

Lotus FM

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Presenter: The Dinokeng Scenario suggests that there's one of 3 possible futures for South Africa. Something that is quite interesting – one, we walk apart or two, we walk behind and the third is we walk together. The scenario team is composed of 35 leaders from political parties, government, media and business including Jay Naidoo and Graca Machel. The team is designed to look at ways of pulling South African communities together to ensure they play an active role in improving the society they live in. Anti-apartheid activist, businesswoman and former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cape Town Dr Mamphela Ramphele heads up the Dinokeng Scenarios and she joins us now to tell us more. Doctor, what do you think about the biggest threat facing South African communities?

Dr Mamphela Ramphele: We were seduced by our government in 1994 with the notion of the government delivering houses, delivering education, delivering everything. So there was a demobilization of civil society in 1994 by the ANC government in its understanding of what is meant 'to govern' and their understanding of governance was taking control. Now if you take control you've got to be able to control and of course they had underestimated what it will take to run a modern democracy with the size of the economy that South Africa is, but also there was a gross underestimation across the whole society of what it would take to deal with the legacy of the past.

Presenter: Now, speaking to communities in KZN, can you give us practical steps to move forward then?

Dr Mamphela Ramphele: The practical thing for KZN, which remains a pressure cooker in terms of the inability of many communities to come to grips with the fact that we are in a plural democracy. Secondly, KZN is one of the rural provinces of our country and problem is not poverty in KZN. Its a very rich province in terms of its natural endowments but we are not utilising the natural endowments of KZN in the sense of agriculture, in the sense of tourism. It used to be one of the provinces that provided excellent education in boarding school for young people from all over the country. It no longer does that. And the problem? The problem is the quality of governance, the quality of public services. A lot of resources are wasted on corruption and so all that leads to one thing. Citizens must take ownership of this

democracy, make sure that what was promised in those manifestos is implemented and that public servants know that they are the servants of the people, not the other way around.

Presenter: That's a very valid point you make. Now how can ordinary citizens help strengthen our national democracy then?

Dr Mamphela Ramphele: South Africans have a very poor self-image. How can a citizen of a democracy be a small cog in the wheel and that's where the problem is. We regard ourselves as citizens as insignificant, unimportant. What's important are the people who are running around with blue lights, [Unclear] So what we need is really an education in citizenship, in what it means to be a citizen of a democracy. You are the owner. You take charge. That's the only way democracy is going to become strong.

Presenter: You've been vocal about the BEE programme – Back Economic Empowerment – why do you think its not working?

Dr Mamphela Ramphele: My views on BEE are that it has failed to deliver on its promise, not because the policy is wrong. I don't agree with those who say we didn't need BEE but if we use BEE for its intended purposes – broad-based black economic empowerment, which means we add to the economic activities that are already there, not we slice and sub-divide the small cake that's there among a few people so that more people become wealthy. That's the kind of BEE that I would like to see stopping.

Presenter: Well, thank you very much for your time. That was Dr Mamphela Ramphele talking to us about community involvement in making South Africa a better place for all.