

ADDRESS BY THE MUNICIPAL MANAGER OF THE CITY OF POLOKWANE WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATION: Mrs TC MAMETJA

Programme Director: Honourable MMC Teffo
Honourable Chief Whip: Cllr Mashiane
Honourable Councillors
Colleagues from Sector Departments
Colleagues from the City of Polokwane

I greet you all in the name of "Wa thinthu mfazi, wa thinta mbokodo". Which loosely translates into "You strike a woman, you strike a rock".

Programme Director

Allow me to commend our government under the ruling party, for a sterling job that the government has done in addressing the challenges faced by many women in our society. With a democracy that will be celebrating 20 years next year April 2014, a lot has been done and we have seen our government indeed working together to bring more women to decision making in political and some administrative positions.

The United Nations has also given the Republic of South Africa accolades for having the highest number of women politicians in both the National Parliament and Provincial Legislatures. It should be noted that not only are our South African women parliamentarians, but that they are also enough figures when one looks at the ratio of women Ministers in the country. The same can be said when one looks at the provincial legislatures where a considerable number of women are Members of the Executive Council (MEC's). The City of Polokwane has also made strides under the leadership of the Executive Mayor, Cllr Freddy Greaver, where out of the almost 80 Council members in the form of Councillors, 33 of them are women. At the same breath we are disappointed to learn that out of the City of Polokwane's approximately 2300 workforce, I am informed we only have approximately 500 women. This figure is worry some and it needs at turn around strategy which will see effective application of the employment equity when making employment appointments.

Programme Director

Whilst woman acknowledge the strides made at a political front, with the number of women becoming Ministers and MEC's, much has not be done at the level of ensuring that a considerable number of women become accounting officers in the form of Municipal Managers, Chief Executive Officers and Heads of Departments positions, to mention but a few. These are some of the challenges women have to contend with on a daily basis.

Albeit in a democracy, many still believe that due to our feminism we are not capable of doing what our male counterparts can do. Wherein some of our women become

fortunate to occupy such positions of accounting authority, their remunerations cannot be assimilated to that one of their male counterparts.

Women have to work thrice as hard to prove their capability, and this is draining away their energy as after work they are still expected to be the good wives of those males who are criticizing them at work.

Programme Director

Women are under severe challenges in the workplace. They have to contend with been called names in corridors when they do their work according to the book. As opposed to our male counterpart, we are not in a position to can even brag about our position because of the demeaning names attached to career women who do things by and only by the book. One will be called a drama queen, Miss too big for her own shoes, and if one is not married, you even hear utterances such as “she definitely needs a man to fix her” .This are but many of the challenges women face at the work place.

Programme Director and Colleagues

The majority of our women are struggling at the workplace. The career website called monster.com has revealed the following obstacles faced by women across the globe:

- Maternity leave
- Leadership roles
- Sexual harassment
- The glass ceiling
- Women safety and health issues
- Appearances (judged by what they wear)
- Salary negotiations and benefits
- Climbing the corporate ladder

Programme Director

Many women have been subjected to sexual advances by their male counterparts, in order for them to get positions. Irrespective of the level or rank that one applies for, those in the level of authority have requested women to agree to sexual relations in order for them to be given jobs. This has resulted in some women succumbing to the pressure and ended up engaging in sexual relations in return for jobs. I do not even have to detail the statistics, it is common knowledge and we read about this on a daily basis.

Colleagues

It has become really difficult for many women to prove their work expertise, because they are looked upon first and foremost as sexual object before their careers. This colleagues is just a snippet or a tip of the ice bag as many women are not willing to come forward to report sexual cases against their male counterpart. We have heard and read in newspapers about women who were told of how stuck their careers will be, for as long as they are unwilling to agree to sleep with their male seniors. This is totally unbecoming and it shows how immoral our society has become.

As I have indicated above, the issue of unequal remuneration for the same job is prevalent, in the mining and retail sector. Our women in the mining and retail sector are arrested in a catch 22 situation, that of either deciding to starve or take the job. The situation in the mining sector is so severe that it reminds one of the apartheid regime, which divided people according to one's skin colour. Women in the mining sector can be compared to the situation of a black man under apartheid, as blacks could not earn the same remuneration as their white counterpart, a situation we are told is still going in some small private white owned firms.

