

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF THE NELSON MANDELA FOUNDATION

Student protests: a moment to listen and reflect

This article first appeared in today's edition of Business Day.

"I am not an optimist, because I am not sure everything ends well. Nor am I a pessimist, because I am not sure that everything ends badly. I just carry hope in my heart." – Václav Havel

The #FeesMustFall movement by students across the country has given us hope and shown us what is possible if we are determined to do things differently. It has, however, also left us with great concern as the Nelson Mandela Foundation (NMF).

The movement should not come as a surprise to many South Africans. Dialogue work conducted by the NMF and the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation on campuses with young people over the past two years highlighted high levels of frustration and alienation. Worryingly, yet again, physical violence has become the language of engagement. And yet we draw hope from what is unfolding. We need young South Africans to take responsibility for making the South Africa of their dreams. We need young South Africans with enough hope to reach for a better future. South Africa needs action now – from the state, from the academic community, from students – that encourages all of us to carry hope in our hearts.

Disturbing images have flooded our computer and television screens, newspapers and mobile phones as the heavy-handed actions of police responded to a determined student movement. Stories of poor students and parents who battle to make ends meet have flooded Facebook and Twitter. These stories are moving and sad and often follow a similar narrative – people save whatever cash they have to assist family members to get through university and have the opportunity to work, to increase social mobility and to lift families and communities out of poverty.

We've heard the heart-wrenching stories of grandmothers' pensions being used to pay fees, of mothers who toil at low-paying jobs to educate a child whose career will benefit our country, economy and future development. Yet, as the above inflationary fees increase, the pressure placed on those supporting the students increases to unsustainable levels. At the same time, we have witnessed scenes of hope, solidarity and active citizenship. We have seen students forming protective shields to allow others to pray, and have watched white students standing at the front lines to protect others. We have seen students and others working together to clean up after the protests and selflessly volunteering

their time and money for the cause. Most inspiring are students putting education first, setting up mass student study sessions and tutoring services with support from both inside and outside of institutional structures. These are scenes that leave us with hope in our hearts, aware that a better future is possible.

These developments took me back to my own university days, when I went through similar experiences (as did those who went before me). And the vicious cycle continues to play itself out more than 20 years later.

Worried parents, I'm sure, cling to hope as they watch these tragic events unfold and hope that their children can at least write their exams. The protests have again highlighted how historical legacies now determine not only the future of a single generation, but of generations to come. Those without are destined to struggle and fight as rising costs make education unattainable.

The movement and the public discourse that has swirled around it have raised many important questions. Why has transformation in post-apartheid South Africa been so slow? What do we mean by transformation? How do we fix a struggling education system? What has happened to South Africa's capacity for negotiation, dialogue, mediation and peacemaking? In a democracy, what are the limits to protest action? What are the limits to the maintenance of law and order? When, if ever, is violence justifiable? How do we balance immediate needs with long-term strategic objectives? How do we all foster discipline in the context of communities that are enraged?

Something has gone wrong that needs fixing. It's time to ask the hard questions on what's wrong and, importantly, how we fix it. We owe our youth the promise of freedom: of better education, the opportunity that a career affords, of social mobility, of a more vibrant and enriched society, and the chance of a better life. It is one that is tied to our own humanity, dignity and future.

One thing for certain is the current funding that tertiary education is inadequate to meet the needs of growing student numbers at tertiary level. Within the context of reduced budgets and increased student numbers, universities are battling to meet student needs. While progress has been made in terms of selection criteria and access to funding, and student populations are closer

to representing the national demographic, we seem to be sitting on a powder keg of dangerously unrealised dreams. Students are carving a path for their own destiny and are no longer prepared to wait for the natural course of history to recalibrate what's wrong. They want change and they want it now. Best we listen.

We have to keep the option open for a different discussion that may consider creative alternatives to the current status quo, which doesn't appear to be working for the majority of students at higher education institutions.

Now is the time to consider how we improve resources for chronically underfunded tertiary education; what level of fees makes education both accessible and affordable; what role business plays in supporting education; and how we improve relations between students, university authorities and the government to prevent a resort to extreme measures in order to be heard.

