

**Why should we die, we black people, if we respect our government?**

Mr Pickson Mkhize, brother of Saul, outlined the origins of Driefontein, bought in 1912 on behalf of the Native Farmers' Association of Africa Ltd by Pixley ka Seme

**O**UR FATHERS told us that these properties could not be taken by anybody because they were gazetted in Pretoria. But later in 1980 the government sent people to Driefontein telling the people they should be moved away, so my brother Saul started looking for the door to consult who are these people who want to move the people of Driefontein. When he got the door, which was the Development Trust, he wrote a letter to Dr Koornhof telling him about Driefontein and the answer was, 'Saul we are still discussing this in Parliament — consult the people of Driefontein.'

Then we wrote another letter saying, 'Dr Koornhof you have written a letter to us telling us that you are not forcing people to be removed from their properties but why are we intimidated by the police at Driefontein?' And all that followed was the government didn't reply to that: so it continued till Saul was killed. The body of Saul was wounded in the right hand side with the multiple wounds of a shotgun. His blood is crying in the hands of those who killed him for his beautiful land with all those beautiful minerals below which we did not dig, which we were still waiting for the people of Driefontein to be ready so they could dig their own minerals.'

After giving an account of the May 30 meeting with Dr Koornhof at the Holiday Inn in Johannesburg, at which Dr Koornhof warned of further strife and

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bloodshed in the community unless all parties agreed to co-operate in the move, Mr Mkhize said:

So we are appealing to God and those bodies who could help us and let us survive from this tragedy that is going to strike us all at Driefontein. Where can we live today if our shelter, we think it is our government, — but he is a man who says there will be more blood — cannot bring peace and harmony to the people of this country. We like our government. We have no fundamental quarrel with him. He is our father and we respect South Africa as he is a government to us and we all belong to the government, black and white, and we serve his will in the interests of the country.

Why should we die, we black people if we respect our government? Is the problem God made us wrong to be black people here in South Africa, that is the question we are asking, we black people. Who is our Moses to save us today here in South Africa?

Or should we go out of South Africa? Where else can we go to? That is the question. Where is our land, where we are created by God, if it is not Africa? We share the same faith with black and white, which is a land where God created his men to have food and water to drink — not like Moses who was thrown on the desert with one day's food and one day's water: that is what the government does to us. He says you must go and look for your God in the desert, where he wants to send us, in Batanango, in the rocky land where there is no water, where you cannot plough anything.

But we ask our government what have we done, because these lands were bought by equal right from you? When we met him on May 30 we said, 'Honourable Minister, where is our right, because we bought our properties by right?' He said, 'You got a right, but now the government has made a law that you black people may not own any land.' And we said to him, 'We bought this land in 1912 before the Native Act was born'. He said, 'Well all that I understand, but what can we do. The government needs this land from you people.' We ask him, 'What is our compensation following?' 'Well,' he said, 'anything the government gives you, you should take it.'

And then I asked him especially, I said, 'My Honourable Minister, I do understand what you say to us, but in the new place where you are sending us, are we to have the same equal rights as we used to have before.' He said, 'Well if times come we can but I am afraid because the place we intend sending you to now, we want you all, the Driefontein people, to go to at Skaapskraal.' He said I cannot

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assure you about the equal status you had at Driefontein you will have in the new area. He said part of it you can have it but part of it you cannot have it because it is not declared yet as the Development Land. It is still owned by white farmers. And then we said to him how about this dam which is to be built at Driefontein which you said is of national use and national interest. Don't you feel like we should drink the same river Nile too, which you are building for the white people. He said no the government needs every black man away from that area. We said there are only 83 people affected by the dam. Can't you give them land beside the dam and then keep the other people at Driefontein. He said, 'the government doesn't need that.'

So this is a very strange thing and we feel if God should kill us, we black people, we should not exist and we should not see to live in this horrible place. I think it is better if God can kill us, we black people, because we can feel we are the cursed people in this world. We have to suffer for what we have bought.





This is a question which we black people, we feel. It is not an ornament for us to live in this world. So God should make a judgement for us and give us where we should live and where's our right to survive. And the people of this world hate the black skin. They do not want to see it living. But we work for the government of which we belong, we are part and parcel. I think the government will be OK if we black people die. And we asked when we came to Driefontein on the meeting on May 4, we said, if the government could kill us all at Driefontein, we ask him to take Driefontein after he has killed us.

So we are asking all those people who could help us, and persuade the government — those who have powers, because our voices are not heard. If you say a voice like Saul you will be shot and killed, if you ask the government why should we move from our land which we bought by right. He says we are squatters, we said, 'Can you tell us the difference between a squatter and one who privately owns his land in freehold?' He says, 'You are all squatters you black people.' You don't have a right.' And he even mentioned to us that there was no man in South Africa in the beginning. 'You are all coming from Africa, from the East. There was no man here. Only the first man came in 1497, Vasco da Gama. And he said the second man was in 1652 which was van Riebeeck, so he feels it's nobody's land. Those people who came first here it should be their land.

We didn't have an answer for him because you

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cannot debate in the Parliament\* except what you are told by the chairman. So it was all which we said in Parliament to him.

This removal has got a big sting which is death between. You will find that the place where they are sending us in Natal is near the fighting places. We never fought anybody at Driefontein. We have been simple people until today, until Saul died. Nobody was hurt. Nobody was ever killed on any occasion but the government says there will be more bloodshed at Driefontein.

We told Dr Koornhof about the past Prime Minister, B J Vorster, who said you must never take a man's home from him. We also supported Dr Koornhof's words in parliament in 1980. His words were 'no black man will ever be forced to move from his place of birth.' And those words were said openly in Parliament. So where is the truth about the law? Does the law only exist in white people not in the black man?

So that's what the government does to us, when it tells the world that forced removal has come to an end, while they come with guns and force the people out of their land and kill innocent people like Saul Mkhize.

\*This refers to the meeting at the Holiday Inn, Jan Smuts, between Dr Koornhof and representatives of the Driefontein, Daggakraal and KwaNgema communities on May 30.

**Black Sash Vigil**  
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