intercession for our nation. With your leadership we have shown that we too don't have to delegate our duty to our country, we must build South Africa ourselves! I am very glad that the university decided to honour the archbishop like this. Often these things are done after people have departed, this is when we start reflecting on their lives and their values. One of our problems is how much time and money we spend dealing with death rather than celebrating life. When a person is no more, they will not come back, and hopefully

he or she will go to haven, but the rest of us must live. I am really glad that we are taking time to reflect.

My focus today is going to be on youth and local economic development, and how we build a South Africa of our future ourselves.

This day marks the 400th anniversary since the landing of the first ship carrying African slaves America, an event that altered the course of history in Africa, Americas and the world. It is in this context that we must acknowledge the journey towards freedom travelled over the past 400 years in Africa and the diaspora.

The South Africa we have makes it possible to boldly state that we will build South Africa ourselves, because we are a free people. South Africa is a thriving democracy with a Bill of Rights, including socio-economic rights. We hold regular elections, have an independent judiciary, an independent media and relatively well functioning institutions, including a professional public service and competent regulators. We have national education, healthcare and social welfare systems. We have good universities. We have a relatively good infrastructure. We have some large SOEs, and no economy of our size has produced multinational firms at the scale we did. Ours is an emerging economy with an advanced financial sector, we produce our own food and export the rest. We are the Persian Gulf of non-oil minerals. We are a land of opportunity for Africans, including Asians. I remind you of these things, because even at a moment of gloom such as we are going through, we have no reason to be despondent about our future. We can still build South Africa, ourselves.

On the 26th of December 1811, the son of Rarabe, Dlambe, uTshawe, confronted by Graham's colonial forces wanting to drive him out of the Zuurveld, proclaimed in front of the enemy, "I will eat honey, and to procure it I shall cross the rivers Sundays, Swartkops and Gqurha. This country is mine." The youth of today, are not facing colonial forces on the banks of Sundays River, but they too face a daunting challenge, can they procure honey from anywhere? Do they have the courage to declare their freedom amidst enemy forces at a barrel of a gun and cannons? Can they proclaim, this is our country, we will build it ourselves?

Despite our thriving democracy, South Africa is a rich country, but sadly, its people are poor. Unemployment, poverty and inequality continue to make of economic liberation a distant dream. StatsSA's latest jobs figures show an unemployment rate of 40%, if we include discouraged workers, and that number rises to 55% amongst the youth, which is a million people. Amongst the youth graduates, the number is 31%. To put this in context, in an area like Mdantsane 6 out of 10 people of working age are not working. In contrast, unemployment rate among white South Africans is less than 7%. Inequality is the highest in the world, with a Gini-coefficient at 0.64. and poverty is rising. According to the World Bank, the richest 1% of South African's own 70.9% of the country's wealth while the bottom 60% only control 7% of the country's assets. The consequences have been a social strife – drugs, violent crime, including rape and murder.

Despite an increase in our social spending, we are week-in week-out horrified by the conditions under which our people live. Young children drown in pit toilets, our people have no sanitary facilities in the informal settlements, we have virtually no formal public transport system, our healthcare and education systems continue to produce poor outcomes. As an example, half of learners drop out of school between grades 1 and 12, and 78% of grade 7 learners cannot read for meaning in any language. Black people, as Vervoed planned, largely remain 'hewers of wood and drawers of water'. Meanwhile, our economy is hardly growing, and we face a real possibility of an economic downward spiral if we get downgraded into junk status by one remaining credit rating agency, courtesy of our growing public debt, for which Eskom alone is R450 billion. Banks and other companies are retrenching, some SOE's such as Denel are battling to pay salaries, and President Ramaphosa has warned of more retrenchment. In other words, it is going to get worse before it gets better. In times like these, we recall Lenin's famous question at the turn of the last century, "What is to be done?" This is indeed our Zuurveld moment, we can confront the enemy, and declare that this is our country, and we will build it ourselves.

In 2013 we buried Nelson Mandela, closing a chapter of a sterling contribution in our glorious liberation struggle. Some have blamed him for the reconciliation and compromises at the dawn of our liberation in 1994. This is not surprising, as every generation turns to blame the one before it. It is a psychological response to our own

sense of inadequacy. Mandela and the 1944 youth league generation will remain lionised for their courage and determination in the face of adversity and death, for their belief that they will liberate South Africa by themselves. Now that they are gone, we too can make our own solemn declaration, we can build it ourselves.

