

# ADDRESS BY **Dr Mamphele Ramphele**

at the second Marikana Memorial Lecture on 17 August 2021



# WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

*We are here today to celebrate the lives of those who were caught up in the events of that fateful day. Their courage to challenge what they regarded as an unsustainable business model that excluded them from sharing the value they have contributed to creating triggering the transformation process we are witnessing today. The lessons learnt from that challenge and its tragic consequences are beginning to bear fruit.*

Today we also celebrate the resilience and courage of those who lost loved ones and colleagues in the tragic events for being willing to go beyond their pain to be part of shaping a future that would be built on lessons learnt by all.

I would like to share with you the key lessons that have emerged and are emerging from the courageous leadership of Sibanye Stillwater in partnership with many inside and outside the company to transform its mining operations to reflect the centrality of the following two principles:

- Indigenous African wisdom is a rich resource for reimagining sustainable prosperity in all we do.
- Sustainable Prosperity requires open spaces for affirmation of interconnectedness and interdependence symbolised by the Letsema Healing Circles.

## INDIGENOUS WISDOM:

### A Critical Success Factor in Socio-economic Development

Artificial intelligence has taken the world by storm as everyone jostles to be part of the 4th Industrial Revolution. Many scientists are however turning to nature and indigenous knowledge to learn about a higher intelligence – nature's intelligence. Nature's intelligence comes from learning from nature's accumulated knowledge from millions of years of experimenting with ways of doing things that are regenerative and sustainable.

Africa, the cradle of humanity, is also the cradle of nature's intelligence captured in the philosophy of **Ubuntu**. Our ancestors learnt eons ago that human beings, like all other species in the web of life, thrive best when each one contributes their best to the common good within the ecosystems, they live in. Ubuntu calls us to honour our interconnectedness and interdependence that are the only guarantors of wellbeing and prosperity for all and our ecosystems.

The mining industry in South Africa would have a brighter future if it were to embrace this wisdom and transform its operations from extractive models towards regenerative ones. Regenerative open spaces for all participants are essential for all to bring their best into the collaborative work to generate shared prosperity.

Imagine a transformed institutional culture that affirms the dignity of all and celebrates the diverse contributions each participant brings to the party. Imagine the rise in energy levels that would be unleashed. Imagine the growing trust levels that would encourage all to share their ideas because they would know that each one of them matters and they are better together. Imagine what creativity would be unleashed when each participant is confident that they would share in the additional value they could bring to the institution!

# THE LETSEMA

## CIRCLE OF HEALING PROCESS

African wisdom of Ubuntu has also given us the tools to make this transition. ReimagineSA has revived the traditional custom of Letsema (Ilima) Circles utilised by our ancient ancestors to call people together to converse and deliberate on complex matters that cannot be dealt with by individual families or clans. These circles were also the preferred model for regular participatory governance deliberations for communities in traditional societies across much of Africa.

The beauty of Letsema Circles is that the sitting arrangement – a circle – is a social leveller. Every participant is at the same level as all others – age, gender, standing and class don't matter. The traditional leaders sit at the same level as all other community people. This social levelling process reinforces the values of Ubuntu – the **I am Because You are**. It reminds everyone that **There is no Me without We**.

The Marikana massacre has opened our eyes to the massacre of our own souls as a nation. The long history of colonial conquest; apartheid colour coding; and post-1994 failures to heal the wounds of the past, establish a democratic just society where human rights reign and opportunities are created for the talents of all is unleashed; has left our souls deeply wounded. We need to embrace healing as a continuous process to reconnect our souls, mind, and bodies as individuals and as a collective we call a nation.

Letsema Circles not only heal brokenness, but also enable more effective and efficient working approaches and institutional cultures that promotes trust and the joy of teamwork. Within a Letsema Circle there is shared responsibility to:

- (i) Co-discover approaches that work best
- (ii) Co-initiate agenda setting processes
- (iii) Co-inspire one another in the team to nurture newfound confidence
- (iv) Co-communicate to learn more about one another's strengths to be celebrated and weaknesses to be managed
- (v) Co-create solutions that are sustainable and inclusive
- (vi) Co-invest in unleashing the potential of each person to bring the best of themselves to the collective work.

The Letsema Circles of healing are powerful spaces for all of us to come face to face with one another in order to heal the broken links from past and present traumas. We need to reconnect and recommit to work together to make ourselves whole. Human beings are at their best when they feel they belong within the family of other human beings as interconnectedness and interdependence is the essence of life.

In addition, we have also learnt about our own limitations at individual and collective levels. By working together, we are able to complement one another to make the whole to be larger than the sum of the parts.

What has been achieved over the last year or so, has laid a strong foundation for a future we can co-create and be proud of. The efforts of each of us is essential to shaping a future we can be proud to bequeath to future generations of South Africans to together build a democratic just society infused with the values of Ubuntu.

Thank you.

## WHERE

## ARE WE NOW?

There is no doubt that the collaborative work we have done together with all the Social Partners including Sibanye Stillwater, has enriched all of us. We have learnt important lessons about whom each of us is; what makes our partners tick and how best to work with them; how doing together is more effective and more efficient to get the best from limited resources. We have also learnt that transformation is a long-term process that requires renewal of inspiration to keep going.