

Thumeka Magwangqana

Speech at Lonmin AGM 2018

My name is Thumeka Magwangqana. I am a South African civil rights activist and chairperson of the women's organization Sikhala Sonke from Marikana. Sikhala Sonke means "We cry together". Since the massacre of 16 August 2012, Sikhala Sonke campaigns for better working and living conditions in the mining affected communities.

Ladies and Gentleman!

I took the long way from the informal settlement of Marikana which lies in the heart of the South African Platinum Belt to London. I made this effort to speak to you at the Lonmin Annual General Meeting. I really do hope that you, the board, the management and the shareholders of Lonmin, listen carefully.

In 2012, our husbands went on strike, asking for an increase of their wages. They were sitting on the mountain in Wonderkop, waiting for their mine management to respond to their plea.

But instead of them to come, the police came. We were amazed to see, the police coming to our place in large numbers. And we heard that a senior ruling party member and a shareholder of Lonmin at the time influenced the police decision to characterise the labour dispute as a criminal action and that the police must deal with our husbands as if they dealt with criminals so that they can be killed. The police had the order to end the strike by any means. So to speak: they did it on purpose, it was already organized, that our fellow brothers should be killed. They were shot at with live ammunition, as if they were criminals.

I did not know that asking for a pay raise is a crime in a post-apartheid South Africa led by the African national congress. Why is our black brothers' blood so cheap? Our brothers' blood is cheaper than the money they were fighting for. You can't replace the life a person with money.

Ladies and Gentleman, the management of the mine, Lonmin, is also accountable for what has happened in Marikana. And you, the shareholders of

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the third largest platinum mining company in the world, should not look aside.

I can't believe that five and a half years after the massacre, there is no one held accountable, neither politicians, the police nor the management of Lonmin.

I don't understand that none of the victims have been compensated. No reparations were paid to the widows and to the injured mine workers. The Commission of Inquiry was not appropriate.

We never thought that such a bloodshed could happen under a black president. We never thought that such killings could occur in South Africa since democracy was introduced. How is it possible that politicians remain in power although they have blood on their hands?

There is no change in Marikana. The people are living in shacks that are leaking, there is no sanitation, no running water, no electricity. And there are no roads. Where is the better life for all? All we have is gender based violence, domestic violence, rapes, the situation is very bad; also the poverty is driving these things to happen.

Mr Beamish and Mr Magara, I have to add some demands and questions to the ones of the Bishop.

1. Will Lonmin take responsibility for the environmental destruction at Marikana?
2. What measures will Lonmin take to ensure that people in the communities around the mine have sufficient water, proper sanitation and electricity?
3. What measures will Lonmin take to guarantee livelihoods for the workers if a takeover by Sibanye-Stillwater occurs?
4. We also demand that money will be set aside in the purchase price of Lonmin to assist with financing sustainable developmental projects, with independent problem-solving mechanisms and counselling. This shall not be limited to Sikhale Sonke.

Ladies and Gentlemen, people of the board and management of Lonmin, when I get home to Marikana, to my community, to the workers and their families, I wish that I can bring them good news. I want to tell them: Those shareholders in the United Kingdom do care about you. Please, don't let me return with empty hands.

Amandla! – Awethu. Power – to the People.

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