



MEDIA STATEMENT

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PROFESSIONALS LEAGUE CALLS FOR AN URGENT CONVENTION FOR ECONOMIC OWNERSHIP BY BLACK SOUTH AFRICANS

It is becoming clear on a daily basis that South Africa as a nation is at cross roads. This occurrence is because the journey travelled since the signing of the September 1991 National Peace Accord, to CODESA which gave South Africa a forum to negotiate a peaceful transition to democracy, gave South Africa half the results. CODESA gave South Africa the current democratic order based on the Bill of Rights and a new political order. These important discussions neglected the fundamental discourse which is the economic question, inclusive of land question as the nucleolus of the economic resolve. Our Black indigenous South Africans remain, in squalor, poor and hungry in their own country and there is no glimpse of hope in sight for the situation to change for the better.

The rise of political racial tension as manifested by the smoke screen, catfight between the Economic Freedom Fighters and the Democratic Alliance on the “Dubula iBhunu” chant, is a case in point that as a nation we are heading for a disaster. South Africa needs to confront the elephant in the room, and deal with the economic question and the total economic redress for Black South Africans. Black people must have access to financial institutions, must have access to markets, to trade, must have access to land for development. Black people deserve a better life. Black South Africans must be part and feel to be part of the South African franchise. If this pressing matter is not discussed and resolved amicably, it does seem that a new revolution is in sight. Our government seems quick to convene national dialogues such as a useless self-serving National Dialogue On Coalition Governments. Our people need no coalitions, they need food on their table, and clothes on their children's backs; and that will come if they have ownership of the economy. South Africa must go back to the table, and convene a National Convention for Economic Ownership by Black South Africans (CEOBSA).

This national dialogue will ensure a prosperous South Africa for all. Opening the economy to Black South Africans will ensure overall prosperity and growth rate for the entire country. This will ensure less poverty, higher life expectancy and greater wealth per capita in South Africa. It is not songs, slogans and marching in the streets that will safeguard our country from civil war in the greater struggle for economic ownership. The great work of Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela and et al, cannot be in vain. Multitudes of stakeholders, from political parties, civil society, private business and religious leaders need to come together and resolve our burning national question. The economy must be in the hands of Black South Africans sooner rather than later.

It is a known fact that during CODESA, a huge political compromise was struck. We know that the so-called Sunset Clause guarantees white minorities a comfortable fat stake in the new South Africa. The current levels of inequality are alarming in South Africa as per the Gini Index. This is unacceptable as this has been ongoing for 30 years since the demise of Apartheid. At the receiving end of this poverty-ridden system of exclusion are the majority — Black South Africans.

As a free nation, we must find new avenues to address and deal with our national question as it is clear that the current government is failing to address the economic impasse in South Africa. There

are no concrete plans in sight, at times we not even clear about the National Economic Regime the government is pursuing. What is the current economic policy of South Africa under the current administration? What does it seek to achieve? Where does it place the advancement of black people economically? Does it talk about addressing ownership patterns of our skewed economy? Where is the voice of the progressive left movement in SA? We seem as a nation to have normalised the madness of economic exclusion of Black indigenous people. Black people remain jobless, landless and moneyless in their majority. The South African economy does not work for Black people in their majority. This remains the worst form of cruelty and lack of political will from all political parties in the South African parliament and an indictment of our Constitution and its Bill of Rights. The blame falls squarely on their doorstep. Government, private sector and everyone continues business as usual in the abnormal situation that Black people face in this country.

At the centre of CEOBSA discussions should be the main economic question of land redistribution back to the black majority. Land in South Africa still sits in the hands of white minority males and again this matter has been turned into a political football without anyone wanting to act decisively on it to bring about redress. As things stand White Males own 72% and African indigenous people own 4%; coloureds own 14%, whilst Indian owns 5% of South African land. These numbers surely make any revolutionary, conscious leader, have sleepless nights; trying to find a redress solution urgently. Our leaders have instead forgotten about the masses. It has all turned out to be about themselves, a great sense of self-aggrandizement and their stomachs.

The time is now to call on all progressive forces and resistant liberals to get to the table and defuse the ticking time bomb in our country. The Professionals League (PL) calls for a Convention for Economic Ownership by Black South Africans, to avert many bubbling economic racial confrontations as we see them bubbling. All South Africans have a responsibility to build a united, democratic and prosperous South Africa, we must refuse to allow the widening racial gap. As a nation we averted violence then and we can still learn from our forebears and fix our problems through national dialogue.

The Professionals League (PL) is currently consulting stakeholders, to petition the arms of the State to action this national dialogue, and these arms are Parliament and the apex court. The Bill of Rights must be enjoyed in full without reservation by all races in South Africa, including the Black Indigenous people. The current economic impasse defeats the very spirit of the Bill of Rights, which guarantees everyone the quality of life they deserve. The 1955 Congress of the People has been betrayed by the leaders, who shout its slogans every day. As the saying goes, we must avoid a situation “when one day, the poor will have nothing to eat but the rich”.

“Eat the rich”.

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