

**Speech by Deputy Minister Ntopile Kganyago during the
Graduation ceremony held at the University of Limpopo on June
06 2005**

Interim Vice- Chancellor Prof. Mahlo Mokgalong

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Members of the Senate

Deans of Faculties

Parents of Graduates

Graduates

I have been asked to be here today in order to address this great gathering which marks the beginning of a new life for the graduates and their families.

I have been asked to deliver a speech a mere 10 days ahead of the anniversary of the June 16 1976 which in both its extent and content radically changed the course of this country's history. June 16 1976 catapulted the township of Soweto from relative obscurity in the

Southern tip of Africa to symbolic and almost Biblical status internationally.

In discharging this responsibility, I propose to look at the transformation process that has taken place in this country since 1994. I will then look at some of the challenges facing this country over the next decade and thirdly, I will speak about what I see as a possible role that some of the individuals who are graduating here today will play.

We are gathered today under the roof of this hall which is now known as the Onkgopotse Tiro Hall. During a similar occasion, a graduation ceremony in 1972, a young militant named Onkgopotse Abram Tiro delivered a speech in which he used the platform to attack the Bantu Education Act of 1953. During what later became known as the Turfloop Testimony, the then president of the Student Representatives Council (SRC) Tiro said among other things that and I quote:

“The day shall come when we shall be free, when every man and woman will breathe the air of freedom. And when that day shall come, no man, no matter how many tanks he has, shall reverse the course of freedom.”

The authorities of the time expelled Tiro for this very reason and despite the democratic protests of the fellow students, the expulsion stood. Tiro then became history teacher at the now-famous Morris Isaacson High School in Soweto, which was in 1976 to become the

cradle of resistance and a central melting pot for the June 16 1976 resistance.

So the student who was expelled from the old Turfloop University in 1973, was later to become a catalyst for further change when his students played a central role in the June 16 1976 uprising three years later.

This is just one legacy that has placed this university right at the centre of this country's political history particularly the transformation that started with the 1994 democratic elections.

Apart from the political disenfranchisement of Blacks, economically the country was leading to 1994, isolated and the economy in crisis. Growth had declined to below 1% per annum in the decade before 1994 and by the early 1990's had come to a standstill. Public sector debt was ballooning out of control.

The police and justice system violated most human and civil rights and the SA Defence Force was fighting a low-intensity war against the liberation movement. Parts of the country lived under a state of war, and assassinations and bombings of political opponents were rife.

A national security doctrine with little respect for the rule of law determined governance. The state had become more isolated, more corrupt and more dependent on extra-judicial measures to sustain itself.

The question facing all of us today, especially the students who are graduating on this campus is whether there is any reason to be hopeful about this country. This is an important issue because through getting the correct response to this question, we would be on our way towards unleashing our own potential in the development of this country and ultimately the region.

To be able to answer the question of whether those who have hope are justified or not, we must first locate as we have briefly done above, the challenges facing this country within the relevant albeit well known context of our apartheid past. Set against the impediments placed by the apartheid legacy, the challenges may seem more daunting, yet they will also serve to illustrate the extent to which we may yet have to go to achieve our full potential.

In this context, it must be said that one of the roles that academic institutions is to produce graduates who are able to interrogate what may have been established as conventional truths for years and reexamine their veracity in the context of the present.

Because of this ability, graduates must increase the pool of patriots, becoming on their own part of patriotic graduates whose mission is not to spread propaganda on behalf of South Africa but who are equipped to provide objective truths to the world about their country.

This role may well demand of the graduate to turn conventional assumptions on their heads and in that process may well place them in the category of those who are given names by those who have no interest in the promotion of truths about this country. Indeed the criticism will not come just from abroad but will also emanate from inside the country from those who may be less informed than you are and those you will have to educate in the course of your careers.

In the first 10 years of democracy as government we conducted what we call Towards a Ten Year Review document in which we looked at how far we had been able to move the country away from more than 300 years of racial rule.

We found that the state has become a people-centred state and programmes to alleviate poverty such as the Expanded Public Works Programme have brought improvement in the lives of millions.

Social grants, have been equalised and extended to all who are in need and eligible. Beneficiaries of social grants have increased from 2.6 million in 1994 to 5.1 million in 2003 with the poorest 20% of households receive the largest amount from grants.

Adult literacy is up from 83% in 1996 to 89% in 2001, and for 15-24 year olds from 83% to 96%. The matric pass rate has risen from 54% in 1996 to 69% in 2002.

Government's comprehensive response to HIV and AIDS has expanded rapidly. Expenditure has increased ten-fold from R30 million in 1994 to R342 million in 2001/02 and HIV infection, after rapidly increasing in the 1990s, stabilised after 1999 – 22.4% in 1999, 24.5% in 2000, 24.8% in 2001 26.5 in 2002.

