



# NUM NEWS

Official Publication of the National Union of Mineworkers

September 2020



**Paris Mashego**  
National Energy Sector  
Coordinator

**Joseph Makombo**  
Rustenburg Regional Organiser

**Xola Rixana**  
Rustenburg Regional Coordinator

## HAMBANI KAHLE MAQABANE!

The NUM bows its head in respect to comrades who lost their lives at this difficult time where the country is facing a challenge of fighting scourage of Covid-19.

The union mourns the passing away of Comrades, Paris Mashego - who was national energy sector coordinator, Joseph Makombo - who was NUM Rustenburg regional organiser, and Xola Rixana - Rustenburg regional coordinator.

Their untimely and unexpected deaths came as a shock. It is a sad loss to the NUM where their loyalty to the NUM members and indefatigable to the struggle of the country would be missed.

The NUM sends its deepest condolences to the comrades families, friends and colleagues and wishing them strength and fortitude during this difficult time.

## NUM CELEBRATES BROTHER FIDEL CASTRO'S 94<sup>th</sup> BIRTHDAY

The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) would like to join the international community and all progressive forces around the world including the people of Cuba in celebrating 94 years since the birth of one of Cuba's most revered revolutionaries Comrade Fidel Castro.

Comrade Fidel Castro led the revolution in Cuba that overthrew the government of Batista in 1959 and introduced socialism.

He became the first Prime Minister of Socialist Cuba from 1961 to 1976 and President from 1976 to 2008. At the same time, he was the First Secretary of the Cuban Communist Party from 1961 to 2011. Under his leadership, Cuba manages to eradicate illiteracy, reduce inequality and boost one of the best and advance health systems.

Fidel Castro is one of the exceptional revolutionary leaders in recorded world history. His life, heroic example, ethics, integrity, and, above all else, his revolutionary and socialist ideas, made a huge impact on 20th Century history and world politics that can never be buried by imperialist propaganda.

Cuba is also one of the leading political powers in the international solidarity movement. Cuba took part in almost most of the liberation struggles in Africa including the battle of Cuito Canavalle where the apartheid forces were defeated in Angola.

NUM values the ideals that this revolutionary stood for and the relationship and friendship between the people of Cuba and South Africa. NUM will continue to be part of the solidarity movement in support of the people of Cuba against the imperial onslaught of Donald Trump and his imperialist forces. ♦

# CORRUPTION IS A POLITICAL PROBLEM, THEREFORE IT NEEDS A POLITICAL SOLUTION

The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) is aligning itself with the assertion made by the Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa Thabo Makgoba saying that politicians who make money out of a coronavirus pandemic amount to an act of genocide.

Our members who come from poor communities that work in mining, energy, and construction are amongst the most hit by this pandemic due to lack of resources. The stolen monies have contributed indirectly to the death of those who such funds needed to help.

allocated to tackle the scourge of COVID-19 but others arrogantly found that as an opportunity to enrich themselves, that is totally unacceptable”, said NUM President Joseph Montisetse.

The NUM also acknowledges that corruption is a political problem, therefore it needs a political solution hence we supported the President Cyril Ramaphosa’s letter to the African National Congress members to vacate offices if they face corruption charges. They must not wait for legal processes to be exhausted.

As we throw condemnation stones we must be sure that we do not live in a glasshouse. However, this unethical business practices must be condemned as it has affected the vulnerable people who needed the COVID-19 funds to preserve lives and livelihood.

**The Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa Thabo Makgoba saying that politicians who make money out of a coronavirus pandemic amount to an act of genocide.**

We call on comrades in the ruling party, the African National Congress, who stand against the looting frenzy to come out in condemnation of the feeding frenzy because silence is complicity to the crime. Silence by good people of our country sends a wrong message that it is the entire African National Congress that is corrupt while as

The NUM has observed with contempt and disappointment the recent events of corruption in various provinces of our country where millions of rands allocated for Covid19 have been looted by politicians through their dirty looting networks of family and friends.

workers we know that this is not the case.

The NUM condemns these developments and believes that as a trade union we cannot be reduced to being voting fadders when elections are at hand.

We also note that this looting culture, besides stifling service delivery to our people, has shifted our struggle for economic freedom and real emancipation towards a struggle against corruption. Such a shift inevitably betrays the National Democratic Revolution.

“As a trade union, we must also guard against corruption in all sectors of our government.

As workers, we should be worried about the future of our children if corruption becomes a defining feature of the South African political landscape in which criminals and tenderpreneurial parasites with family webs can make money and huge profits without any real ownership and investment in productive assets and operations.

It is so bad that millions of rands are being

This means that the opportunity for decent jobs for many South Africans is betrayed by the national struggle. In this regard, as workers, we call for a blacklisting of all those tenderpreneurs found guilty of corrupt activities.

By black-listing these elements, we will prevent them from making any business transactions with the state in the future. These deeds must also be conceptualized and deemed as acts of counter-revolution devouring our revolution.

The names and information about the culprits must be posted on websites of procurement

*continued on page 3*





# CHINESE DENIALISM BETRAYS MAO ZEDONG INTERNATIONALISM



By Tankiso Mike Fafuli – NUM Official and former Ward Councillor, JHB  
(Writes in his personal capacity). Date: 17 June 2020

## 1. Introduction

This input's focus is largely on the recent ill-treatment of Africans in China during the enforcement of Chinese regulations pertaining to covid-19 pandemic. It is the position of this input that indeed there is evidence that Africans were ill-treated in China particularly in the city of Guangzhou.

This input further holds that there is general discrimination of Africans in China and discrimination against them exposed them to further stereo-typing and revived the historical colonial legacy of African animalisation.

Thus seen as responsible for the second wave spread of the virus compared to other race groups. The official position of China has been to dismiss the allegation as either propoganda or misunderstanding of how it conducts enforcement. This attitude deprives them the opportunity to attend to this problem from the perspective of the victims.

A positive response from this angel would empower China to strengthen further its relations and the peoples of Africa on person to person, community to community basis, which is entrenching relations beyond official state to state relations connexion.

## 2. Background

### 2.1 Guangzhou city and African population

The city of Guangzhou is regarded as the capital of Guangdong province. It has a large-community of Africans. The African community is characterised by those who come from Nigeria, Ghana, and Mali. South Africans are also found including Egyptians and those from Democratic Republic of Congo.

The capital is fertile commercial centre responsible for supporting an export driven manufacturing sector. The concentration of Africans is a result of the pedigree of tolerance the area has shown and the general growing cordial relations between African countries and China. While there is no precise statistics the cautious estimation is that more than 15,000 Africans live in this economic hub city.

### 2.2 China investment in Africa

China has invested heavily in advancing African infrastructure development. It is with great acknowledgement that China has built the headquarters of African Union in Addis Ababa, and has also invested a lot in Africa's infrastructure development across the continent. Recently, China is playing a critical role in supporting the continent with medical masks and other relevant supplies to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 pandemic. For instance "China overtook the US as Africa's largest trading partner nine years ago, and in September 2018 President Xi Jinping pledged a further \$60 billion in loans and investments".

## 3. Trailing Connexion Lacking

### 3.1 lack of transection of relations to lower base

However, this intercontinental relationship which blossoms at elite levels does not manifest in the person to person level or community to community levels between the Chinese and Africans. The reason is that both continents have not invested in ensuring that the smooth relations that take place at official states levels transcend to these dynamic and intricate peoples levels.

For this reason Africans at these levels experience discrimination in the hands of Chinese who still see them as inferior folks with criminal potential and a threat to stability. For instance Guanjou is popularly known as 'chocolate city' due to the number of Africans residing there. The experience of Africans in the area is simply harassment and as such are often stopped and searched for IDs and Passports documents comparatively speaking. A conduct which does not often apply to other racial groups.