The world today faces a crisis of leadership, and no one is there to look out for us and the future generations. Unilateralism, racism, narrow nationalism, protectionism, that have all been rolled back by the turn of the century are back in the mainstream and in full swing. We face a constant threat that Trump may impose more tariffs on our goods as he continues with trade wars. The US has pulled out of the Nuclear Non-proliferation treaty, and war drums are beating from Washington to Moscow, from Saudi-Arabia to Iran, in the Korean peninsula to Kashmir, from Venezuela to Syria, from Israel to Palestine. It has pulled out of every climate change initiative. Africa, while making progress on the free trade and some minimal progress on political integration, continues to have its people suffer the worst forms of social deprivation and armed conflict, often characterised by violence against women and children. Despite entering this century with the Africa rising narrative, and pinning our hope on the demographic dividend, as we are expected to be home to 2 billion people by 2050, our economic growth as a continent is mediocre, our savings next to dismal, and facing capital flights including through illicit outflows.

South Africa faces its worst challenge since liberation. The social compact that has come to define this liberation is no longer holding. Amidst these challenges, South Africa is confronted with a crisis of leadership. Across all political parties, the leadership elite is absorbed in its own issues. Whether it is the difficulty of building a non-racial platform, or an honest left alternative, or, a broad church capable of marshalling all social and class forces towards national interests, our political elites are consumed by short term personal and economic interest, putting our national liberation project in peril. This is the context to the state capture, and responses to it. Otherwise, how are we to understand the failure to appoint the best people to lead a turn-around in government, the policy *inertia*, and the divisions besetting the ruling party? How are we to understand the changing alliances in local government and the daily flip-flopping we are subjected to by our political leaders.

The leadership crisis is by no means restricted to politics, it extends to trade unions, business, and the church! Our people eat dog meat, and drink petrol as a form of devotion to God.

For many years at the Competition Commission we have been uncovering cartels spanning basic food products such as bread, milk and eggs, infrastructure related goods and services like construction, cement, steel, plastic to essential inputs like fertiliser. Interestingly for you, we are pursuing book publishers for fixing prices and preventing online publishers from gaining traction. At any one time, the Competition Commission has a roll of no less than 200 cases of transgressions. We are currently releasing a provisional report on data prices, which shows that South African prices are not only higher than comparative countries, but also anti-poor. We are looking at the costs of private healthcare and have a provisional report that shows that prices have been rising at concerning rates and the market has failed. We are looking at competition for retail space in shopping, which is uncovering why our people are not able to gain access into shopping mall and why locals are unable to compete with foreign national in this sector. Business has more recently been rocked by the Steinhoff accounting scandal leading to loss in billions of investors' money. Accounting firms, consulting and legal firms have been implicated in state capture related scandals. So far there has been no collective action or response from business.

Should all of these make us despondent, when our ancestors declared their freedom on the mouth of a canon? I mention all of these because out of adversity usually comes the most beautiful minds, the rarest courage, all essential ingredients as we build a socially caring South Africa, Africa and the world. This is beautifully captured by the late President Nelson Mandela in his autobiography, "Whether that comes from nature or nurture, I cannot say. Part of being optimistic is keeping one's head pointed toward the sun, one's feet moving forward. There were many dark moments when my faith in humanity was sorely tested, but I would not and could not give myself up to despair. That way lays defeat and death." We can build it ourselves!

Our struggle is not short of heroes and heroines, you know them and their legendary tales. You know from here Nxele and Maqoma, you know Jabavu and Rubusana, you know Calata and Govan Mbeki, you know Mandela, Tambo and Sisulu, you know

Sobukwe and Steve Biko, Chris Hani...I cannot count them all! What the South African struggle misses is YOU. We will build it ourselves!

So, what is to be done?

Ethical leadership

Leadership is the most common denominator of all successful countries. Given where we are, South Africa needs visionary, principled competent and value-based leadership. We cannot pray without action, we must build SA ourselves.

Universities, especially student leadership is the breeding ground for future leaders. That is why, when as students go on strike, however noble your cause maybe, it is stressful to see you burning a university. We worry about the university, a legacy of our people, we worry about resources needed to rebuild it, but we also ask ourselves, what kind of future leaders is Fort Hare breeding, leaders who burn a university.

