

## AN OPEN LETTER TO MR JIMMY MANYI

Dear Jimmy

Let us drop titles for the purpose of a necessary exchange. So let us forget for now that I am a Cabinet Minister and that you are a Director-General equivalent, in the same government. I want to address you simply as a compatriot South African.

I want to draw to your attention the fact that your statements about "an over-concentration of coloureds" are against the letter and spirit of the South African Constitution, as well being against the values espoused by the Black Management Forum since its inception. That you were a Director-General of the Department of Labour, as well as the President of the BMF at the time when you made these statements is quite a mystery. It is a mystery because I must assume that you were elected as President of the BMF, without any familiarity with the history and constitution of that organisation; and that you were appointed as Director-General of the Department of Labour, without any familiarity with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa or the legislation administered by the Department itself.

I observe from a GCIS press release that Mr Vusi Mona issues in his own name, you apologise for the statement because "some people may have taken offence". This continued negative behaviour merely serves to confirm the values that you hold, or more precisely, lack thereof. Firstly, why Mr Mona had to issue a statement is beyond comprehension since you distinctly did not utter those racist sentiments as an official of the GCIS. Secondly, that you lack the moral conviction to publicly apologise says so much about your acute lack of judgement. Thirdly, the statement apologises only for the fact that "some people may have taken offence" says to me that you clearly fail to appreciate the extent to which your utterances are both unconstitutional and morally reprehensible.

These "things", (as the ANC statement says that your utterances reduce people to being mere commodities) in your view, "the coloureds who are over-concentrated in the Western Cape", are the sons and daughters of those who waged the first anti-colonial battles against the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British when they set foot on our shores. These "things", which so irritate you, include many who made huge sacrifices in the struggle against apartheid, at a time when people with views like Jimmy Manyi were conspicuous by their absence from the misery of exile, the battles at the barricades and from apartheid's jails. By the way, what did YOU do in the war, Jimmy?

I want to put it to you that these statements would make you a racist in the mould of H F Verwoerd. I want to put it to you that you have the same mind that operated under

apartheid, never merely satisfied with inflicting the hurt of forced removals and the group areas act, would encamp language groups so that horrible aberrations, such as Soshanguve, were created to accommodate "non-Tswanas" in their own little encampments in greater Mabopane. Mr Manyi, you may be black, or perhaps you aren't, because you do not accept that label and would prefer to be "only a Xhosa", whatever the label you choose, I want to put it to you that your behaviour is of the worst-order racist. I refer to you in this way because for those of us who found our way into the struggle through the Black Consciousness Movement have always understood the origin of the Black Management Forum, as we have understood and supported the ANC documents that speak of "blacks in general, and Africans, in particular." Regrettably, in your understanding the term "Black" has quite a different meaning.

As a consequence of your behaviour, people like me - in the ANC and in government, are being asked to explain what was in the mind of the drafters of the amendments to the Employment Equity Act. We were present at the point of the debate of the first Employment Equity Bill; we expressed a complete comfort with the assignment of 'designated groups' to include "black people" which means "Africans, Coloureds and Indians." because it served as a representation of our constitutionality and as the fruits of our struggle. When in your capacity as Chairperson of the Employment Equity Commission you made strange utterances that sought to carve away at the basic premise of the Employment Equity Act, we should have been more vigilant. The just and constitutionally obligated provisions for redress are not and can never be an excuse to perpetuate racism.

Now, in the light of the utterances you have made at a time when you were the DG of the Department of Labour, and given the fact that the amendments to the Employment Equity Act were drafted during your tenure, I have a sense that your racism has infiltrated the highest echelons of government. Count me among those who, in spite of my position, will ensure that parliament acts in the letter and spirit of our constitution when it adopts amendments to the Act.

I have never waged any battle from the premise of an epithet that apartheid sought to attach to me but I will do battle against the harm you seek to inflict. When I do so, it is not as a coloured but as a non-racist determined to ensure that our great movement and our Constitution are not diluted through the actions of racists like you.

I have been prepared to sacrifice before for the cause of the kind of society articulated in the Freedom Charter. It is not a cause that has ended. I have simply not been called upon to make the same kind of sacrifices since 1990. I must declare my willingness to make sacrifices

now in deference to the opening lines of the Freedom Charter that boldly declare that "South Africa belongs to all who live in it".

I now know who Nelson Mandela was talking about when he said from the dock that he had fought against white domination and that he had fought against black domination. Jimmy, he was talking about fighting against people like you.

Yours sincerely,

Trevor A. Manuel