

Full Speech by Herman Mashaba
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To Save South Africa We Need to Act As One

DATE: 29 August 2020 **RELEASE:** Immediate

Sanibonani,
Goeie More,
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Avuxeni,
Ndaa!

Good Morning South Africa.

As a people, we have travelled a long and difficult journey.

After our painful and divided past we emerged into the light of democracy with hopes and dreams and a belief in the prospect of building a new country.

I remember feeling a sense of pride when I could stand in a long queue with my diverse fellow South Africans to vote in 1994. I was finally a citizen in the country of my birth.

I believed we would see an explosion of opportunity as the shackles of our past had been broken by great men and women who had achieved the impossible in South Africa.

But, like you, I came to see how our country fell into the hands of evil people, people who inflicted pain and suffering on the people of our country through their greed and failure.

26 years into our democracy, South Africans are suffering.

We suffer from the highest levels of inequality.

We suffer from an economy that does not grow, leaving 10 million people unemployed and families destroyed by the stress of hunger.

We suffer from levels of crime that leave law-abiding citizens living in fear while criminals roam our streets with impunity.

We suffer from an education system that grooms our young people for nothing better than unemployment.

We suffer from racial division and hatred, and betrayal of the promise that every South African is equal and valued.

We suffer from a government that has taken us backwards, not forwards; that loots the funds meant to deliver opportunity, dignity and services to the people of our country.

We suffer greatly as a people.

But, my fellow South Africans,

If there is one thing I know about the South African people, it is that we are resilient.

We have endured hardship and have prevailed.

We succeed in spite of our government and not because of it.

We believe, even when there is little to believe in.

And let me tell you today, we are the majority in our country.

We are not the radicals who hate and sow divisions amongst us.

We are not the criminals, the extremists, the corrupt, or the racists.

We are the good, hard-working, law-abiding, family-oriented and freedom-loving people of our beloved country.

We are the South Africans who love our country, hate what has been done to it, but have given up on the political system because it does not give us cause for hope.

We are the greater people of this country, the silent ones, the unseen and ignored.

We are black, we are white, we are indian, we are coloured, we are young, we are old, we live in cities, we live in villages, we are heterosexual, we are LGBTQI, we are men, we are women, and we all have had enough!

Because we have been silent for so long, we've given power to the noise of the few who claim to speak for us.

But not anymore, our voices are rising and rising.

We are ready to take action and take back the future of our country.

There is nothing as powerful in this world than that moment when good people realise that they are the majority, and stand together to change the course of history as one.

Today, I stand before you to offer you hope in the face of our despair.

I stand before you today to launch a new future for our country in the face of our national depression.

I stand before you today to tell you, with a deep sense of conviction, that we will emerge from the depths of our despair and enter a new age of prosperity.

Make no mistake, it will not be easy.

We face the grim prospect of 3 to 7 million more South Africans joining the ranks of the unemployed in the wake of Covid-19.

We face trade unions that will protect their members at the expense of the unemployed.

We face political parties who will want to divide us because they are threatened by the positive change that we threaten to bring.

However, if there is one thing that I have learnt by engaging South Africans through The People's Dialogue, it is that together we will overcome and prevail.

Today I am proud to announce the values which, together, we have carved into the foundation of bedrock on which our vision for South Africa will be built.

We stand with the majority of South Africans for a non-racial future.

I affirm today this non-negotiable truth, that every South African has an equal and intrinsic value, no less and no more than any other.

Racism diminishes the equality and worth of a South African and sets back progress in our country.

It has no place in this new party and it has no place in our country.

When I started my business at the age of 22, many people won't know that I partnered with a white Afrikaner from Boksburg and an Indian from Laudium. In the mid-1980's, when it was illegal to do this, we succeeded together to build a successful business.

This is the dream I have for South Africa.

Together with you, we stand for social justice.

I want to share a story with you, the day my heart broke for the millions of people in our country living without dignity.

While campaigning in Alexandra in Johannesburg in 2016, I came across a young woman.

She had all the qualities that would have placed her in any boardroom if only life had been fair to her.

She invited our delegation into her shack and I noticed she had no toilet facilities anywhere nearby.

I asked her; "How do you survive without a toilet?" She replied that "I have trained my body to only need the toilet at my place of work."

We cannot fulfil our destiny of a non-racial future, as long as the brutal legacy of our history continues to persist like this, a history that deprives too many of our fellow South Africans of even the most basic of life's dignities.

We cannot sit back and allow our fellow South Africans to live in squalor in informal settlements across our country. We are going to reclaim our cities from criminal elements and offer these buildings to the private sector to build affordable accommodation for our people, students and small businesses.

BBBEE has not served anyone but the wealthy, politically-connected elite over and over and over again.

It must be put in its rightful place in the rubbish dump of our history!

And must be replaced with a massive programme of investment into education and opportunity in areas where communities suffer from the legacy of our unjust past.

We believe in the transformative power of education.

Despite spending one of the highest percentages of our budget on education, our education system is ranked as one of the worst, particularly in the critical subjects of maths and science.