*continued on page 4*

*continued from page 2*

departments of state institutions. Such black-lists should also be made accessible to the public to prevent implicated individuals and companies from indulging in business transactions with the government.

The African National Congress must remove anyone found guilty of corruption from political office and deployment lists. We call on the African National Congress to stop selective prosecution in which officials of the state are hounded for irregularities while the political executive responsible for affected departments or entities are exonerated. The African National

Congress must consider holding any political executive liable for maleficence in their offices and be forced to resign.

As workers, we should find ways to call on the African National Congress to stop family members of deployees from being involved in business with the government. It is a sacrifice those availing themselves for deployment should make. This will contribute positively in preventing activities of corruption through family networks. Finally, the NUM calls on all its members and their families to report any form of corruption within the civil service starting from the wards to

the national offices. They should do this without any fear to save our revolution from imploding under the weight of corruption.

If we do not stand firm in correcting the African National Congress it will lose the coming elections and we will find it difficult to mobilise people because we were silent when wrong things happened.

There should be continuous lifestyle audit but it should not be limited only to politicians, it must include those who are participants in the procurement processes - **NUM President.** ♦

continued from page 3



This is clear racism. There is a need to the Chinese government to therefore invest a lot in good inter-racial communal inter-connectedness in this area. Otherwise a continued grievance may catapult the continental relations between China and Africa into disastrous international relations experience and to the disadvantage of both people.

### 3.2 The Diplomatic spin and its betrayal

The Chinese diplomatic spin betrays the esteem in which Africa holds for China. Such that they would expect apology, accountability, and consolidation of relations when challenges of this nature emerge. But this has not happened and where it has happened it has done so amongst and between the narrow political elites of both continents.

While this may satisfy political egoism of the continent's elite it does not necessarily attend to the massive grievance of those directly affected. Such as casualties of racist ill-treatment and their communities and their African countries of origin.

It is also not necessarily to the maximum appreciation of the masses of Africa. Who are equally directly offended by the association of their folks as disease carriers. A tendency consistent with the colonial legacies responsible for the animalisation of the Africans as monkeys, chimpanzees, and baboons.

This tendency has not received the colonial currency it deserves from those offended and largely aggrieved by the events of ill-treatment and harassment in April 2020 covid-19 breaking interventions. Therefore it would be a grave insult by China to reduce the African grievance to misunderstanding and propaganda.

#### 3.2.1 Motive forces of the revolution

It is the legendary wisdom of the great Chinese revolutionary Mao Zedong himself which reminds the workers and

the working class of our continent that "The people, and the people alone, are the motive force in the making of world history". Mao died in 1976 at the age of 82 and he was responsible for the establishment of the current People's Republic of China.

Driven by his wisdom any reconciliation and accountability project between China and African Union and limited to the political elite pertaining to the allegations of ill-treatment of Africans in China would not be representative of the aggrieved multitudes of the continent. Simply because the masses of the continent would not have been taken along and familiarised with the discussions, explanations, and outcomes thereof.

Currently it does appear that the matter has been reduced to the lower levels of our societies in which discrimination happens. This is unfortunate and betrays Mao Zedong's instructive inclusive guide on the importance of the involvement of the masses, the poor and working class, for the success of any social change.

#### 3.2.2 Strengthening intercontinental relations

Lack of efforts to ensure that participation is broadened is a grave bilateral weakness. A good attempt given the problem would involve the lower classes and an extension of gratitude to victims' harassment themselves. But politicians on both sides of the unions have missed the opportunity to strengthen the intercontinental affairs.

Therefore the African working class people amongst whom are victims of discrimination and racism must agitate for China accountability against its denialism. The aggrieved masses of the continent yearn for open explanation, apology, and reconnection. So that they can revisit china fearlessly and as full respected humans.

This is important to undertake and the

lower base of the continent must activate their solidarity, lobby, and mobilisation networks to address their grievance against ill-treatment of fellow African migrants in China. The ANC outside government has a responsibility to assist in this regard.

Alternatively, societies may have to lead themselves in this quest in a way whose outcome may therefore not be predictable.

#### 3.2.3 Apology to the African people

The gesture of apology is very imperative for China to do to the African people. For instance, relationship experts generally indicate that "Apologizing helps repair relationships by getting people talking again, and makes them feel comfortable with each other again".



Current President of South Africa, Cde Cyril Ramaphosa

**NUM founding General Secretary Cyril Ramaphosa has this to say on why NUM was formed: "We formed the NUM so that it can be the shield and spear for mineworkers. That is what the NUM was formed for. So that with the spear it can launch attacks, it can march forward and eliminate all forms of exploitation and discrimination that was levelled against mineworkers. It became a shield because it was only the NUM that could defend mineworkers and it continues to be the only union in the mining industry that can defend mineworkers. The NUM became an important weapon against tribalism. Before the NUM was formed, tribalism was promoted, it was encouraged and it was planted throughout the mining industry. The mining bosses thrived on dividing workers and they divided workers along tribal lines." ♦**





It is important that China makes this apology and the ANC working with the SACP and Cosatu must assist it. The masses of our people must embrace the intercourse. Where it is practical to express such apology to the affected people directly it should be done. The fundamental principle in such exercise reparation of intercontinental relations and building sustainable relationships.

### 3.3 Humanity and Equality

#### 3.3.1 Global restoration of the African dignity

An apology to the African people who incurred the wrath of Chinese officials contributes immensely to the restoration of the African dignity. Again in this regard relationship experts indicate that 'Apologies re-establish dignity for those you hurt. Letting the injured party know that you know it was your fault, not theirs'. For the purpose of the restoration of the dignity of Africans who were accused of being responsible for the spread of second wave of Chinese Covid-19 China must pronounce an apology to Africa generally.

It must extend direct apology to those who were manhandled and ill-treated as seen in social media videos and international news. Such an act is imperative and more revolutionary than a simple populist "appeal unto Caesar". It is not the Rome in the Apostle Paul's world that begs for apology to re-instate the African dignity. It is the lower base, the massive low base people of Africa, and not the elite, who yearn for the restoration of the African dignity. For this quest China remains heavily indebted to these multitudes.

#### ► Discrimination against Africans and African American

##### 3.3.1.1 Intelligence of the African people supreme

Besides their dignity, African peoples`

intelligence has been undermined over time. Thus in most instances the black Africans were animalised into baboons, monkeys, and apes. Including all forms of derogatory stereotyping throughout colonial history. As a result the perceptions cannot be taken lightly as they re-invent a painful legacy to the African continent.

Gabriela Dulan, a medical student from Uganda studying in China in a live interview with Al Jazeera said "Africans are put in quarantine for 14 days thereafter this 14 days quarantined is extended but this was not done to people of other races. They are being tested more than ones". A point further affirmed by Roberto Castillo.

#### 3.3.2 Discrimination against African Migrants

The official line of China has been to reject all allegations in this regard including personal victim accounts. According to BBC Reporter the local authority in Guangzhou indicated that they had tested each African national in the city and discovered "111 of the more than 4,500 in Guangzhou tested positive".

The assertion of testing every African national, on its own, simply demonstrates a degree of systematic racial profiling and count targeting. Effectively showing a level of discrimination by local officials on African migrants.

As Africans were suspected of being responsible for the spread of the virus they were stigmatised and denied access to restaurants and hotels. Those who were there to study were taken out of their rooms without being provided alternative accommodation. There are direct personal interviewees to corroborate these events.