Government's economic policies have turned around an economy that was in crisis. Almost continuous growth since 1994 has created jobs, but not enough to keep up with the increased number of people looking for employment.

Government policies have freed resources for social expenditure by reducing the interest we have to pay on debt. The budget deficit fell from 9.5% in 1993 to 1% in 2002/3, and public sector debt from 60% to 50%

Between 1995 and 2002 the number of people employed grew by 1.6 million from 9.6 million to 11.2 million. But the unemployed also grew by 2.4 million because many more people were seeking work. While many unskilled workers are unemployed, there are shortages of skilled workers in many sectors.

That is why it is necessary for programmes such as the EPWP to succeed, because their purpose is to increase the skills pool in the country and in the process close the yawning gap between our skills base and the requirements of the economy.

With regard to empowerment, Black people in top management grew from 12% to 13% between 2000 and 2001; and in senior management from 15% to 16%. Black ownership of public companies was 9.4% in 2002 compared with 3.9% in 1997. This was virtually non-existent before 1994.

Tourism has surged – from 5.7 million international tourist arrivals in South Africa in 1998 to 6.4 million in 2002.

We have also identified the challenges that we face over the next Decade which include the delivery by all three spheres of government requires improvement and progress in economic areas under new agencies or partnerships for example in small business, Human Resource Development, restructuring of State Owned Enterprises, equity and empowerment.

Significantly, since 1993 government's social spending has shifted to the poor. Between 1993 and 1997 social spending increased for the poorest 60% of households – especially the poorest 20% - and decreased for the 40% who are better off. It increased for Africans and decreased for others. It increased in rural areas three times more than metropolitan areas and double other urban areas.

In the past 10 years four social trends shape the challenges ahead. These are the following:

- From 1996 to 2001 the South African population grew 11% from 40.4 million to 44.8 million. But the number of households grew by 30% from 9.7 million to 11.8 million, as households became smaller.
- The number of jobs grew 12% but the economically active population grew 35% between 1995 and 2002. The new job seekers are not only young adults but also older people who in the old order did not consider themselves part of the labour market, many of them African women from rural areas.
- Thirdly, while all main sectors grew between 1995 and 2002, there was a shift from public services, construction and mining to financial and technological services.
- As President Thabo Mbeki has said, the above is creating “two economies” in one country with one that is advanced and skilled, becoming more globally competitive. The second on the other is mainly informal, marginalised and unskilled. Despite impressive gains in the first economy, the benefits have yet to reach the second economy.
- There has also been a shift from rural to big urban areas. 20% of people in the main urban areas are new migrants. This adds pressure on urban service delivery and economic opportunities and causes loss of people and opportunities in rural areas

Against this background it is easy to see the magnitude of the challenges facing our country. If we are to make continued progress towards the fundamental objective of our country and of state policy - a united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society - then we need a major intervention to reinforce the consolidation of democracy with measures aimed at integrating all of society into a growing economy from which they can benefit.

Among some of the challenges facing this country and the questions in your minds is unemployment. Unemployment perpetuates poverty and retards the economic development of our country and people. Together with crime, unemployment perhaps pose the greatest threat to our country.

In this regard two fundamental strategies underpin the government's approach to reducing unemployment. Firstly, to increase economic growth so that the number of net new jobs created starts to exceed the number of new entrants into the labour market.

Secondly it is to improve the education system such that the workforce is able to take up the largely skilled work opportunities which economic growth will generate. Short to medium-term strategies have been put in place to contribute towards these strategies. The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) forms one of government's short to medium-term strategies.

Against this background I must say that we have broadly determined that going forward we will require specific skills in the following areas among others. These are : Auditing, accounting, bioinformatics, biotechnology, actuarial sciences, computer science, mathematical sciences, statistics, demography, geology, microbiology, chemistry, engineering, information systems, physics, transportation studies and tourism among others.

Related to the challenge of unemployment which faces graduates today is what psychologists would call irrational negativity about the prospects of the future. This is based to an extent on the informational overload whose ideological interest is to ensure that Africa, and South Africa as a part of that, remains in the doldrums and is treated as a basket case.

This is despite the fact that Africa has more natural resources than Europe and therefore even on that basis has the greatest potential in it to beat the European Union. The reality is that in spite of this potential, we remain largely relegated, particularly in the mainstream media here and abroad, the continent of Africa still conjures images of death and despair and therefore a basket case. This we must say has much to do with the role that the media plays and also presents a challenge to the graduates today.

The facts are as follows:

- Africa's economies grew by more than 5 percent last year - their biggest expansion in eight years. Central Africa's oil boom spurred 14.4 percent growth for that region.
- Ghana's stock exchange is regularly one of the highest-performing markets in the world; in 2003, it was No. 1, gaining 144 percent, according to one analysis.
- Exports to the US from 37 African nations jumped 88 percent last year, to \$26.6 billion. Jeans made in Lesotho are sold in US stores. Also, flowers from Kenya and vegetables from Senegal are regularly available in European shops.
- Use of cell-phones and the Internet is growing faster in Africa than anywhere else, according to the United Nations.

