

**Reünie van Matie-studenteleiers wat in 1989  
in Lusaka met die ANC gaan praat het  
STIAS, 14 Junie 2014, 12:00  
Inleidende opmerkings deur prof H Russel Botman,  
Rektor en Visekanselier van die Universiteit Stellenbosch**

*Dankie, Bev. Middag, almal.* Good afternoon, everyone. A hearty welcome to all of you.

Allow me to single out a few special guests:

- Adv Thuli Madonsela [the Public Protector]
- Dr Tito Mboweni [former Governor of the Reserve Bank]; and
- Mr Roelf Meyer [Chair of the Civil Society Initiative].

Thank you for joining us today.

Also welcome to members of the media. *En welkom aan al ons kollegas en studente. En natuurlik ons eregaste vandag, die “Lusaka-Maties” ...* also known as “The Maties Who Caused All The Trouble”. *Ná alles wat gebeur het, verskaf dit my groot vreugde om vir julle te kan sê, “Welkom tuis!”*

*Julle is destyds bra stief deur die owerhede behandel. Intussen het daar baie water onder die brug deurgevloei, en dit is vir my ’n riem onder die hart dat julle hier is – nie net om terug te dink nie, maar om ons almal te help dink aan hoe gaan ons die toekoms verder binne.*

*Welkom ook aan die twee mense wat julle destyds vergesel het, mnr André Zaaiman en mnr Hennie Serfontein. Dankie dat julle almal weer hier saam is.*

Now, it’s remarkable to think that the events we are here to commemorate happened so recently. Twenty five years is not a long time... yet when one considers the fracas around the trip by Matie student leaders to Lusaka in 1989, it’s very clear that we are discussing a completely different time.

South Africa was a very different country back then, and this University a very different place. It was against this background that your visit to the exiled ANC and others took place.

We know it generated a lot of controversy. The question is, “Why?” Why would a government as mighty as the government then worry about students doing this? Aren’t student leaders supposed to take an active interest in society? And had there not been many other “safaris” to Lusaka and Dakar and Harare for talks with the ANC?

So, why the fuss around this visit? I think there were two reasons: Your youthfulness; and the fact that you were from this University.

As students, you represented the next generation. So, if the leaders of tomorrow were starting to think for themselves, the old order’s tight grip was clearly slipping away.

And as Maties, you represented a University that had been pivotal to the idea of Afrikaner Nationalism for the beginning. So, if critical voices at Stellenbosch were growing louder, it would become harder to keep everyone else “on song”.

*Dís hoekom my voorganger so “afkeurig” oor jul “safari” was ... julle het hierdie Universiteit tot in sy fundamente geskud – en die land ook.*

*Ons het so bietjie in die argief gaan rondkrap en afgekom op 'n lang memorandum van prof Mike de Vries aan die Ruitersweg, jeugvleuel van die Broederbond. Dis in sy eie handskrif, en is gedateer 9 Mei 1989.*

*Dié jaar is vir hom 'n "laagtepunt", sê hy – en ek haal aan: "Die US begin seerkry ... Idasa reël byeenkomste, SPOG reël toere, Nusas demonstreer ... en "die SR verbreek hul vertrouensverhouding met my".*

*"Quo Vadis, Stellenbosch?" vra hy dan. "Waarheen is jy op pad, my universiteit?"*

*En dan kom die insiggewende deel – hy lewer 'n pleidooi vir 'n terugkeer na wat hy noem "sekere basiese beskawingswaardes". En wat is hierdie waardes? Sy lys sluit in:*

- *"die Christelike godsdiens";*
- *"gesonde gesagsverhoudinge";*
- *"gedissiplineerde vryheid";*
- *"'n verantwoordelike sin"; "pligsgetrouheid"; en selfs ...*
- *"eerbied vir die instelling van die huwelik" in teenstelling met "vrye liefde".*

Now, there's nothing wrong with these values *per se*. But I think what students were reacting to was a "disconnect" between values and reality.

You had an establishment that said it "rejected racism", an establishment that said it was in favour of an "inclusive solution to South Africa's divisions". But what was actually happening? The majority of the population were denied the vote and equal access to services and opportunities ... because of their skin colour.