#### 3.3.3 The myth of African disease shipping agents

It is also a long colonial history that Africans were viewed as backwards and uncivilised. They were viewed

as potential disease shipping agents. Whose movements needed to be limited as a precautionary health and safety measure by all those nations who deemed themselves as civilised. China is not immune from such colonialist mind-set. As a result it is not far-fetched to imagine incidents of African discrimination in its context.

Sara Clarke reports that "we saw 114 new cases reported in Guangzhou of coronavirus infections and 16 of those were Africans". The African migrants are accused of being responsible for a "second wave of infections in Guangzhou. What is ridiculous is that the positive outcomes of their testing presented just a fraction of 114 new cases. This is clear confirmation of singling out of people based on their race. Inevitably it insinuates that the test were also an expression of xenophobic attack on African migrants by Chinese officials.

#### 3.3.4 Eviction of African immigrants

The Chinese authorities responsible for implementing Covid-19 regulations compliance went to an extent of evicting African tenants in some apartments while leaving other race groups unperturbed. The inhuman undertaking of these evictions is deplorable as it was conducted in the middle of the night. Those evicted remained stranded for alternative accommodation and ended up in streets. As information points out "There is an escalating scrutiny of foreign nationals, but they are targeting the Africans and the African American community".

### 3.4 Long History of Discrimination of Africans

#### 3.4.1 Discrimination of Africans and African Americans

The Discrimination of Africans in China is not just triggered by the desperation of Chinese officials in their efforts to deal with the pandemic. The discrimination of Africans in China has a long history. Therefore the discrimination of "black people," is not new and had been observed long before the COVID-19 crisis". China simply prejudiced minorities and migrants to cover its failures in tackling covid-19. Thus Africans became a symbol of safety hazard and their harassment clear measure of prevention and good public relations.

#### 3.4.2 Forceful quarantine racism

Many Africans were forced into quarantine in areas such as Guangzhou. By the way 'Guangzhou is home to Asia's largest African migrant population, who come to China chasing business opportunities, reputable universities and low living costs'. In their explanation they were also subjected to numerous covid-19 tests despite the first outcomes being negative while other racial groups would be tested once.

continued on page 7

# Num regret the decision taken by Minister Gwede Mantashe to drop a supreme court appeal on once-empowered, always-empowered principle

The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) deems the decision by the Minister for Mineral Resources and Energy Gwede Mantashe to drop a Supreme Court appeal that contended a ruling supporting ‘once-empowered, always-empowered’ as regrettable.

The High Court ruled earlier in April this year that mining companies are not required to top up black ownership levels if they have previously met the minimum 26% black ownership requirements.

The Department of Mineral Resources and Energy argued that the ownership element of the Mining Charter should be a continuous compliance requirement for the duration of the mining right and the Mineral Council argued that it should be a once-off requirement.

Supreme Court was expected to make a ruling on this standoff. The decision by the Minister to drop the appeal means the order would be undisputed.

The effect of ‘once empowered always empowered’ rule is that a mining company will still be deemed to be in compliance with transforming its ownership structure even if that company does not currently have the required level of historically disadvantaged South African (HDSA) ownership.

The consequence of this decision by the Minister will derail SA’s transformation journey and delay achieving equality and economic transformation in the mining industry.

Recognizing that SA’s economy still excludes the vast majority of black people from ownership of productive assets. This step by the Minister is a reversal of the gains we have made in transforming the ownership of the mining industry.

The ownership of SA’s mineral wealth and more particularly ownership of mining companies still lies in the hands of those who were historically advantaged by apartheid.

For as long as this grave inequality remains – it is tantamount to selling out to allow a ‘once-empowered, always-empowered’ principle to prevail.

The objective of the Mining Charter is to promote economic transformation to enable meaningful participation by black people in the economy; and further to achieving a substantial change in the racial composition of ownership of mining companies.

The decision to end the appeal is in direct

opposition with the object of the MPRDA, Mining Charter and BEE legislation.

The ‘once empowered always empowered’ rule is contrary to the constitutional right to equality, the BEE Act’s function to achieve substantial change in the racial composition of ownership of enterprises and further the MPRDA’s objective to achieve equal distribution of SA’s mineral wealth.

There are still unsuitable and non-compliant levels of HDSA ownership in the mining industry. The decision to end the appeal has hastily ended transformation before it could even happen.

The attainment of substantial change and transformation in the racial composition of ownership of mining companies cannot be a once-off requirement.

Compliance to the ownership element in the Mining Charter necessitates a continuation to benefit future generations in order to achieving substantial change in the racial composition of ownership of mining companies.

The effect of ‘once empowered always empowered’ rule is that the ownership levels of SA’s mineral wealth would still remain predominantly white. ♦



**Women have a higher chance of getting cancer. August is women’s month and we encourage women to be aware of inherent health risks.**



Remember, prevention and early detection saves lives. Eat balanced meals, monitor your physical and general wellbeing so that you can be healthy.

**#YourHealthMatters**

Share our post and visit [www.mineralscouncil.org.za](http://www.mineralscouncil.org.za) to learn more

**#MakingMiningMatter**



# The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) takes note of the recent political developments in Zimbabwe

**N**UM is disturbed by the labelling of Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) as a terrorist Organisation by the ZANU-PF Acting spokesperson Patrick Chinamasa. This unfortunate and baseless statement by Mr Chinamasa is meant to silence the trade unions in Zimbabwe.

Trade unions are legitimate and democratic organs of workers and recognized by the constitution of Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe is a signatory to eight core

ILO Conventions amongst others. Therefore this verbal attack and the visit by state security agents to the house of the ZCTU President Comrade Gift Mutasa on the 12th of July 2020 whereby they damaged his vehicle is a clear violation of its international obligations.

NUM has a history of working with unions around the world and unions in Zimbabwe and therefore stands with our colleagues in Zimbabwe and condemns this development as it paves the

way for the destabilisation and repression of democratic institutions of workers.

We also support the call by the international labour federations, BWI, IndustriALL and SATUCC to condemn this development. We call on the Zimbabwe government to respect the rights of workers and its citizens and allow peaceful protests. ♦

..... **By International Relations Unit.**

*continued from page 5*

Video evidence gone viral has backed up the allegations of racist treatment of African migrants by Chinese officials when conducting raids and covid-19 rules enforcement. Thus the popular anger of this Chinese racist offensive across the continent against such attacks.

### 3.4.3 Chinese posturing and denialism

Chinese officials have resorted to outright rejection of these allegations as an official position. Reducing what the world sees on social media as prejudice against African to a mere "misunderstanding", is disgusting. It is a demonstration of the undermining of the intelligence of African people. The denials do not assist the African people to reclaim their dignity and China to extend unto them respect as trading partner.

## 4. Partnership of Mutual Interest

China is now the number investor in the African economy and there is no doubt that this demonstrates the growing fraternal relations between the two continents. But this must be a partnership based on respect of each other. But does this happen? It is not a secret that many Chinese enterprises or projects prefer to source their labour from China at the exclusion of local African labour across the continent. This is a grave indictment against African governments and the African Union.

Now that South Africa chairs the African Union it is an opportunity for South Africa NUM working with Cosatu to engage and influence President Ramaphosa and the ruling party to begin to change this trend.

The ANC Nasrec Conference in 2017 engendered Radical Economic Transformation.

This agenda must encapsulate local jobs for local people of the continent unless where critical skill is missing then China can bring some. Such an engagement should be undertaken sooner than later. It bears reclamation of respect of our dignity and an affirmation of equal partner, and mutual respect in trade endeavours.

## 5. Conclusion

The 'Mistreatment of Africans' in this economic hub of China has endangered the good relations often presented as existing between China and African continent.