Rwandan president Paul Kagame told the media this year that negative reporting had cost Africa in terms of Foreign Direct Investment.

He further argued that the negative portrayal hurts Africa's efforts to fix its problems. "One of the reasons why Africa has not been able to attract enough foreign direct investment, which we need for our development, is the constant negative reporting," he added. I totally agree.

We also agree with Carol Pineau a longtime reporter on Africa who says that "Africa has other things going on besides wars and

famines. We make it sound as though there is no economic life in Africa."

According to John Chiahemmen, the chief Reuters correspondent to Southern Africa and chairman of the Foreign Correspondents Association of Southern Africa, "Africa is shifting more and more toward becoming a business story."

In South Africa recently Barclays Bank's spent more than R30 billion buying 60% of South Africa's largest bank, Absa. This is Barclays' biggest investment outside Britain in its 100-year history.

Two South African men who wrote a book called South Africa-The Good News, were tired of negative cocktail talk about South Africa here and abroad mainly by South African citizens.

According to Steuart Pennington and Brett Bowes before 1994 only 63 percent of South Africans were functionally literate. That figure now stands at 80 percent.

The country's notoriously high murder rate has decreased by 25 percent since 1994 and now the country rates in the top 15 percent of the world's economies.

We concur with Charles Stith the former US ambassador to Tanzania who said that racism is may be at the centre of negative perceptions of Africa, including South Africa.

Stith says that China has problems, "but we see and hear other things about China. Russia has problems, yet we see and read other

things about Russia." That same standard, he says, should apply to Africa.

According to Pennington and Bowles, right now, South Africans, both local and abroad, do not demonstrate the kind of passionate patriotism we see in many countries. We are a proud people but are in the habit of focusing on the negative and saying little about the positive."

Why do we not know these important and positive facts about Africa in the international media? The fact is that the majority of us know very little, if anything at all, about the problems afflicting such countries as the UK and the US.

Both countries have had much longer periods of democracy and should we not expect that they do not face the challenges we face in South Africa. Did you know that nearly 13 million people in the UK live in poverty? This amounts to 1 in 4.

Did you know that in the UK people from the Caribbean, Bangladesh and Africa were twice as likely to be unemployed than white Britons three years ago. In 2000/01, more than two-thirds of people originating from Pakistan and Bangladesh were living in poverty.

In 2002 in the US, 34.6 million people lived in poverty, a number higher than the one for the previous year. This amounts to 1 in 8.

14.1 million of these lived in severe poverty. The poverty rate among African Americans was almost 1 to 4, and 1 to 5 among Hispanics.

In 2002, 34.9 million Americans did not have enough food for basic nourishment, compared to 31 million in 1999. In the same year, 2002, the working poor were poorer than this section of the population was in 1979.

A 1990 study of 20 countries showed that Russia, the US and the UK were the worst in terms of the proportions of poor households, their respective figures in the above order being 34.3, 23.5 and 23.0 percent respectively. The Nordic countries stood at 8.2 percent each for Denmark and Norway and 9.1 percent for Sweden.

With regard to South Africa's bugbear, crime, in the UK, between 1991 and 2000/1, murder, attempted murder and threat or conspiracy to murder increased by 160 percent. Various crimes resulting in wounding increased in the same period by 860 percent!

It may also come as a surprise to some that Washington DC, the capital of the US, has one of the highest crime rates in the country. The 2001 national average for violent crimes per 100,000 people was 506.

We have no business denying poverty and crime in this country which are a reality and we have no intention of minimizing their impact or of celebrating that which should be condemned equally by all societies.

Malcolm Dunn, Senior Partner at the accounting firm, PricewaterhouseCoopers, says: "South Africa's investment rating (Standard & Poor's) has moved from BB nine years ago to BBB as of 2002. No country has ever achieved the extent of this jump in such a brief span."

Charl Kocks, Director at CA-Ratings, writes: "South African businesses are tough. Very tough. They are tougher than most of their counterparts in countries that fall under the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

I am raising the above in order to demonstrate the interdependence of countries and the commonness of their problems. This in my view is a result of two main factors, technology and globalization.

The challenges facing the UK are very similar to those facing this country. The difference might be in emphasis but the fact is that we all face challenges of sustaining economic growth, dealing with poverty and the challenges posed by technology.

Graduates, I repeat are expected to have an enquiring mind, and again to question conventional assumptions. That is how we will arrive at new truths and also contribute to the increase of general totality of human knowledge. This is how I have today presented a case of how in examining this country afresh we can come to a different variables. This is one way in which we arrive at fresh

information by examining the relationship between old variables and as a result be forced to our pleasure to change our assumptions. This is part of our quest to understand the challenges facing this country, but more importantly the opportunities which come with those challenges.

