



women

Department:  
Women  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



## YOUNG WOMEN'S ASSEMBLY

### KEYNOTE ADDRESS

**Date:** 26 March 2019

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**Time:** 09:00

**Speaker:**

Ms. Bathabile Dlamini,

Minister in the Presidency Responsible for Women

**Venue:**

SHERATON HOTEL, PRETORIA

Programme Director; Ms Minenhle Ntuli

Acting Director General of the Department of Women,  
Ms Annette Griessel

NYDA Executive Deputy Chairperson, Ms Bavelile  
Hlongwa

Members of the Presidential Review Committee for  
Women's Emancipation and Gender Equality

Senior members of the Department of Women, and  
Government,

Young Women Leaders,

Good morning,

- Patriarchy is the single biggest threat to your future as young women.
- South Africa's future rests in the hands of youth attaining their full potential in area of work, personal and professional development, as well as change agents for the world they want to live in.
- We have returned from the 63<sup>rd</sup> Commission on the Status of Women where young women in this room represented SA well in sessions championing the causes of women.
- Executive Director of UN Women, Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka praised South Africa for its energy in taking women's issues forward, especially that of young women.

- While women continue to make strides in ensuring emancipation, there is a second wave of patriarchy that is sweeping over us, hoping to silent our voices, to silent the National Gender Machinery. There is even rumours of the department being re-structured.
- Our history shows that our policy advances on women's empowerment and gender equality was a result of women's hard won battles and sacrifices. Unfortunately there is still much to be done to dismantle the system of patriarchy.
- For a long time rights afforded to women have been considered favours, or hand-outs, when our fundamental freedoms are a right, and anything less is a human rights violation.
- The protection and support of young women remains crucially central to my priorities both as the Minister of Women and the President of the African National

Congress Women's League, the largest women's league in Africa.

- Ensuring generational emancipation should be a firm goal of everyone in this room, both young and old. It is only through partnership between young and older generations that we can overthrow patriarchal systems that still continue to suppress our development.
- Patriarchy is fluid, in that it changes its shape and form to invent new ways of separating and segregating women to ensure easier control. Where we are today is because of the efforts of our elders like, in South Africa, Winnie Mandela, Albertina Sisulu and Charlotte Maxeke.
- In South Africa, our women leaders are forgotten, women are relegated to oral histories while we build statues to celebrate men. Our history, the history of

women to be recognised as equals, as adults and indeed as human beings is being eroded because history itself is gender-biased.

- South Africa considers education a key driver towards women's emancipation. SA Government recently declared that children complete two years of **Early Childhood Development** and moved ECD from Department of Social Development to the Department of Education, creating an uninterrupted system of tracking children through their formal education.
- Our government-backed tertiary education programme – National Student Financial Aid Scheme sponsors young women to study at a University or Technikon of their choice, covering tuition, accommodation, and also provides a monthly stipend (R275) for personal healthcare. More recently the Department of Higher Education allocated almost R1

Billion to pay off historical debt that was preventing young people from obtaining their degrees.

- To support the girl child in basic education and ensure that she is not missing a single day of school due to something she cannot control, on 28 February 2019 we launched the **Sanitary Dignity Programme** for Quantile 1, 2 and 3 schools (non-fee paying schools). This Framework aims to put the value chain of production, distribution, education, and disposal in the hands of women.
- **Pregnancy** and being a mother is **not a crime**. South Africa permits pregnant female learners to continue with their schooling during her pregnancy and return post birth. The now young mother is supported in her new journey through the availability of a child **grant** for her child, **free health services**, **free vaccinations** and access to ECD centres. The point at which the

teenager becomes a mother must not be the end of their lives. These services must support the teenager to be able to complete school, move into **tertiary education** (which was declared **free** in 2017 to be progressively rolled out from 2018) and move into being an active participant in the economy.

- While our government also battles in a tough global economy, we remain committed to ensuring free tertiary education for deserving students. Our mission is to ensure that young women succeed through the system. This requires focus on **safe** and **affordable accommodation** and **transportation**.
- It is our responsibility to ensure that young women have safe spaces in institutions of higher learning by ensuring that **Gender Offices** and **Legal Offices** include the effective reporting of Gender Based Violence and that these offices are strengthened to



truly grant support and justice to victims of GBV in institutions of higher learning.

- It is also very important that we support institutions that have deliberately created initiatives focused on absorbing the young woman graduate into the workplace. It is a condemning trend that young women graduate and are increasingly resorting to domestic work due to lack of opportunities.
- Young women must be found present and actively contributing to the GDP and taxable collective of the country. In 2018 South Africa launched the **Youth Employment Services (YES Initiative)**, established as a partnership between government, the private sector and social partners to help provide work experience for young people on a scale that will be significant.

- Government has declared in 2019 that **no work experience** must be **required** from new graduates and that other sectors should follow suit. This is intended to re-generate the culture of mentorship in companies, to guide young graduates in their field of choice.
- Young women must also proportionally **benefit from funding opportunities** provided by government and its entities in order for young women to sustain their business and initiatives. This funding must be extended to women to want access to land to engage in agricultural practises.
- Most often, women are born into a life of oppression, spaces of toxic masculinity and patriarchal systems that force women into submissive roles of compliance and servitude. This has a devastating impact on the mental health of girls and young women and as

government we continue to raise awareness to this trend, to be able to respond by offering support where it is needed.

- **Gender-based Violence:** In order to make progress on gender disparities in our communities it is pivotal that we strengthen all sectors to work together. In 2018 the South African government held the **Presidential Summit on Gender Based Violence and Femicide** and made firm commitments to work with civil society to take decisive action to implement a national strategic plan against GBV. This week the President will sign the GBV and Femicide Declaration, as well as open the Booyens Magistrate's Court in Oakdene, south of JHB.
- **On Health:** It is important for us to reform our **police and health services** that are currently micro-aggressive towards women and the LGBTQIA+

community; to reform the legal and justice system to heighten the seriousness in which the recording of GBV cases takes place and strengthen services such as the **Gender Based Violence Command Centre** to be inclusive of the various services one requires post experiencing GBV.

- **On Language:** We need to start changing our attitudes towards gender. Children need to be taught about gender-sensitivity and rights of young girls and women from a young age. Discrimination is often subtle, and personal. We need to educate young boys that girls are equal in all respects and should not be relegating to second-class human beings. We must work through disciplines like Life Orientation that can breed a new non-sexist and intersectional South African.

- **Politics:** We need more women to get into politics and to rise to lead political organisations. We need to profile our successes in all sectors to erode stereotypes that limit the hopes and dreams of young girls.
- **New forms of Patriarchy:** In the recent game RAPE DAY, players are able to advance only through raping women. This disturbing video game is one of the ways in which sectors of society continue to attack the rights of women.
- There is a second wave of patriarchy that is hitting us hard. We have sectors of society that do not want to see women attain full emancipation. We cannot be surrounded by successful women in these spaces and forget that out there, there is a silent battle raging against women. As women, we need to stand together to push back, against this push back!

- Our role at this Assembly is to network and share ideas because you are the brightest minds in SA. We need to work together to ensure gender equality and the emancipation of women.

I thank you