The reality is that Africa has a large population of Chinese in respective African countries. If this is not attended to and proper advocacy conducted it could result in a big counter-offensive to the trajectory of intercontinental integration the two are building. This should be prevented.

While concerns have been registered we have not experienced a proportionate challenge by Africans to China. Their quest for clarity has been very timid in the face of clear evidence on social media and Chinese denialism.

It is our responsibility to defend our dignity, equality, and our humanness against our animalisation. Doing so requires an uncompromising humble posture. Furthermore, we should not use different standards of judgment and condemnation against colonial tendencies by either the West or the East. Our dignity as African people must reign supreme at all times in protection of our human rights.

## 6. Way Forward

- ▶ It is the responsibility of the African Union to call on China to withdraw absurd excuses as this undermines the decolonisation of the continent and the humanisation of the African people.

- ▶ South Africa should condemn the inhuman manner in which some of the African people in China were treated such as being evicted in the middle of the night. We call for an apology on such inhuman treatment and not diplomatic spin.

- ▶ Most importantly we should call for action and see accountability against the responsible officials who undertook the night evictions targeted against African migrants who were allegedly suspected of Covid-19 spread. Including many other inhuman actions.

## REFERENCES

**Aguilera J (2020)**, Confederate Statues Are Being Removed amid Protests over George Floyd's Death, published June 10 by Time, US.

**Castillo R (2020)**, How discrimination towards Africans and China's surveillance state will reset a migration trend, published by Quartz Africa Weekly Brief.

**Dotto C (2020)**, 'Little Africa' in China, published by New Internationalist.

**Li H (2020)**, Mistreatment of Africans in Guangzhou threatens China's coronavirus diplomacy, issued April 17, published by The Conversation). By

**Scott E (2020)**, Why It's Important to Apologize in Relationships, published by Very Well Health, April 2018.

**Sun Y (2020)**, COVID-19, Africans' hardships in China, and the future of Africa-China relations, published in Africa in Focus, 17 April issue.

**Vincent D (2020)**, Every African National Tested (in 'Africans in China: We face coronavirus discrimination'). BBC News, Hong Kong, 17 April. ♦

# Right to refuse to work in an unsafe working area in relation to COVID-19

By Martha Lale - Health and Safety Legal Unit

## What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is defined in the Disaster Management Regulations published under the Disaster Management Act 57 of 2002 as the Novel corona virus (2019-n CoV2) which is an infectious disease caused by a virus that has previously not identified in humans, which emerged during 2019 and was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organisation ("WHO"). Novel corona virus is caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome corona virus 2 (SARS-Cov 2).

When Covid 19 was declared a pandemic it meant that it was already a global epidemic of which an epidemic is referred to as a large outbreak.

## What are the risks attached to COVID-19

People/persons of all ages can be infected by Covid-19. Older people and people with the pre-existing medical conditions are at a higher risk of becoming severely ill when infected by novel corona virus. Those illnesses are the following:

- ▶ obesity,
- ▶ asthma,
- ▶ diabetes, and/or
- ▶ heart disease

Covid-19 causes more severe diseases than seasonal influenza. Even though many people globally have built immunity to seasonal flu strains, however Covid-19 is a new virus to which no one has immunity. This means that more people are susceptible to infection and some will suffer severe disease/illness and even succumb to the severity of the disease.

## How is the disease transmitted

Persons/people could get infected by novel coronavirus when touching contaminated surfaces or objects and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth.

Covid-19 virus can be transmitted in all areas including areas with hot and humid weather. Novel corona virus is a respiratory virus which spreads primarily through droplets generated when an infected person coughs, sneezes or

through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose. Novel corona virus can be transmitted from person to person, usually after close contact with an infected person.

## Treatment of the disease

There is no specific treatment for the disease/illness caused by the novel corona virus and many symptoms can be treated based on the patient's clinical condition.

## Symptoms displayed by person infected by COVID-19

A person who is infected by novel corona virus will display the following identifiable symptoms:

- ▶ body aches;
- ▶ loss of smell
- ▶ loss of taste
- ▶ nausea;
- ▶ vomiting;
- ▶ diarrhoea;
- ▶ fatigue
- ▶ weaknesses or tiredness



NUM Carletonville Region led by the Acting Deputy Chairperson Phumeza Mgengo donated sanitary towels, masks and sanitizers in Carletonville and surrounding communities during the lockdown.

continued on page 8



continued from page 7

### Asymptomatic infected persons

A person who is infected by novel corona virus and does not show the identifiable symptoms as mentioned above is referred to as asymptomatic infected person. Medical evidence has shown that asymptomatic infected persons can infect other persons. Cases of persons being infected by asymptomatic persons appears to be very common globally and even complicates the efforts to get the pandemic under control.

This, translated into a working place would mean that an asymptomatic person can easily get access into a working area and get into contact with other workers resulting in other workers being infected, if no proper health and safety measures and testing protocols are put in place.

### Are employees protected by any law in ensuring that they do not get infected at the work place?

Even though, Covid-19 is a new pandemic, occupational health and safety legislation has been promulgated in order to ensure that employees are protected and prevented from being infected with occupational illnesses and injuries whilst at work. Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) 85 of 1993 and Mine Health and Safety Act (MHSA) 29 of 1996 are the two pieces of legislation that are meant to protect and prevent employees from occupational illnesses and injuries.

In addition to this, section 24 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa provides that: "(a) everyone has a right to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being", meaning that, the health and well-being of persons in the Republic of South Africa is a fundamental right protected by the Constitution of our country. The health and well-being of everyone as mentioned in section 24 of the Constitution would also include the health and safety of everyone in the country.

Since Covid-19 has been declared a pandemic by World Health Organisation (WHO) it then meant that the Disaster Management must be invoked. It was therefore prudent for the South African government to develop regulations issued which regulates the management of Covid-19 in South Africa and hence the promulgation of Regulations in compliance with section 27(2) of the Disaster Management Act, 2002.

As a result of the regulations mentioned above, the department of labour and employment developed Occupational Health Measures in the workplace dated 29 April 2020 contained in Government gazette number 43257, notice 479 which are the occupational health measures to be applied by the employers in the management of Covid-19 in the workplaces and are in compliance to regulation 10 (8) of the Disaster management Act, 2002.

On the other hand the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy issued a Mandatory

guideline to provide a framework to mitigate and manage Covid-19 Outbreak in the mining industry that requires employers in the industry to develop Code of Practices in their operations in compliance to the issued guideline.

### Employees/workers obligations in relation to COVID-19

In as much as the regulations published on the 29 April 2002 in terms of the Disaster Management Act, 2002, of which the Occupational health measures contained in Government gazette number 43257, notice 479 places a number of obligations to the employer, they also place obligations to the employees/workers on the following issues:

**Can the lack of implementation of COVID-19 health measures by the employer result in a working area to be declared to be unsafe**

- ▶ **Item 21.2 requires every worker to report if they suffer from identifiable symptoms mentioned above;**
- ▶ **Item 24 requires every employee/worker diagnosed with Covid-19 and isolated in terms of the Department of Health guidelines, to undergo a medical evaluation in order to confirm a negative result of a test conducted if such an employee is to be allowed to return to work;**
- ▶ **In terms of items 29.3 and 29.4 Employees are required to always wear a mask, sanitise or always wash hands with soap and to always adhere to the employer's social distance rules.**

The abovementioned obligations are in line with the provisions of section 14 of OHSA and section 22 of MHSA which requires every employee to take reasonable care to protect their own health and safety and also to take reasonable care to protect the health and safety of their fellow employees who may be affected by their acts or omissions.

