



**MINISTRY: FINANCE
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SPEECH BY THE MINISTER OF FINANCE, TREVOR A MANUEL

**THE DAVID WYNNE LECTURE
SOMERSET COLLEGE**

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*I know that none dare challenge me when I say - I am an African.
I owe my being to the Khoi and the San whose desolate souls haunt the great expanses of the beautiful Cape - they who fell victim to the most merciless genocide our native land has ever seen, they who were the first to lose their lives in the struggle to defend our freedom and dependence and they who, as a people, perished in the result.*

I am formed of the migrants who left Europe to find a new home on our native land. Whatever their own actions, they remain still, part of me.

In my veins courses the blood of the Malay slaves who came from the East. Their proud dignity informs my bearing, their culture a part of my essence. The stripes they bore on their bodies from the lash of the slave master are a reminder embossed on my consciousness of what should not be done.

I am the grandchild of the warrior men and women that Hintsa and Sekhukhune led, the patriots that Cetshwayo and Mphephu too to battle, the soldiers Moshoeshoe and Ngungunyane taught never to dishonour the cause of freedom.

I am the grandchild who lays fresh flowers on the Boer graves at St Helena and the Bahamas, who sees in the mind's eye and suffers the suffering of a simple peasant folk, death, concentration camps, destroyed homesteads, a dream in ruins.

Being part of all of these people, and in the knowledge that none dare contest that assertion, I shall claim that – I am an African.¹

In many respects this powerful statement clarified the fact that we, as South Africans, are a nation forged by people from all over the world – but we are, and must claim ourselves as Africans. So, each one of should declare _ I am an African.

¹ Deputy President Thabo Mbeki in Parliament on the Occasion of the Adoption of the “Republic of South Africa Constitution Bill, 1996”, Delivered on 08 May 1996.

This historical fact is defining for us. Our South African-ness is something we must claim and an identity that we must respect. It is a respect that we must all demonstrate by the active claiming of that distinct identity and by participating in the shaping of this nation.

Many countries have an oath of allegiance. The United States of America, for example, requires its citizens to recite, "I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands: one Nation under God, indivisible, with Liberty and Justice for all." In fact there is a further pledge in the USA that requires a promise to bear arms on behalf of the United States, to perform non-combatant service in the armed forces, and a series of similar commitments. The shorter version is recited in schools across the country very frequently.

In Australia, there is a Pledge of Commitment that requires its citizens to recite, "From this time forward, under God, I pledge my loyalty to Australia and its people, whose democratic beliefs I share, whose rights and liberties I respect, and whose laws I will uphold and obey."

As South Africans, our pledge is to our Constitution, its values and its principles. It is used when people acquire South African citizenship and it reads, " I,....., do hereby solemnly declare that I will be loyal to the Republic of South Africa, promote all that will advance it and oppose all that may harm it, uphold and respect its Constitution and commit myself to furtherance of the ideals and principles contained therein."

It is only recited by new citizens. The rest of us are meant to be good citizens, well aware of our responsibilities. As President John F Kennedy once said, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." We have to ask, what can I do to make this country truly great.

The commitments we make are much softer than that of many other countries, but we should not ignore the value of this softer approach. It is a conscious effort to ensure that we all take ownership together to create this sense of space, place and respect.

Our Constitution starts with the words,
*We, the people of South Africa,
Recognise 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.*

You will all be aware that the motto on our Coat of Arms reads, "*!Ke E:/Xarra //Ke*". These words, drawn from one of the ancient Khoi-San languages, called /Xam says, "Diverse people unite".

Our task, as young South Africans is to give form and substance those very important messages and symbols. In doing so, there are some aspects that appear confusing. On the one hand, the Constitution accords political rights – to form parties, to contest elections and to vote, to all its citizens, over the age of eighteen. So, in the political sense, we all have total equality.

The big challenge arises when we try and implement measures to give effect to those words from our Constitution that read, "We recognise the injustices of the past." The difficulty is that under apartheid, the rights to ownership and control of every aspect of the economy vested almost exclusively in the hands of white men. We must therefore work to

ensure that we can, as part of building this democracy, deracialise the ownership of the economy.