To that end, 20 years into democracy, many of our women are finding themselves between a rock and a hardplace. Salaries are not been determined according to one's qualification in the mining sector, but according to one sexual orientation. On the same breath, the mining sector has further went on not to allow women do certain jobs, not because women can't do, but merely because they are women.

Discrimination against women at the workplace is so rife that, one really wonders if women will indeed be finally emancipated from the chains of economic slavery. Due to these forms of discrimination we are sitting with shocking figures when it comes to the number of women who are pilots, engineers, CA's and so forth.

Programme Director

Of late we have even heard our own Minister of Defence Force, Honourable Lindiwe Sisulu arguing about the lack of women military personnel on higher military ranks. Almost 98% of our military senior military personnel is made up of men. This means that the majority of our military women personnel are at entry levels.

Though in the municipality I head, which is the City of Polokwane where we have attempted to balance in terms of section 57 appointments. There are still a lot of municipalities which have their management team comprising of boys choirs.

Programme Director

As if that is not enough, the pattern also applies to middle management positions which still comprise of boys choirs. This shows how little faith our male counterpart have in us women. Despite our qualifications, we are still sidelined for most positions. It is morally demoralizing for us women to know that irrespective of our experiences and

qualifications, there are still certain positions that we cannot occupy merely because we are women.

Colleagues

We live in a society or a global community that whilst acknowledging that the world has moved, for the women the world is still that one which is that of a patriarchal society which has always relegated women's skills to the kitchen.

On the South African context, allow me to argue that our call of a non sexist society still carries a question mark. For as long as we still have the mentality that women can only become nurses and not doctors, for as long as we still believe in the notion that women can only become secretaries and not managers, for as long as we are a society that believes that women can only become Personal Assistants and not Accounting Officers. We still have a long way to emancipate women from the chains of economic discrimination. That our economy can never and will never be complete without the role of women.

As I conclude my speech, I would like to re-emphasize the fact that government has done a commendable job in uplifting women. But allow me to request government to act with the same speed it acted in ensuring that women occupy key political positions, to women who want to become careerist. That the only thing different between a men and a women is their sexual organs, not the brain or intelligence. We need stronger women oriented policies that will see women climbing career progression ladders at the workplace. We need the private sector to heed to the call of government by ensuring that women in the private sector are given same opportunities as their male counterpart.

I would like to leave all women in attendance here today with the following motivation;

The importance of showing up fully at work- giving the fullness of your brilliance and playing full out. Being wildly passionate about your TO DOs. Being breathtakingly committed to your big projects and best opportunities. Being a rock star in what ever you do each day to put bread on your table. Work gives meaning to our lives. It influences our self worth and the way we perceive our place under the sun. Being great at what you do isn't just something you do for the organization you work for- its a gift you give yourself. Being spectacularly great at your work promotes personal respect, excitement and just makes your life a lot more interesting. Good things happen to people who do good things. And when you bring your highest talents and deepest devotion to the work you do, what you are really doing is setting yourself up for a richer, happier and more fulfilling experience of living. How do you feel after an ultra productive day? How do you feel when you have given your best, had fun with your team mates and gone an extra mile for customers ? How do you feel when you have brought more heart to what you do for a living? How do you feel when you reached for your greatest goals and grabbed them? It feels pretty good, does nt it ? And you don't need to have the biggest tittle to do the best job. This point makes me think of the words of Dr Martin

Luther King Jr- who once said" if a man is called to be street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as Michaelangelo painted or as Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause and say, here lived a great street sweeper who did her job well" . So be a rock star at work today. Walk onto the stage of this day and play your Heart out. Give the performance of your life. Wow the audience against them cheering for you. Be the expert of whatever you are doing. And when you get famous and people from all over ask for your autograph, make sure you drop me a line. I would like to hear from you as you climb up the ladder. This is what Robin Sharma shared with his readers in his book called " The Monk that sold his Ferrari "

"Wa thinta mfazi, wa thinta mbhokodo" " You strike a woman, you strike a rock".

"I'gama la bafelokazi mali bongwe"

I thank you and wish you all the best.