In terms of OHSA and MHSA an employer is required to ensure that employees are protected and prevented from acquiring occupational illnesses and injuries whilst at work.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996, section 24 protects the health and well-being of persons in the Republic of South

Africa. Since Covid-19 is has been declared a global pandemic by WHO, and the regulations promulgated in terms of section 27 (2) of the Disaster Management Act, 2002, aims to protect every persons' health who might be infected by the novel corona virus (Covid-19) which is in line with section 24 of the Constitution Act 108 of 1996.

The Occupational health measures contained in Government gazette number 43257, notice 479 issued by the Department of Labour in Compliance to Regulation 10 (8) of the Disaster Management Act Regulations issued on the 29 April 2020 which are in compliance to section 27(2) of the Disaster Management Act 57 of 2002, which places the overall responsibility on the employer to ensure that measures are put in place at any workplace to manage the outbreak of Covid-19 and to mitigate the infections.

Can an employee refuse to enter and work in a working area where an employer has not complied with the occupational health measures as outlined/provided will such an employee be regarded as having refused to discharge his duties in terms of his contract of employment with the employer. Section 23 of MHSA gives an employee an automatic right to leave any working place if circumstances arise with reasonable justification, appear to that employee to pose a serious danger to the health or safety of that employee.

Section 14 of OSHA requires that an employee must report to the health and safety representative a situation which is unsafe or unhealthy which has come to his/her attention and such a situation must also be reported to the employer, which does not necessarily give the employee an automatic right to withdraw at the time when such an employee identifies an unsafe situation.

In relation to a working area where the required occupational health measures are not put in place, and also taking into consideration that Covid-19 is an infectious disease and the factors surrounding how a person can get infected by this disease, such a working area should be regarded as an unsafe working area which employees can refuse to enter and perform their duties in it.

Does a contract of employment allow an employee to enter and perform duties in an unsafe working area? Irrespective of the fact that an employee has entered into a contract of employment with the employer, some of the obligations imposed to the employer by the occupational health and safety legislations is to provide a safe and healthy working environment to their employees. Looking at this in terms of the risks posed by Covid-19 in working areas and ensuring that that the employer provides a safe and healthy working area that do not pose any danger to their employees, one would actually agree to the fact that the occupational health measures issued as mentioned above, are meant to ensure that a safe environment is provided by the employer for its/their employees. ♦

# COSATU welcomes President Ramaphosa's pledge to ratify Convention 190 to fight violence and harassment in the workplace

**C**OSATU has noted the President's announcement of government's commitment to ratify Convention 190. For COSATU and workers in general, this is the most significant announcement for this year's Women's Month.

Convention 190 was adopted by the International Labour Organisation on 10th of June 2019 and it was intended to eliminate violence and harassment at the workplace against women. When ratified and passed into law by South Africa it will be a key tool in the fight against the incessant violence and harassment that women face daily across workplaces in this country.

We are perturbed though that since its adoption, last year, it has not been tabled in Parliament by the Department of Employment and Labour for ratification or to the Cabinet for approval.



This is despite COSATU and its affiliates raising constantly reminding Minister and senior leadership of the Department of Employment and Labour to treat this as an urgent matter.

Hopefully after the President's announcement, everyone will move with speed to process it through Cabinet and table it in Parliament. Working women across South Africa need to be assured that Parliament will ratify Convention 190 by November 2020.

We also expect Parliament, the Departments of Employment and Labour, and Justice and

Constitutional Development to review our existing labour and criminal legislation to ensure that all our laws are in compliance with Convention 190 and to provide the necessary amendments where needed. Protection of women in the workplace is non-negotiable. ♦

Constitutional Development to review our existing labour and criminal legislation to ensure that all our laws are in compliance with Convention 190 and to provide the necessary amendments where needed. Protection of women in the workplace is non-negotiable. ♦

## Eskom and SIU's efforts to recover stolen funds should be accompanied by efforts to prosecute wrongdoers

**T**he Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) has noted and welcomes Eskom and the SIU's efforts to recover about R3.8 billion worth of looted funds from former senior officials of Eskom and the members of the infamous Gupta family.

This is long overdue, and it is necessary in fixing the ailing power utility. The era of impunity is over and corrupt politicians' officials, managers, and board members, who have looted Eskom should be held accountable.

The Federation is disappointed though that the SAPS, the Hawks, the Assets Forfeiture Unit, and

the NPA are missing in action. We expect more from these state institutions. They need to play their role in fighting the cancer of corruption.

Eskom has destroyed the South African economy and millions of livelihoods. While we are happy that there is some movement in recovering the stolen funds, we still demand a public forensic audit to look into the flawed procurement processes, and the exorbitantly corrupt financial transactions and deals that have been signed over the last two decades.

Corrupt, fraudulent, and burdensome contracts at Eskom must be canceled. Quality control

and transparency must be restored, and proper management and governance systems must be introduced to ensure that work gets done and resources are not stolen nor wasted.

These are key components of the Eskom Social Compact and Implementation Plan initiated by COSATU and soon to be adopted by the Presidential Working Committee at Nedlac. Its adoption must be speeded up to ensure the power utility is turned around. Both Eskom and the government need to account to social partners at Nedlac. ♦



# Silicosis settlement becomes effective

By Adam Letshele

Companies party to the silicosis settlement reached on 3 May 2018 of the silicosis and tuberculosis class action litigation, are pleased to announce that the settlement agreement has become effective. The Occupational Lung Disease Working Group - representing African Rainbow Minerals, Anglo American South Africa, AngloGold Ashanti, Gold Fields, Harmony and Sibanye-Stillwater – and Richard Spoor Inc, Abrahams Kiewitz Inc and the Legal Resources Centre representing the claimants, reached this historic settlement after almost five years of negotiations.

On 26 July 2019 a full bench of the Gauteng Local Division, Johannesburg, of the High Court, approved the settlement agreement reached by the parties, but before the agreement could become effective, class members were given the right to opt out of the agreement if they so wished. The 90-day opt out period ended on 24 November 2019. The opt out submissions underwent an independent audit. The outcome was that only three class members chose to opt out, indicating that the support of class members for the settlement is almost entirely positive.

The agreement provides meaningful compensation to all eligible gold mineworkers (or their dependants) suffering from silicosis and/or who contracted work-related tuberculosis.

Eligibility is based on a mineworker having worked for a mine owned or managed by any of the companies that are party to the settlement at any time between 12 March 1965 and 10 December 2019.

Now that the agreement is unconditional, the Tshiamiso Trust, which will oversee the processing of claims and payment of benefits to those eligible, was registered on 28 November 2019 and the appointment of the full Board of Trustees is underway. Tshiamiso is a Setswana word meaning "to make good" or "to correct".

Further details on the establishment of the Trust and how potential beneficiaries can establish whether they might be eligible for compensation under the Trust and, if they are potentially eligible, how to go about establishing a claim, will be made in due course.

## Work in Progress

The lodging, assessment, certification and payment of compensation benefits on a large scale will become possible only once the organisation and systems of the Trust have been established. The structures of the Trust, and the drafting of the policies, procedures and processes, including



the recruitment process of staff and service providers are close to finalisation. The necessary advertisements and appointments will follow.

The Trust Deed emphasises the importance of cooperating with the Medical Bureau for Occupational Diseases (MBOD), and the Compensation Commissioner for Occupational Diseases (CCOD), which administer the state compensation system, and the National Institute of Occupational Health (NIOH). In this regard, cooperation agreements are under discussion which will enhance the functioning of the Trust.

A crucial avenue of work is the development of a claims management information technology (IT) system. This work is underway and will initially be implemented at specific sites in selected locations as part of a pilot to test its efficiency and to ensure that it serves the needs of claimants and the Trust. The pilot phase of the system is planned for the end of June 2020. Additional sites will be established over time.