At the same time we must be aware of multiple challenges outside of tertiary education – challenges that lie ahead for the country, caught in a cycle of low growth and an expanding deficit. Managing priorities remains a concern as the multitude of challenges in healthcare, education, transport, energy and infrastructure weigh down on a strained fiscus. It is clear there is a need for transparency, innovation and social cohesion in developing the South Africa we imagine.

Education is central to the success of our people and was a priority for Nelson Mandela, who never failed to stress its importance to young people. More recently, Professor Thomas Piketty, in his address at the Nelson Mandela Annual Lecture, highlighted education as one of the most significant factors around the globe in reducing inequality and lifting people out of poverty.

These are lessons we ignore at our peril. We know that South Africa is one of the most unequal countries in the world, and we depend on education to help us rise above these difficulties.

We are concerned about the failure of dialogue, in the great South African tradition, to talk about these difficult issues. Dialogue was used to great effect in our transition, and one would expect that we create the space for meaningful engagements that produce tangible results for our students, institutions of higher learning and our own futures.

The protests signal the growing inability to engage in robust, meaningful and honest dialogue. This is especially apparent when there is a need for a conversation across economic, racial and generational lines. The turn towards continued protest by the youth over the past few years signals the frustration of many in increasingly dire circumstances; the youth have joined many other communities in seeing protest as the only viable form of political communication.

The legacy of Mandela is that we need to be involved in dialogue and conversation to achieve meaningful change. The fact that students needed to disrupt a national gathering to gain the attention of the state signals a problem, as does any response that results in violence.

We call for calm from students, law enforcement agencies and university administrators as we grapple with difficult new developments. We call on students to go back to class and write their exams while we evaluate the gains made thus far. As we continue to engage in constructive dialogue, we have to seek the path that recognises the students' legitimate

concerns, current government and university funding constraints, and innovative solutions. We caution against criminalising protests and any other action that may inflame an already volatile situation.

We assure students that crucial lessons of listening continue to be learned by all. We must continue to listen to pleas of the poor without waiting for violent marches. We must hear concerns of young people and consider their issue serious, not only for their future, but also for ours.

So much of what students protest about is also a reflection of what's wrong with our society. We are here to listen, and the Nelson Mandela Foundation is committed to helping in whatever way it can, along with all the relevant institutions and stakeholders, to find sustainable solutions.

Warm regards,
Sello Hatang



MANDELA, IN HIS OWN WORDS

Nelson Mandela Foundation releases authorised Madiba quotes app

Who said: "Few things make the life of a parent more rewarding and sweet as successful children"?

What about: "A blind pursuit of cheap popularity has nothing to do with revolution"?

Still don't know?

Don't fret, help is at hand.

The Nelson Mandela Foundation has developed and launched the authorised Nelson Mandela Quotations app to bring Madiba's words to the palm of your hand.

The app is available in two formats: a free, lite version and a paid-for premium version. The lite version sends you a daily quote from the world's most inspirational moral leader.

The premium version grants subscribers access to a database of thousands of Mandela quotes – ranging from the value of children and importance of education through to reflections on forgiveness to condemnations of injustice and discrimination – in addition to getting the quote of the day.

[Click here for the full story.](#)



PIKETTY IN SOUTH AFRICA: DEBATES AND DIALOGUES; A CRITICAL EVALUATION

From the 1st to the 3rd of October 2015, the Nelson Mandela Foundation (NMF) hosted Professor Thomas Piketty, renowned economist and author of the bestselling *Capital in the 21st Century*.

The NMF was a partner at events held at the University of Cape Town, the University of the Witwatersrand and the University of Johannesburg. Piketty also served as the speaker at the 13th Nelson Mandela Annual Lecture and provided additional inputs at the Social Partners Dialogue with leaders in business, labour and the state.

The following paper serves as a critical reflection on Piketty's visit, his views on South Africa and the debates which emerged. Whilst not ignoring Piketty's broader work, the focus is on his visit. Further emphasis is placed on themes that were continually reiterated during the dialogues by both panellists as well as the audiences.

