



**Ministry Justice and Correctional Services
Republic of South Africa**

Minister of Justice and Correctional Services Ronald Lamola (MP)

**On the occasion of the Black Lives Matter Debate in the Parliament of South
Africa 18 August 2020**

House Chairperson;

Our resolve as a nation has never been tested as during the pandemic of COVID-19 that is ravaging the entire globe. We stood firm, resilient and united as a nation for the past five months. This resilience is what must carry us going forward. Standing together, we can triumph, we have shown that we are people of courage and determination. This stood true to the values espoused in the preamble of our constitution when it states:

“Recognize the injustices of our past; Honour those who suffered for justice and freedom in our land; Respect those who have worked to build and develop our country; and Believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity.”

Honourable Members

When we speak of BlackLivesMatter, we must understand that it is part of our historical legacy. We live in a world where colonialism, the legacy of racist capitalism and its pervasive racial inequality still persist. As W.E Du Bois argued in 1903 that ***the problem of the twenty- first century is the problem of the colour-line.***

As a nation united in our diversity, Proteas Fastbowler, Lungi Ngidi, reminds us that the road to total transformation is incomplete, moreover when some amongst us are committed to the status quo. Who can with a clean conscious, disagree with Ngidi when he says: **“As a nation, we have a past which [is steeped] in racial discrimination, we need to take this very seriously and like the rest of the world is doing, take a stand.”**

Faf Du Plessis, our former Proteas national captain could not have said it ***better when he said, we cannot assert that all lives matter unless black lives matter.*** The black lives protests in cricket yearns for our solutions. The cries of retired world renowned cricketers such as Makhaya Ntini, calls for close scrutiny of the underlining systematic racism in sports and society in general.

This are also the experiences of Black professionals in South Africans in boardrooms and in all the commanding heights of the economy. This are the class and race contradictions we must resolve as a nation. Generations after us should not be debating this matter, they should be counting the progress we've made.

We must borrow from Sol Plaatjie when he said, **the regeneration of Africa belongs to this new and powerful period! *By this term regeneration, I wish to be understood to mean the entrance into a new life, embracing the diverse phases of a higher complex existence.***

BlackLivesMatter must introduce a new life in our fight against racism and in our commitment to build a new nation.

Our developing nation, with its young democracy, is a direct beneficiary of tangible international solidarity. For instance, our Cuban brothers and sisters have been on our side in any war. Today, their solidarity and expertise are being utilized in the fight against COVID-19. Our Solidarity with Cuba goes as far back as the Battle of Cuitoavale, hundreds laid their lives on the line for our freedom. It is against this background that we support the call by the Italians to award the Cubans the noble peace price for their role in the fight against COVID-19 in the world.

Honourable Speaker

The battle for our liberation, has always been linked to the struggle for Civil Rights in the USA. Martin Luther King called the Sharpeville Massacre “a tragic and shameful expression of man’s inhumanity to man”. He further argued that it “should also serve as a warning signal to the United States where peaceful demonstrations are also being conducted by student groups.

As result, we as citizens deploy violence instead of dialogue. Our law enforcement agencies are creatures of society, and so our criminal justice reformation is critical. The implementation of the Farlam Commission recommendations will help to confront and resolve some of these challenges.

House Chairperson;

Our relatively young democracy works for the people of South Africa, its challenges are not insurmountable. One of the legacies we have inherited is the psychological brutality of apartheid.

Honourable Chairperson

Given our difficult past, our continuous task as we develop our democracy is to ensure that we build communities with a shared national identity, a well-defined collective heritage, and a common fate as called for in the preamble of our constitution. In other words it is our historical mission to address the National Question.

This is consistent with our National Development Plan, which, recognizes that ***social cohesion needs to anchor progress in deracialising ownership and control of the economy without reducing poverty and inequality, transformation will be superficial.***

This ultimately means that we must reject those amongst us who try to individualize South Africans along racial, tribal and gendered lines. Most importantly, we must become society where those who have been historically disadvantaged as a direct of the legacy of our past, are not told to forget it, because it is simply in the past.

Black lawyers and black professionals in general should feel that their lives matters too in their professions.

Our history speaks for itself, to this very day, undoing the legacy of apartheid requires us to collectively redefine our future whilst acknowledging the harms of the past. In this way, BlackLivesMatter becomes a global social justice movement that forces many amongst us to particularly commit to the new South Africa in a manner which rebuilds a nation.

In recent years, we have shown that we can repurpose apartheid imagery for our democratic project. Consider the site where the nation's top legal minds gather to enhance the constitution, the Constitutional Hill. It is the very same place in which a total of 156 people, including Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo, were arrested and held at the prison complex before the historic Treason Trial in 1956.

Two years later, 2 000 women -- Winnie Madikizela-Mandela and Albertina Sisulu among them – were detained after protesting against the pass laws. The Anti-Pass Campaign of 1960 saw additional prisoners incarcerated, and many school-goers below the age of 18 were arrested after the student uprisings of 1976.

And yet today, the very same place where our heroes and heroines languished for our freedoms, is a site of Constitutionalism. South Africa's unparalleled accomplishments on constitutionalism and democracy, are an attachment of how unity of purpose can triumph over a legacy of fragmentations characterized by decades of undermining black lives in the country.

The pessimism by some among us, belies the obvious truth that our transformation agenda and national democratic society is progressing well. This enables social

cohesion and nation building in the country. We seek to unite the country, while our opponents want to break all the gains of freedom and democracy.

While on our way to recovery, we must crush any pitfalls of consciousness such as corruption in our quest to rebuild the economy. We must show no mercy to the corrupt, the law must take its course, even if it comes at the pain of our friends, colleagues, brothers, sisters, or anyone for that matter. Let justice be done though heavens may fall. We must refuse the imprint of corruption to be our collective identity as a nation. We must isolate acts of corruption and those that are found to be on the wrong side of the law, the law must take its course. This must not derail us from rebuilding the nation during and post COVID-19.

House Chairperson, it is a national shame that incidences of racism still confront us, but we have shown firm commitment to address this, among other initiatives, the hate crimes bill is awaiting the pronouncement of the constitutional court to be taken forward in this house.

Honourable Members

As former President Mbeki advises us, ***the global experience stretching over a long period of time, demonstrates that the creation of a constitutional and legal framework for the suppression of racism is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition to end the violation of human rights. Accordingly, a constitutional and legally guaranteed right to equality and nondiscrimination is very important to the fight against racism.***

May I add, this is one of the greatest victories of our liberation struggle to date.

We should draw lessons from our past and work to build on what has been achieved in the struggle against racism.

As we emerge from this Covid-19 pandemic where we are staring poverty, inequality and unemployment at the face, we have to mobilize the might of our nation against these challenges which pose as another pandemic staring at us.

It is not time to falter or to lose hope, it is time to roll our sleeves and build the economy and create much needed jobs.