In accordance with the settlement agreement the databases of the participating mining companies, the claimants' attorneys and other relevant sources have been combined and given to the Trust. This will assist the Trust in identifying eligible claimants.

As early a stage as possible, the Trust hopes to be able to use this combined database to identify and process the first claimants through the Trust's

compensation claims management system. Other claimants should please be assured that work on their claims will proceed as quickly as possible.

The Trust plans to use user-friendly communication tools to enable claimants to check for themselves whether there is adequate information already available to the Trust to support a potential claim, and to receive information on where to formally lodge the claim and go for medical assessments, if required.

## Detail of the settlement agreement and Trust Deed

There are ten classes of claimants who, once properly certified, will be eligible for a benefit as follows:

**Silicosis Class 1: R70 000; This is an early stage of silicosis (lung function impairment of up to 10%) which is not compensable in terms of ODMWA**

**Silicosis Class 2: R150 000; This is the equivalent of 1st degree silicosis in ODMWA**

**Silicosis Class 3: R250 000; This is the equivalent of 2nd degree silicosis in ODMWA**

Silicosis Class 4 with defined special aggravated medical condition: a special award of up to R500,000. This category provides relief to a small number of claimants who are suffering from extraordinary disease conditions which exceed most other silicotic claimants. There is no equivalent ODMWA compensation category.

**Dependant of a deceased eligible silicosis claimant who died between 12 March 1965 and the effective date: R100 000, where silicosis is deemed to be the primary cause of death;**

**Dependant of a deceased eligible silicosis claimant who died between 1 January 2008 and terminating on the effective date, where the deceased had the condition referred to in 2 or 3 above: R70 000;**

**First degree tuberculosis. An eligible claimant must: (i) have worked underground at a Working Group mine for two years; and (ii) have been diagnosed with first degree tuberculosis within a year of working at least one shift at a WG mine: R50 000;**

**Second degree tuberculosis (same conditions as 7 above save for second degree diagnosis): R100 000. The tuberculosis diagnoses are in line with MBOD definitions;**

"Historical" tuberculosis (in absence of medical

continued on page 12

continued from page 11

report determining degree of tuberculosis):

An eligible claimant must: (i) have worked at a WG mine for 2 years between 12 March 1965 and 28 February 1994; (ii) have been issued with a tuberculosis certificate (without indicating degree of tuberculosis) within a year of working at least one shift at a WG mine: R10 000 or same condition as (i) and (ii) above but with proof of first degree tuberculosis: R50 000 or second degree tuberculosis: R100 000.

Dependant of a deceased tuberculosis claimant where: (i) the deceased worked underground at a Working Group mine for two years; (ii) the deceased died within a year of working at least one shift at a WG mine; and (iii) tuberculosis was the primary cause of the deceased's death: R100 000.

These benefits will increase annually by the extent of the increase in the CPI from the third year of

operation of the trust fund. Benefits will be paid on the basis of beneficiaries' service at Working Group mines.

There is no limit on the number of potential claimants. Any claimant who has a qualifying claim will receive the compensation due to him or her during the lifetime of the Trust. Individuals will be entitled to opt out if they do not wish to participate in the settlement.

The companies last year announced amounts that each has provided for as the estimated cost to them of the settlement based on actuarial assessments. These amounts total approximately R5bn.

Following the 33% increases on 1 April 2018, the current ODMWA benefit for 1st degree silicosis is R63 100, and for 2nd degree silicosis R140 506. The settlement awards are significantly higher than these amounts.

**What can a potential claimant do now?**

Potential claimants can do one of the following:

**Your local TEBA office can assist you to fill out a V12 form (More service centres to be included and advertised).**

**Phone the call centre at 080 1000 240 or 0800 110 110 and they will help you to fill out a register form.**

**Send a 'please call me' to 072 557 8077 and the call centre will call you back.**

**You can register on the website [www.silicosissettlement.co.za/register](http://www.silicosissettlement.co.za/register).**

If you have already registered at any of these or through the MBOD you do not need to register again. ♦

# NUM declares a wage dispute against Kumba



The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) has declared a wage dispute with Kumba Iron Ore at the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA).

The parties met at the CCMA in Kuruman on the 20th of August 2020.

The NUM demands that the company should offer a wage increment of 8% for the lowest-paid workers and 6,5% for the highest-paid workers. The NUM and the company are in agreement when it comes to wage increases.

The only issue that has stood on the way of the parties signing the agreement is management's

demand. For the past donkey years, the company policy on sick leave provides workers with 120 days. To our dismay, in a round of negotiations, the company wants to do away with the benefit and condition of employment that workers are used to for all these years just like that.

Attempts to convince the company to deal with the issue differently were not successful and that makes the issue; the only stumbling block to signing off the wage agreement. We are very disappointed with the unreasonable and selfish posture. Our view is that as parties we should sign off the agreement and deal with the company demand in a separate process like we have conceded with some of our demands. In actual

fact, we feel that this is unfair to us as workers that for us to get better salaries and conditions of employment we must give away what we already have. This is the perpetual exploitation of workers and the poor. It seems the battle line has been drawn. The NUM remains unshaken and we will fight for our members' demands to the bitter end.

"NUM is ready to find an amicable solution to end the dispute. Attempts to pursue the company to consider conceding to our demands while we were still on the table failed; unfortunately, we reached a dispute without any better offer," said Mpho Phakedi, NUM Treasurer General and

Chief Negotiator at Kumba Iron Ore.

"At the CCMA level once again we made a lot of compromises on the majority of issues including wage increase; housing and even giving away some of the demands such as increase on the retirement fund and conceding to their wish of three years agreement. With all those efforts and concessions the stubborn Iron Ore Giant continued to refuse to play their part. We are very disappointed that the company put its selfish interest first more than the thousands of workers who are exploited on a daily basis by the same company," Phakedi concluded. ♦



# NUM Women's Structure National Women's Day Message

Revolutionary greetings from the office of National Women Structure of The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) to beautiful women of our country and special greetings to the women of the NUM.

09th August is National Women's Day in South Africa whereby as women we not only to celebrate but commemorate the achievements of the Women of 1956.

As Women of today, it is upon ourselves to each emulate The Women of 1956, we should strongly and positively continue with the NOW fight that is Gender Equality and Gender-Based Violence. The 2020 Women's Day is commemorated under the theme "Generation Equality: Realising Women's Rights for an Equal Future". This is the national theme that Minister in Presidency for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities Mme Maite Nkoana-Mashabane launched of the 31st July 2020 in commemorating 2020 Women's Month Program.

As women of South Africa, we celebrate and commemorate Women's Day under very difficult times whereby globally we are affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and Gender-Based Violence.

The month of August celebrates women and their achievements across SA. This special time calls upon all of us to reflect on the immense contribution women have made to the history of this country and continue to make as the drivers of change for a better society and SA for all.

National Women's Day draws attention to significant issues South African women still face such as single parenting, domestic violence, and sexual harassment in the place of work, pornography, unequal pay and schooling for all girls. This day can be used as a day to protest or fight for these issues. Due to this public holiday, there have been many significant advances. Before 1994, women had low representation in Parliament of only 2.7%, this number has significantly doubled being 48% throughout the country's government. National women's Day is based around much of

the same principles as International Women's Day on the 08th March and strives for much of the same freedom and rights, and International Women's Equality Day that is commemorated on the 26th August. The day takes us back as US women officially became part of the constitution on the 26th August 1920. This day marked a turning point in the history of the struggles for equal treatment of women's right.