Political Activism

I have previously commented that what we cannot build a sustainable democracy where our best brains get to work for the private sector, the average for government, and the worst become politicians. In the old city of Athens there was once a thriving democracy, but it was taken over by oligarchs, who unleashed a reign of terror. Athenian democrats fought the oligarchs and replaced their rule with democracy. However replaced generals on the basis of loyalty to democracy over merit. The city was invaded from the outside and fell, leading to a crushing end of the Athenian Empire, as the weak generals could neither defend the citizens from 'barbarians', nor defend the city. Democracy need the best generals in the front. But we cannot complain if we do not get our hands dirty building South Africa by ourselves.

Economy

The Eastern Cape, and South Africa offers vast opportunities. Let me mention a few especially in relation to local economic development;

Manufacturing

The province is well positioned for export led manufacturing, with two commercial harbours and IDZ's. This has attracted global investors into our region. These investors are often under obligations, and sometimes in response to commercial realities, to procure inputs from local suppliers. We need to maximise our exploitation of this opportunities to create more light industrial manufacturing. There are also various financial and other incentives for manufacturing. This sector is able to absorb unskilled or semi-skilled labour at descent salaries.

Agriculture

Agriculture still hold potential for unskilled labour absorption in rural areas, as it is key for food security. The Eastern Cape is a net importer of agricultural products. This should not be the case. This city should be a gate way for agricultural produce from hinterland. We must get people back to working the land and revive irrigation schemes. But we must also recognise new ways of farming, and the importance of scale. This means more collaboration and coordination is needed, at the same zeal we are seeing in advocacy for hemp farming, the same zeal for which we want the land restored to its rightful ownwers.

Knowledge Economy

The knowledge economy lies at the centre the 4th industrial revolution and is the base for the entire economy. With a cable connecting East London to Europe the eastern cape will become a gateway for communication with G5 capabilities, but it needs to prepare its people for this economy. This is not is some distant future, digitalisation is already displacing workers whilst creating new opportunities.

Oceans Economy

South Africa has a large coastline in the world relative to its size. However, much of it remains untapped. The Eastern Cape hardly features in the fishing sector in South Africa, and it is high time to demand fishing rights and insist on local processing of fish. We must also teach children about the ocean and the opportunity it presents.

Tourism

The Eastern Cape's rich heritage is a foundation for sustainable tourism in our province. The Eastern Cape, for an example, has no tourism around its cultural practises such as ulwaluko, or an equivalent of incwala in KZN, or even a battle site tourist route. Fort Hare, itself, lies at the epicentre of this cultural heritage.

Education

Education holds the Eastern Cape and South Africa's greatest potential. We have old renowned schools that are or used to be centres of excellence. We must rebuild these institutions. However, there are two things that need to happen in education. We must get the basics right. We must have teachers at school and learning every school day, and this must be the number one goal. Equally, we must focus on the quality of education for the kind of world we have to prepare our children for.

We have the fortune of a legacy of four universities. But the universities are not preparing students for the future economy. The skills we are producing are no longer relevant for coding, AI, graphic designers, game developers, machine learning, algorithms, drone piloting, etc. The future is now! Universities have to relook at their offerings. The fourth industrial revolution is in not in some distant future. It has started creating massive opportunities but also displacement of workers and business in South Africa as we speak.

It is time to make studying 'lit' as you young people would say☺. Making education fashionable must be your rallying call and you must also rally others in your communities. You will be surprised the potential impact which you could have on your communities by being there as a role model/encourager to your fellow youth.

I challenge you to identify 2 to 3 other young people from your community and take them under your wings. Help connect them to the different resources which are available. We can build it by ourselves. We have to build our communities, and our country, ourselves.

In conclusion

We must act with the same determination that drove our forebears in building our nation. They turned prison gates into centres of learning. They turned community funerals into lecture rooms and incubators of hope. They revived people's dreams, and inspired others to move beyond their fears. They were able to provide action where there was hesitation, optimism where there was cynicism, determination where there was floundering to realize a better tomorrow.

Impuma Koloni yaziwa ngokukhalipha nobugorha

Izinja zayo ziyawulanda umkhondo

Amagqirha ayo ayawubona umhlola

Kungani ngoko satshabalala?

Let us build South Africa by ourselves!