[Click here to view the full report.](#)

Overview of the Social Partners Dialogue with Professor Thomas Piketty

Thus far in 2015, South Africa has experienced an electricity supply crisis, labour unrest, a slump in commodity prices, a substantial depreciation of the rand, significantly low producer and consumer confidence ratings, increased crime, and a downward revision of gross domestic product (GDP) growth forecasts from an already low 3% to 2%.

On various levels, such a bleak outlook does not bode well for South Africa, a country which still fights extreme poverty and unemployment after 21 years of democracy, and remains characterised by some of the highest levels of income inequality in the world. The low level of economic growth is unlikely to bring rapid relief to an increasingly impatient society, and there is an urgent need to explore new paradigms of thinking and solutions for South Africa's challenges.

Against this backdrop, the Nelson Mandela Foundation (NMF) invited Professor Thomas Piketty, a well-known French economist, to present the annual Nelson Mandela lecture and participate in a Social Partners Dialogue with business, government and labour on inequality and poverty in South Africa.

[Click here for the full story.](#)

Piketty's Annual Lecture makes the New Yorker

Professor Thomas Piketty's trip to South Africa for the 2015 Nelson Mandela Annual Lecture was featured in the *New Yorker* on 26 October.

[Click here to read the article.](#)



'KEEP GOVERNMENT'S ATTENTION'

Dr Lawrence Carter gives moving talk at the Foundation South Africans must keep the attention of government and continue to hold leadership accountable for current challenges.

This was the call from renowned American academic, activist, pastor and professor at Morehouse College, Dr Lawrence Carter, who spoke at the Nelson Mandela Foundation on 28 October.

His talk on kindness, peace and leadership comes in the midst of protests across the country as students protest under one banner – #FeesMustFall – for fair access to education.

"It is very difficult for us to be kind to those who knowingly, or ignorantly, create moral evil. The perpetuation of poverty in South Africa is moral evil," said Carter.

"Thirty-six percent unemployment among youth aged between 15 and 34 is a powerful example of moral evil. This is a far cry from the economic, political, social and educational justice called for by one of the greatest moral leaders of the last thousand years – Nelson Mandela.

[Click here for the full story.](#)

THE MANDELA INITIATIVE

Since 2012, a university-led national initiative has researched and advocated strategies to overcome poverty and inequality in South Africa. The Nelson Mandela Foundation established a partnership with this project, which was publicly announced during the visit by Professor Thomas Piketty in October.

The project, known as “The Mandela Initiative”, comprises a multidimensional approach to understanding and overcoming poverty and inequality in South Africa. The Mandela Initiative, which is set to run until the end of 2017, is guided by a 32-member think tank, with members from across the country, including those in academia, policy experts, researchers, members of civil society and senior government officials.

[Click here for the full story.](#)

SEQUEL TO MADIBA’S AUTOBIOGRAPHY TO BE PUBLISHED IN 2016

The NMF’s Research and Archive team is assisting with the finalisation for publication of Nelson Mandela’s sequel to his autobiography, Long Walk to Freedom.

Mr Mandela began writing the book he titled The Presidential Years in 1998, but ran out of steam before it could be completed. Nearly half of the envisaged book had been written.

Last year, Mrs Graça Machel reignited the process, and the NMF has assembled a collective led by Joel Netshitenzhe and Tony Trew to edit Mr Mandela’s own text and supplement it with narrative generated from deep research. The project has enjoyed unprecedented access to a range of archival collections, including ANC, parliamentary, presidential and SABC holdings.

The book, expected to be published in mid-2016, will provide readers with unique insight into Mr Mandela’s oversight of government in the period 1994-1999.

We were privileged to work closely with Lungi in 2007 during the making of the exhibition Parenting a Nation: Walter and Albertina Sisulu which launched at the Nelson Mandela Foundation in 2008.

[Click here for the full story.](#)

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www.nelsonmandela.org



CONDOLENCE MESSAGE FROM THE NELSON MANDELA FOUNDATION ON THE PASSING OF MLUNGISI SISULU

“On behalf of our Chairman, Trustees and Staff we at the Nelson Mandela Foundation send our deepest condolences to the family, comrades and friends of Mlungisi Sisulu, son of the late Walter and Albertina Sisulu,” said Sello Hatang, CEO of the Nelson Mandela Foundation.