We will launch an education revolution in South Africa, with a new curriculum that raises a nation of employers and not just employees.

We are going to focus on investing in Early Childhood Development Centres to prepare and equip every child in South Africa at an early start in education.

Small business development and the skills of future jobs will become a focus in our schools, along with efforts to teach young men about respecting and protecting the women of our country.

SADTU will learn that we, the majority of this country, choose our children over them, and teachers and principals will be performance managed.

We, the majority of this country, stand for economic prosperity for all South Africans.

I personally know the power of economic freedom.

I grew up in the rural village of Garamotse, Hammankraal in the north of Pretoria. I know the pains of hunger!

I started my business at the age of 22 and have enjoyed the freedom that arose from my hard work.

This is my dream for all South Africans.

Unemployment is destroying our country. Over 10 million of our fellow citizens live without the dignity that comes with work with millions more projected to join their ranks after this pandemic.

When our citizens are unemployed, and they become dependent on the state to survive, their dignity and self-worth is destroyed.

Children grow up not seeing their parents going to work and the family unit becomes devastated. With this our country grows weaker and weaker! We must change this.

We will lead the revitalisation of the South African economy through a clear, decisive and uncompromising implementation of sound policies that will deliver the promise of a prosperous and shared future.

We will reform the labour laws of our country and end the stranglehold that trade unions have over our government. Trade unions are a key stakeholder, just like any other, but they will not have a veto right of our economic destiny.

We must make it easier for businesses to hire more of our citizens because we cannot protect what will soon be a minority of employed people at the expense of the majority of unemployed people.

We will remove every barrier in the way of small businesses and we will actively support them.

One stop-shops will be created, just as we did in Johannesburg, where small businesses can receive all the help they need to get started.

We will ensure access to finance through government insured loans through commercial banks, and we will offer tax incentives to all small businesses.

The cornerstone of our economic offer will be the establishment of free trade zones located near areas of high unemployment. We must end the era of believing the world owes us something and offer the investment incentives that makes South Africa an attractive place to invest.

We will not treat the private sector as adversaries but as partners in the work of employing every, single South African.

When I was growing up, I remember the industrial areas of Babelegi, Garankuwa, Mogwasi, XwaXwa, Seshego and other areas across the country. In these communities, the only people who did not work were those who did not want to work.

Today these communities sit with unemployment levels approaching 80% and youth who sit on street corners without purpose in their lives.

These state-owned industrial areas are full of factories that lie empty, abandoned and derelict. A sad reminder of an era when South Africa was a manufacturing hub. We must change this.

We will take these abandoned factories, and we will put them out to the private sector with incentives to recommission them and employ people from these communities.

These areas will once again become hubs of economic activity. We will soon commission a study through one of the leading universities so that this plan can be put into action on our first day in office.

We will invest heavily in universities, FET, nursing and teachers' colleges as well as vocational schools so that every young South African has access to a set of skills that they can put to use in improving their lives.

For any of this to happen, we have to reorganise the national budget.

In this future I speak of, there is no room for State Owned Entities that need bailouts!

There is no room for cadre deployment that employs ANC cadres.

There is no room for a cabinet of 70-odd people, and there will be no room for the vast VIP protection services and lavish lifestyles.

We, the majority of this nation, stand resolutely for the Rule of Law.

Our country has degenerated into a society where law abiding citizens live in fear while the corrupt and the violent fear nothing. We must change this.

Our police force needs to be restructured to become a modern crime fighting machine. We need more policemen and women.

We need to resource our detective units and modernise our investigative capacity. We have to remove the political interference that cripples our police.

Our court system needs to be resourced and expanded so that the pace of justice is sped up.

A system of elected regional heads of the NPA must be introduced so that we, the people of South Africa, can hold them to account for prosecutorial performance.

We need specialised units to tackle priority crimes in South Africa, including the re-establishment of The Scorpions. These specialised units must follow a prosecutorial style of investigation and must be supported by similarly specialised units in the NPA and our court system.

One thing I can guarantee you, as someone notorious for saying what I mean and meaning what I say, is that I hate corruption with a passion!

Corruption cannot be fought with rhetoric or platitudes, but only with action.

I did this in Johannesburg with a professional unit that investigated over 6000 cases, involving more than R35 billion in expenditure, and effected more than 800 arrests.

If you want this throughout our country, and if you want to see politicians in jail for corruption, or the likes of the Gupta's extradited to face trial in South Africa – then you have found your political home!

Like all of you, I have grown tired of the cases of repeat offenders being released on parole and committing rape and murder again.

In the coming months, our party will consider this question and perhaps it is time to consider, at a minimum, throwing away the key for those who are found guilty of gender based-violence, rape or murder.

I am tired of the rights of criminals who kill and rape over and over again, being given a stronger voice than the murdered and raped young women who would still be with us today if their murderers had not been released from prison.

In the interim, we believe that private prosecution is the route to pursue whilst our criminal justice is still captured.

Our party stands for an end to illegal immigration, and we stand firm on this.

We are a sovereign country and, as such, we have borders.

