

## SA's ruling elite 'rotten'

Rhodes University vice chancellor Sizwe Mabizela laid into the political elite yesterday, saying people "of questionable moral and ethical character" are in charge of the country...



Many people place most of the blame for the poor quality of leadership to which South Africans are subjected today on Zuma. (Image extracted from YouTube)

"The noble qualities and values of personal integrity, honesty, humility, compassion, respect for each other, fairness, forgiveness, empathy, selfless dedication and willingness to put others first - that were so beautifully exemplified by President Nelson Mandela - have given way to venality, a complete lack of integrity, moral decadence, profligacy, rampant corruption, deceit, and duplicity."

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the Rhodes University graduation weekend, Mabizela said South Africa had lost its moral compass by voting in "people who have no sense of right and wrong, just and unjust, fair and unfair, ethical and unethical".

He added: "We have become a society in which obscene and unbridled opulence exists alongside debilitating poverty and deprivation; a society that relentlessly promotes a culture of untrammelled greed and conspicuous consumption above the public and common good; a culture that judges one's worth by the amount of personal wealth amassed."

He said far too many people were mired in desperate daily routines of survival, while at the same time crass materialism and vulgar displays of personal wealth had become popular with the elite.

Referring to disarray in key government institutions such as the criminal justice system - which has recently lost or suspended several top officials - Mabizela urged the 2015 Rhodes graduates to make a difference in a society characterised by uncertainty, cynicism and despair.

"My appeal is that you become an active, engaged and concerned citizen who takes a special interest in, and concern for,

those who are living in the social and economic margins of our society."

## **Not the first to slam poor leadership**

Mabizela joins several other top South Africans who have spoken out about the moral and ethical status of the country.

In 2012, former Unisa vice chancellor Barney Pityana said: 'We must blame nobody but ourselves for the tragedy of our education system, a collapsing healthcare system, a bloated but inefficient civil service, pervasive crime and corruption that has become endemic.

'That is because we have elected a government without any intelligence collectively to understand what must be done. We have a government trapped in ideological blinkers that believes and behaves like it is unaccountable.'

Also in 2012, Nedbank chair Reuel Khoza faced harsh criticism after writing that 'our political leadership's moral quotient is degenerating and we are fast losing the checks and balances that are necessary to prevent a recurrence of the past...'

In November, top businessman Johann Rupert told the Remgro AGM: "The leadership of this country, quite frankly, is becoming very, very hard to defend abroad."

In connection with the Rhodes statue debate, Mabizela said: "We must respect each other's views. We should never try to delegitimise or be dismissive of each other's views and experiences."

He said South Africans were still struggling to find a common set of values and had yet to forge a shared sense of national identity. "The maturity of our 21-year-old democracy will be tested as we engage, debate and discuss our painful, complex and uncomfortable past."

"It will also require mature and visionary leadership, values- based leadership, caring leadership, compassionate leadership, bold and courageous leadership, moral and ethical leadership, responsible and accountable leadership, leadership that is guided by principles and one that eschews populism."

Source: *The Times*, via I-Net BRidge

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