## What are we celebrating?

On Women's Day and any other day, we need to ask ourselves what we are celebrating when this failing economic system has shown time and time again that women are not 'valuable'. On the surface, celebrating Women's Day or month is important, because it is symbolic.

Women such as Winnie Mandela, Lillian Ngoyi, Helen Suzman, Albertina Sisulu and many others have worked hard to ensure that women have better representation, and this should be celebrated.

However, a deeper look into Women's Day elicits reflection that should be part of the celebration. In simple terms, what is worth celebrating? The obvious answer would be that women are free from the political bondage that was apartheid, that women in general – and black women in particular – have fewer structural impediments to entering and progressing in business and at work, and that to some extent, women no longer have to enter the institution of marriage and bear children to be significant.

But on the flip side, men are at war with women; even when women are able to overcome the historical and structural oppression and make it into workplaces, they still have to deal with sexual harassment and being undervalued. They face similar oppression in their communities and at homes.

When capitalism is in crisis, it turns on women, people of colour, LGBTI community (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and Intersex). We have seen this throughout history that when World War I and II ended globally, economies were in tatters and capitalism had to repress women to regain its edge longer and able to provide for their families in the way that society expected them to.

This created what Bell Hooks refers to as a crisis of patriarchal masculinity, where Men were suddenly confused about their role as men in the family and society, because the meaning they attached to being men as 'provider', 'strong', 'head of the home', etc., no longer applied to them. This confusion and frustration were taken out on women, both at home and in the workplace. Men were able to re-enter the workplace, despite women being paid less; many employers still preferred to hire men over women, and women lost their jobs to make room for men. As countries started to rebuild after both wars, women were convinced that their main role was in the home raising the kids, while the men grew the economy.

The same is true for South Africa; at the end of apartheid, the South African economy was in ruins

because of sanctions and because apartheid criminals emptied state funds before fleeing the country. Apartheid was ruthless to black men – many leaders killed, exiled, or in jail. A lot of the later apartheid liberation work was carried out by women and the youth. Similarly, as women in Europe and America were pushed aside after the wars, women in South Africa had to take a back seat to allow men to take the lead in growing a struggling economy.

Today, while the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting everyone, everywhere, but



continued on page 16

# Role of Trade Unions in South Africa Today:

## The Reality of the Labour Movement

By Sabelo Mgotywa



**A**lways bear in mind that the people are not fighting for ideas, for the things in anyone's head. They are fighting to win material benefits, to live better and in peace, to see their lives go forward, to guarantee the future of their child" Amilcar Cabral

Consciousness allows no activist to appreciate vacuum in the struggle. Prior and during the Covid-19 era, the capitalist system presented to the working class, in particular, the workers a reality that the entire working-class organizations have known for decades: the capitalist mode of production thrives on exploitation and crisis. The current reality and material conditions dictate that activists and progressive formations should always expose the injustices in our society and not serve on the wrong side of history.

Following on the path that Fidel Castro paved for the oppressed in saying "I'm not attached to anything. I'm attached to what it feels it's my duty, to do my duty. I think that I will die with my boots on."

It is against Fidel's views that I also want my views to be known, I want to be amongst the downtrodden workers who are on daily basis facing the retrenchments by the heartless capitalists who have no idea how painful it is to sleep

without food on the table. The primary duty of every progressive cadre cannot be the duty to belong, but the duty to participate and contribute constructively. I refuse to be on a political quarantine when material conditions do not permit for such.

It does not require scientific evidence to prove that the capitalist system has designed a path to seek a new way of exploitation or to exclude workers from shaping new modes and patterns of production. Those who own means of production only see workers as tools or objects to be used to

generate more profit for them without anything in return for those who sell their labour-power. Moreover, capitalism continues to entrench and create surplus labour: the pool of unemployed labour.

Equally, the purpose of organized labour has recently been the point of scrutiny, their relevancy has been questioned, especially with a new generation of innovations that enables exploitation and work within a different context of the working environment. The traditional modes of work are changing, and the old way of organising workers is outdated, while unions are still pre-occupied with old challenges and old discussions. Today, innovations such as e-hailing systems in our transport system, digital trading systems and other range of innovations that seek to transform the working environment have left trade unions scrambling over old ideas while capitalism is implementing new ideas and ways of work.

Apart from the latter, the current reality of the depoliticizations of the trade unions – a shift from the primary purpose of being an active vehicle in the broad struggle, producing politically conscious cadres for the movement and mobilizing a wide range of social partners in society to intensified intra-organizational conflicts, factional mandates

and a delink with the broader working-class struggle. Leaders and members of trade unions are more concerned with loyalty to groupings with a core focus on divisions, even if it means bashing each other or compromising workers along the process. This is anti-revolutionary and reflects the antithesis of the core purpose of our struggle and the mandates of trade unions.

Leaders should not be judged by how many people they have destroyed during their term of office but how many lives they have changed for the better.

The working class must unite to escape the brutality imposed by the bourgeoisie, and the only way to secure better lives for themselves, but equally a greater human position, and this cannot be achieved without the political development of trade unions, ideological training of cadres and the unity of the working class. These are all tools to fight the real enemy and their selfish interests which are that of exploiting the working class. The capitalists will always defend their interests with all they have at their disposal.

***Mao Tse Tung shapes our thinking and analysis of the reality that lies ahead by asserting that:***

"Fight no battle unprepared, fight no battle you are not sure of winning, make every effort to be well prepared for each battle, make every effort to ensure victory in the given set of conditions as between the enemy and ourselves".

The power to fight against the real enemy of our people lies with the masses united, focused and determined - knowing exactly who the enemy is. Our agenda includes subjects whose meaning and importance are beyond question and which shows a fundamental preoccupation with struggle, such as abolishing tensions amongst union leaders for worker unity, creating a participatory revolutionary environment devoid of the worker to worker violence, and being strategically consistency, technically flexible and analytically alert.

The worker to worker violence that we have observed in our mining communities in the past few years and currently - can only serve one interest, which is that of the capitalist whose sole ambition is to witness the working class divided at all material times. Workers must unite to defeat the real enemy.



This, therefore, brings one crucial question that we should begin to ask ourselves: who are our friends as well as who are our enemies? The organizational report of 1991 to the National Conference of the ANC by the then Secretary-General, Alfred Nzo, emphasizes that one of the primary principles of conducting the struggle against the brutal apartheid regime was based on the identification of the real enemy. Immediately we answer this fundamental question, we will begin to understand that as workers we have got only one enemy regardless of our political affiliation or preferred trade union that one has joined. The imperialists are always united, and they continue to be, as such we remain vulnerable to an extent that they have mastered the art of using the division of workers to their advantage. The only weapon we have at our disposal is the power of unity; we must organise ourselves and building a united front to confront the real enemy, not ourselves.

This, therefore, reminds us of the African of the proverbs that "No matter how hot the water from your well, it will not cook the rice," which Cabral emphasises that it expresses with singular simplicity a fundamental principle, not only of physics but also of political science.

The time to place power in the hands of the working class has arrived and it is now, the workers must refuse to object to make capitalists richer and richer at their expense. The economic realities presented by Covid-19, which are not new but challenges that have been in existence all along, has laid a scientific basis of the historical argument of the left that capitalism whenever confronted with a crisis, it collapses and besiege the livelihood of the lower class. This was partially presented by Karl Marx in asserting that "The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal and idyllic relations." Marx Further stresses that capitalism has resorted to personal worth into exchange value, in place of the numberless indefeasible chattered freedom, has set up that single, unprincipled freedom, the free trade. The above is the basis for the exploitation of the workers by the ruling class which the those who own means of production in our country.

