

When the call comes... Pick up

 By [Marion Scher](#)

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The phone call that no CEO wants to get is the one with the name *Carte Blanche* attached to it. Immediately the antennae go up - why do they want to talk to us? What do they know we don't?

One such phone call or in fact several such phone calls were apparently made to Goldfields last week and the reply *Carte Blanche* says they were given was that it (Goldfields) weren't prepared to take part in the programme.

The programme went on to show how Goldfields obtained their South Deep mining licence whilst at the same time announcing a R2.1 billion BEE partnership deal. They proudly announced that some 47,000 workers would benefit from this.

In comes mining journalist Barry Sergeant and financial journalist Lindo Zulu to the story and they tell a very different tale of beneficiation. They tell how Goldfields hired self-admitted former gangster Gayton McKenzie as a consultant to put together this BEE deal. As everyone knows he's in business with that epitome of good business, Kenny Kunene, although Goldfields distance themselves from the latter's involvement.

The upshot, according to Sergeant and Zulu, was a string of beneficiaries, all friends or acquaintances of McKenzie and Kunene, and most with strong ANC links (we're talking politicians here), some of whom were struggle heroes like Baleka Mbete and Limpho Hani, but others like Ashwin Willemse and Jerome Brauns (Zuma's former attorney) don't quite fall into that mould.

Cash for the connected, but the miners...

Although South Deep mine won't produce gold at full capacity until 2015 these elite shareholders received a R25m upfront share gift when the deal was announced, but according to the *Carte Blanche* transcript, "...there is no preferential dividend for the miners; they must wait 15 years for their shares, locked up in the Thusano Trust."

Both Sergeant and Zulu, and *Carte Blanche* award-winning producer, Joy Summers and her team apparently did everything they could to get Nick Holland to answer questions. Yes, he was busy handling a strike but if he had nothing to hide why did he not speak to the media and put his side across?

Yesterday Goldfields issued a statement responding to the *Carte Blanche* programme saying 'The programme was filled with inaccuracies and innuendo and sought to discredit what has been broadly welcomed as a ground-breaking transaction.'

Hello Mr Holland - that's why we have a law allowing you right of reply, which you apparently refused. A lot of damage can happen in 24 hours when questions remain unanswered.

The statement from Goldfields goes on to assure everyone the deal for the mining rights was kosher and that they complied with all legal requirements.

They also mention the broad base of the deal, giving a share to employees, communities and a BEE consortium including historically disadvantaged South Africans who contributed to the successful and peaceful transition of the country. Really?

They do admit right at the end of the release that Gayton McKenzie was contracted in an advisory capacity. Just having your name linked to his cannot be a good business move Goldfields.

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They also talk about all the wonderful things they're doing for the community but according to the footage and interviews done in the documentary nothing has happened so far!

The bottom line is when that call comes better you speak to *Carte Blanche*, and at least have the opportunity to defend yourself on air rather than let them use the entire footage to drag you through the mud!

Following Sunday's show and this is a given, John Robbie took up the story on his morning show and again the airwaves were abuzz. Again there was John telling the listeners they were attempting to talk to Holland but still nothing!

For every minute of silence there's an untold amount of irreparable damage done. It makes great viewing but not good business!

To view a transcript of the show, [click here](#).

ABOUT MARION SCHER

Marion Scher (www.mediamentors.co.za) is an award-winning journalist, lecturer, media trainer and consultant with 25 years' experience in the industry. For more of her writing, go to her Bizcommunity profile or to Twitter @marionscher.

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