A good example of how a challenge can become an opportunity is in the Expanded Public Works Programme. Gelile Lukheni and Lebo Matukane are involved in the two year learnership and road construction called the Gutshwakop-Luphisi Road Project in Mpumalanga.

Gelile is a 28 year-old mother of two who until earlier this year, had never been employed in her life. Now she and 50 other people in her community of Kabokweni, Nelspruit are involved in the R2, 24 million worth road construction project. Although Gelile did not have any skills or knowledge about road construction, the opportunity to get involved in the project enabled her to access a new set of information and to use that to feed herself and her family.

Thirty year old Lebo Matukane, who is also involved Gutshwakop-Luphisi Road Project owns a road construction company and employs 44 people. She attributes her company's success to hard work and like Gelile, she did not have any skills or knowledge about road construction.

Lebo who did not complete her high school education, started her construction company after receiving on-site and technical training

last year. Sixty percent of those working at the Gutshwakop-Luphisi Road Project are female, 20 percent of whom are the youth, because the project targets female headed households and homes where no-one is employed. It seems that they have taken a leaf out of Phinda Madi, the author of Leadership Lessons from Emperor Shaka the Great.

Rhodes professor of Business Phinda has given us a guide which we can use as we navigate through the challenges of our lives after graduation. In his book of Ten Lessons from Emperor Shaka the Great, Madi gives advices in the following way.

Have a Sense of Mission – Shaka was born out of wedlock and was throughout his childhood the subject of scorn and ridicule. Shaka knew deep down that unless he fulfilled his mission, his life would have been wasted. Shaka built the Zulu army which defeated the British 50 years after Shaka's death.

Be Apprenticed to at the feet of Conquerors- It was Dingiswayo who sharpened Shaka for the future challenges. Dingiswayo studied the way of the Swallows(White settlers in the Cape) mastering their language, riding horses and using their guns.

To protect themselves from King George , Dingiswayo belived that the people of Africa had to be powerful as the English. He believed this could be done by building one nation and thus welcomed all to his kingdom. It was while staying with Dingiswayo that Shaka

distinguished himself as a leader and his vision began to exceed that of Dingiswayo.

Thirdly, Innovate for Effectiveness- Shaka challenged virtually every convention that was held sacred by the Zulus in order to build from the ashes of the old the new. He appointed a woman to be in charge of one of his regiments composed of men. He believed speed and decisiveness were critical in winning

Lead from the Front- Shaka led from the front. When he asked his warriors to discard their sandals and stomp on the thorns, he was the first one to do that. In the first battle that the small Zulu clan engaged in, against Zwide who had just captured and killed Shaka's mentor, Dingiswayo, Shaka led and ordered his troops from the group while Zwide watched the battle from a vantage point at Qokli Hill. Because of this, Shaka was able to defeat an army with far superior numbers. During times of peace, Shaka would wake up before dawn and take the warriors out to train.

Build a dedicated team-Shaka knew that if you want to be a great leader, you cannot do it alone. You have to surround yourself with people who believe in your dream. While Shaka was earning the admiration of Dingiswayo, he began to build a core of loyal friends, men like Mgobozi, Mdlaka and Nzobo. In these men, he found a great team that was willing to die with him battle.

Work according to a strategy-Shaka knew that the only way to build the Zulu nation was to end the little skirmishes and to unite the

different little clans under one strong rule. Shaka protected and fed all the clans that came to pledge allegiance to him. Even the Whites went to Shaka for protection and hospitality. By the time the White man came to them, the Zulus were ready for them. Shaka had a plan that he was working towards - every battle he fought was for a bigger purpose.

Be Strong and Courageous- Shaka was tormented by bullies during his exile. He realised that the only way to fight his lowly and humiliating status was to win extra-ordinary victories. He knew that claiming lineage to the Zulu throne would not get him anywhere. He realised that his only salvation lay in being noticed and liked by Dingiswayo the Great. The first obstacle on his way to greatness was fear. He had to conquer fear.

Know the Terrain- Shaka would win a battle because he understood the battlefield better than the enemy. He was the first leader in the land to use spies. In this way, he knew almost everything about his enemies: how people felt about their leader'; the leader's strengths and weaknesses; the exact number of warriors in each of the enemies regiments; and their battle plans.

These are some of the lessons we can take with us as we prepare to face the world. For us to be successful, we will require strategy, planning, vision, creativity, knowing the terrain and be prepared to challenge conventional wisdom in order to develop new solutions for ourselves, our country and continent.

And then as Tiro said in this very hall in 1972, when that day shall come, no man, no matter how many tanks he has, shall reverse the course of our freedom.

I thank you