Twelve years after the establishment of democracy, the picture is still not very pretty. If we look at the statistics for Directors of the Top 100 Companies in South Africa – there are 2 489 Directors, of whom 202 are women (105 White Women and 97 Black women) and of remaining 2 287 Directors, 351 are Black men. In other words, 1 936 of the 2 489 Directors are White men. And, of all the 384 companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, only 1% have women as Chief Executive Officers. The same holds true for certain professions, such as Chartered Accountants, of whom there were 25 346, at last count. Of the total, only 5 827 (23 %) are women, and of this number, 4 826, or 83% are White Women. Of the 19 519 male Chartered Accountants, 17 600 , or 90% are White men.

I am sure that you will all share with me in recognising that from your own experiences in class, it would be quite incorrect to infer that either Blacks or women are less capable of excelling at particular subjects. I would even guess that in most instances the top students in Mathematics or Science are girls. If this is correct, then the poor representation of Blacks and Women in key positions in the economy can surely not be as a result of nature, it would then have to be a consequence of what our Constitution refers to as “the injustices of the past”.

If we recognise this fact, as the Constitution requires that we do, we have to act to correct it. This presents us with a difficult but necessary task. As a government, we have debated this issue at great length and concluded that, since it will not self-correct, the process must be assisted. This process is called “Employment Equity”.

There is an Act of Parliament called the Employment Equity Act that sets as its purpose “To achieve equity in the workplace by

- a) promoting equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment through the elimination of unfair discrimination; and
- b) implementing affirmative action measures to redress the disadvantages in employment experience by designated groups, in order to ensure their equitable representation in all occupational categories and levels in the workforce.”

The Employment Equity Act says that :

“designated groups means black people, women and people with disabilities” and also says that “black people is a generic term which means Africans, Coloureds and Indians”. So, it is clear that this Act is a measure to deal with the injustices of our past, by focusing on better opportunities.

There are a further set of measures contained in another Act of Parliament entitled the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Act that seeks “to facilitate broad-based black economic empowerment by a) promoting economic transformation in order to enable meaningful participation of black people in the economy : and b) achieving a substantial change in the racial composition of ownership and management structures and the skilled occupations of existing and new enterprises”

These are very difficult issues, yet they are necessary to ensure that we can build a South Africa whose fortunes and future we all share, regardless of our own personal history of advantage or disadvantage.

Similar issues arise in the context of sport, where we really must work to ensure that we have greater representativity of race in our national teams to ensure that we can all support the teams, raise our flags in respect of the teams and together share in the glory of

victory or the pain of defeat. Again, this is a very difficult task – there may be players who consider themselves good enough to make the team, but feel overlooked in the interests of representativity. This is exceedingly difficult – but it will get much better as we ensure an equalisation of opportunities from early in the lives and development of the talents and skills of all of our people.

I want to assure all of you that contrary to what you may hear occasionally – this is not apartheid in reverse. It is a painful but necessary set of actions that we must live through to ensure that we build a durable democracy in South Africa where our nationhood will be shared by our children and grandchildren. It is perhaps best described in Afrikaans where the words for what we seek to achieve are *Regstellende Aksie*, literally translated as “corrective action”.

I raise these matters with yourselves – you are a generation of teenagers, most of you are from distinctly privileged backgrounds and none of you would have been responsible for, or even grown up with formal apartheid. Many of you will feel hard done by – some of you may even be of the view that you are being overlooked. But I raise these matters with you, difficult as they are, because I fervently believe that if you understand the challenges before us, if you accept yourselves as South Africans, if you commit to a better future for all citizens of our country, you will assist us in addressing these very difficult matters. We have no room for failure. Former President Nelson Mandela said at his Inauguration as President on 10 May 1994 – remember that he was the first President of a democratic South Africa- *“Out of the experience of an extraordinary human disaster that lasted too long, must be born a society of which all humanity will be proud. Our daily deeds as ordinary South Africans must produce an actual South African reality that will reinforce humanity’s belief in justice, strengthen its confidence in the nobility of the human soul and sustain all our hopes for a glorious life for all.*

Let us build such a reality, together as proud South Africans, and as Africans all.

Thank you.