That was what sparked outrage on campuses across the country – including here at Stellenbosch. And it was a moral outrage. You guys wanted to do your bit to help fix what was so obviously wrong with South Africa.

For that, we owe you a debt of gratitude – again, not because you spoke to the ANC *per se*, but because you took the lead in doing the right thing, despite the cost to yourselves.

You were young, but you showed us the way. *Wat julle as "bogsnuikers" gedoen het, het die "volksvaders" duidelik erg gegrief. Luister bietjie na Die Burger se kommentaar destyds, via "Dawie se pen": "Amateurs moet uit die politieke arena padgee sodat die ervare, professionele manne sake kan hanteer."*

*Die feit dat 8 van die 18 Lusaka-Maties vrouestudente was, het duidelik die paternalistiese onderrokke laag laat uithang!*

Now, your actions in 1989 was a turning point for this University, just as June 16 was a turning point for the country as a whole. Stellenbosch would never be the same after your trip to Lusaka. In fact, in many ways we are still riding the waves of change set in motion by your decision to stand up and speak out; your decision to be not only objects of the reality but subjects instead.

A quick footnote – Stellenbosch is often portrayed as having been the quintessential "cradle of apartheid". But there were many critical voices here through the years – and we acknowledge them all. *Byvoorbeeld, ons het ook op 'n petisie in die Mike de Vries-versameling afgekom. Dis opgestel ter ondersteuning van almal se "reg om met enige persoon in gesprek te tree". En dis deur 167 personelede regdeur die US onderteken.*

So, the pressure for change kept mounting, and eventually this old institution would catch up with its “Young Turks”. In 1999, your alma mater finally acknowledged – and I quote “its contributions to the injustices of the past.”

This was contained an important SU policy document, our “Strategic Framework for the Turn of the Century and Beyond”. Broad and deep discussion had led to the University taking responsibility for the past – both its own actions and its contributions to the injustices perpetrated in this country.

This was an apology for apartheid, one that should be repeated from time to time. But the University didn’t stop there. It also committed itself to “redress and development”.

“Redress” referred specifically to access. In 1990, Stellenbosch had just 762 black students. Today, we have more than 9 000, or roughly a third of our student body. And by 2018 we will be even further along.

And regarding the commitment to “development”, it laid the foundation for a science-for-society approach at Stellenbosch. As I said in my installation address in 2007: We had to move “from success to significance”.

We started doing so with the University’s HOPE Project. And now we have our own Vision 2030, which is for SU to become more inclusive, innovative and future focused.

Never again do we want to be a university only serving a section of the population. We are now a national asset. *Stellenbosch is nie meer “volksbesit” nie. Ons behoort nou aan almal – die wêreld en die land ... en al sy mense. En julle het ons daardie kopskuif help maak. Dankie! Ons is trots op julle.*

You showed true thought leadership, and left a valuable legacy for future generations: You chose to examine life critically, and to be active and engaged citizens. These are the attributes that we hope every Matie would have developed by the time they graduate.

The country certainly needs thought leaders for the future. Twenty years into our democracy, a lot has been achieved in our country, but many challenges remain ... both old and new. And the way to make a difference, is to think critically, engage with society; and act courageously ... as you did.

*Dit geld ook hierdie Universiteit. Ons is dalk in ’n heel ander tydvak, maar dit beteken allermens daar is nie meer brandpunte op kampus nie. Daar is byvoorbeeld die vraagstuk van simbole.*

*Stellenbosch staan lankal nie meer vir DF Malan se 1913-idee van hoër onderwys net vir die Afrikanervolk nie. Maar weerspieël ons simbole dié verandering? Wat doen ons om almal hier welkom te laat voel... te laat voel dis ook hulle plek hierdie? Hoe laat ons die mure en geboue en pleine tot almal spreek?*

*Dis sulke kwessies waaroor ons kritiese denke nodig het. Dit het weer tyd geword om grense oor te steek – al is dit hierdie keer metafores. Dit het tyd geword om kloue te oorbrug met waagmoedige gesprekke. Ek sal graag wil hoor wat julle oor al hierdie dinge dink.*

So, thanks for being here today, and I am looking forward to a good discussion.