Keeping quiet and turning a blind eye to such, meanwhile, such bare facts that serve the basis for the characterization of the realities and the conditions of the South African proletariat will not be justified when history questions the purpose served by the current generation of progressives and revolutionaries in advancing the struggle against capitalism.

The earlier we wage the war or struggle against our real enemy which is the capitalist class the better. The working men and women continue to work in unsafe and unhealthy working conditions, just to attain much to survive even below what capitalists themselves define as the poverty line. Until when must we be silent? It is capitalism and the capitalist state that should be held accountable for these injustices, including the scourge of

crime, poverty, inequality and moral decay in our society. The sooner workers realise that the crime is man-made machinery to weaken the struggle for the working class the better.

Social ills generated by the nature of capitalism are used to divide us, isolate the poor and the unemployed from those with a better material advantage, and it is a directed onslaught against the core objective of our struggle.

Only conscious activists can wage a revolt against this barbaric system which thrives on the psychological weakening of the masses, to an extent that it uses the media to depoliticize the masses.

South Africa is amongst the top richest countries in the world in as far as minerals are concerned, however, we are the highest when it comes to unemployment. This alone calls for a serious revolt against the capitalist class and its system of exploitation.

**Leaders should not be judged by how many people they have destroyed during their term of office but how many lives they have changed for the better.**

If the employers are not confronted by a focused collective opposition in the form of trade unions, the exploitation of the working class will continue. But the latter should not be mistaken as a call to produce workerists. The continuous battle of competition that has been introduced in our country's worker's movement can only benefit the capitalists and if the status quo is not challenged with workers and conscious activists, this competition within the trade unions, either in the workplace or broadly in the trade union movement, workers will be the ultimate victims and not the enemy.

We need campaigning trade unions, not a conglomeration of greedy armchair workerists preoccupied with isolating workers from their formations.

The current leadership should be challenged to lead and unite workers to come up with solutions for our ailing state-owned entities, the likes of SAA, Denel, Eskom, as well as challenges faced by mineworkers, in particular the likes of Village Main Reef (VMR). It is of great concern that workers at VMR are not certain of their future, while others at SAA and other industries had downed their tools, meaning that our economy will take a huge

knock. This all happened when the world was preoccupied with fighting a deadly disease, the invisible enemy; the COVID-19 pandemic.

Trade unions are not paradoxical organisations and their core purpose, as indicated earlier, is not contradictory. On the one hand, unions are essential for creating a worker's organisation that can oppose capital and challenge it for power. On the other hand, they should contribute sufficiently as a vehicle for mobilising those workers to transform the system. The use of the dialectical concept of contradiction is perhaps best exemplified in this regard, that the existence of contradictions within the capitalist enterprise would allow opportunities for strategic choice to emerge, but no one strategy would prove entirely successful.

**As Mao once said, "Every Obstacle is an Opportunity".**

Capitalism creates conflicts between employers and workers while simultaneously providing the latter with a basis for challenging and changing capitalist. Trade unions, for instance, are torn between accommodation and conflicts: they co-operate with employers to improve the terms and conditions of their members, while also challenging the excesses of capitalism if not capitalism itself.

Therefore, the immediate challenges of the trade union movement in South Africa can only be addressed by the following:

1. Vigorous political education
2. Creation of second layer leadership/Pull of cadreship
3. Organizing strategies devoid of workerist tendencies
4. Realignment of progressive forces against the personal grievances of individual leaders.
5. Creation of soft landing for leadership or exit strategies

A revolutionary union is the guide of the masses, and no revolution ever succeeded when the revolutionary union leads them astray. When we discharge our responsibility as workers, we should have vigour, be energised, and strive to build militant and campaigning unions that will not only focus on bread and butter or worker issues or workerist tendencies which are anti-revolutionary in their nature but should resist the temptation of wanting to rewrite the history of our glorious movement and trade union movement to the inverse.

**Everything for workers and nothing against them.**

**Sabelo Mgotywa is the Former National Secretary of the NUM Youth Structure; Former Acting National Education Secretary of the NUM and Former National Committee member of the Young Communist League of South Africa. ♦**



# Mineworkers Investment Company Invests in EBMTAC Academy

Our reason for being is to make possible some of the key benefits of membership to the National Union of Mineworkers, with the drive to help South Africans reach a better life. Primarily, we have achieved this through various programmes that touch not only the lives of the members but their families too. Which is why this year, 2020, we are proud to be celebrating with the Elijah Barayi Memorial Training Centre (EBMTC) on their 25th anniversary.

The EBMTAC is an important institution for members, their families and South Africa. The institution, whose mandate was training shop stewards, is now aiming to become a fully-fledged FET college. In addition to shop steward capacity building, members and their families will have access to a broad range of viable vocational training programmes that will help create new career opportunities, and advance existing careers for a better life.

Why vocational skills? And why now? In 2015, 20 years into our existence as the investing arm of the NUM, we reviewed our various beneficiary programmes against the progression of our country and the economy. We know that

education, financial inclusion, healthcare and housing are key development pillars for society – addressing inequalities in those areas helps society get closer to a better life. We looked at education, and our country and after much engagement, realised the opportunity for growth.

The country had come a long way from our recent chequered history with notable leaps in social and economic development. Education institutions that had guaranteed artisans had evolved into academic institutions, leaving a worrying gap in vocational skills development. The real need to bridge that gap lay in reviving FET colleges. For NUM, these would arm members and their families with skills that guaranteed employment in an economy that has an oversupply of academic graduates and a lessening repository of vocational expertise. Meeting this need in our members’ lives meets the need in the economy too. Our country is desperate for practical skills that would contribute to industry and help carry our economy forward .

This is where the evolution of the EBMTAC came in. MIC helped establish a dedicated new academy within the training centre. We committed R30

million to the development of the unit where NUM membership and their families are able to access a suite of viable vocational skills programmes. This evolution aligns seamlessly with the training centre’s objective, which is to help people reach their full potential through relevant skills development programmes.

This academy emboldens the education benefit that NUM members and their families are entitled to. While the NUM will continue to ensure that members are heard, and their grievances are handled in their workplaces; as the investing arm of NUM, we are ensuring that the membership and their families have effective means of upward mobility to reach a better life. And therein is the power of investing – together, we are focusing on making the present better and ensuring that the future of our families, communities and our country is in the capable hands of skilled, economically active South Africans.

As the Elijah Barayi Memorial Training Centre celebrates 25 years, and the country celebrates 26 years of democracy, we continue to toil, and make inroads to support efforts for self-determination, and a better life for all. ♦

*continued from page 13*

the impact is not the same as the pandemic is deepening existing inequalities and vulnerabilities, particularly for women and girls.

Sexual and reproductive health care is a right, and like pregnancies and childbirth, human

rights don’t stop during the pandemic. Together, let’s put the brakes on COVID-19 and safeguard the health and rights of women and girls.

## Why we love National Women’s Day?



It empowers women. Having a day to commemorate the history and the fight that women have fought is a great way to remember and ensure progress in the future.

It raises awareness. Women have had a lot of obstacles to go through and

having days like these help to raise awareness on just how far women have come.

It’s full of history. Women have had a long forged path of fighting for freedom and this day honours all the sacrifices women have made throughout South African history.

From the office of The National Women Structure, we wish you a day filled with goodness and warmth, wishing you happiness, today and forever, no matter from which angle you appear to be. On Women’s Day and any other day, it’s always a perfect day to say as women, we are lucky to have each other and to be in each other’s life”

A strong Woman is 100% herself, 100% of the time. The strongest actions for a woman is to love herself, be herself and shine amongst those who never believed that she could self - From the National Women Structure Secretariat. ♦