Despite this we have not met the expectations of our own citizens and, therefore, cannot possibly meet the expectations of citizens of other nations who are here illegally as well.

We have the right and legal obligation to our citizens to determine who may enter our country and for what reason. These are not only our laws, but the laws of most self-respecting nations in the world.

I stand against xenophobia and there is no place for this or any type of hatred in our party or in our country.

So, let me be clear: we want the people of the world to come to South Africa to work, vacation and invest.

But, when people enter South Africa they must meet two very reasonable requirements. Firstly, they must enter our country legally and, secondly, they must obey our laws once here.

This should not be negotiable!

My fellow South Africans,

We have a crisis taking place across our border.

For years our government has watched while ZANU-PF destroyed a country once capable of feeding much of Southern Africa.

This crisis impacts our country deeply, and it is now time for a new approach. It is time for hard diplomacy!

We must adopt the strongest and harshest policies against an oppressive government, and not punish the people of Zimbabwe.

This should start by freezing the assets of ZANU-PF leaders in South Africa and banning them from entering our country until there is real reform in that beloved country.

We cannot stand for justice, dignity and human rights while ignoring this crisis across our border.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We commit to deal decisively with drug syndicates that destroy the future of our vulnerable youth, and in the process, destroy our families.

We will deal with them in the only language they understand: with force.

We also believe in dealing decisively with criminal syndicates destroying our country's infrastructure.

It angers me to watch as our rail network is being openly destroyed on daily basis while our people are being failed by our public transport system.

And it angers me to see our electricity infrastructure being looted when our people live in darkness.

This too must change.

Along with you, we stand for electoral reform.

South Africans must vote directly for their President, Members of Parliament, Premiers and their Mayors.

They should do so in a constituency-based system that forces political parties to put forward credible candidates, not the career politicians that sit in our parliament representing their ambitions and not our needs.

If we did this as a country, we would be able to hold elected officials accountable and *what* candidates offer would be more important than *which party they represent*.

While we fight for this change in legislation, we will not just talk this principle, but we will live it too. We will put words into action!

Our candidates who contest elections will not be chosen in back rooms by our party. They will be chosen by you, the people of South Africa through a system of direct democracy in the form of primary elections.

Candidates who apply to be public servants, will campaign in their wards, and when the time comes, those who have registered with us, will be asked to vote to choose their candidate for our party in a primary held before election day.

This very same system will be used to performance manage our public representatives. Those who disappoint you will be replaced. Our public representatives must serve you the people.

Along with you, we stand for ethical leadership and a professional public service.

South Africa is filled with promise and potential but we are being held back by greed and corruption, and the looting of state resources meant for basic services. We must change this.

We will hold the public representatives of our party to the highest ethical standards and ensure that we declare corruption as Public Enemy Number 1. This is not negotiable.

We will act to professionalise the public sector to ensure that we build a capable and efficient state that serves the interests of the South African people, and not career politicians and deployed cadres.

Public sector appointments should be based on merit, competence and a commitment to ethical service to the people.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

These are our values, forged in partnership with millions of South Africans.

It is an unbreakable bond which will never change, while will never shift and will never be forgotten, because it was forged with you.

We will not be an opposition party! South Africa has many opposition parties, but it has no government in waiting!

The opposition has failed in South Africa because they lack broad appeal and they do not offer a viable prospect of unseating the ANC. We will change this.

Where we contest next year, we will win!

Where we win, we will govern for the benefit of all South Africans, and we will make this our offer to all of South Africa in 2024.

My father passed away when I was 2 years old, and my mother was a domestic worker in Johannesburg. I was raised by my sisters and my grandfather.

It was my grandfather who taught me, “listen to what people say, but trust only what they do.”

This is why I say to you today, the time for talk is now over.

My fellow South Africans,

It is now time to reveal the name and identity of our new party. Now is the time for action!

<Reveal of ActionSA>

Now that the time for talking is over, and the era of Action is upon us, I stand before you to dedicate this new party to you, the people of our country.

Before I proceed, I would like to call my family on stage, to thank them.

I would not be standing here today without their unwavering support of our shared vision to fix South Africa.

We will achieve nothing as individuals or as a country without strong families.

This I know for sure!

I am blessed by a family that has backed our endeavours – supporting me through this difficult and time-consuming journey – and for leading the way in resourcing this effort.

My beloved wife, Connie, our children, Nkhensani and Rhulani, I thank you personally for your sacrifice and support, and on behalf of all South Africans who believe in the importance of this new party.

They are part of the majority of our people who refuse to give up on our country.

We will no longer be silent.

We will no longer let the corrupt, the racist and the radical few speak on our behalf.

We will no longer allow our country to be destroyed by greed and incompetence.

Let us Act as one against corruption,

And Act as one for a capable and ethical government.

Let us Act as one against unemployment,

And Act as one for jobs and quality education.

Let us Act as one against crime,

And Act as one for the protection of our women and children.

Let us Act as one against growing inequality,

And Act as one for social justice.

Let us Act as one, because actions speak louder than words!

I thank you.

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