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President, distinguished platform guests, ladies and gentlemen! We have arrived at a historic moment. We have brought together under the aegis of the United Democratic Front the broadest and most significant coalition of groups and organisations struggling against apartheid, racism and injustice since the early nineteen fifties. We have been able to create a unity amongst freedom loving people this country has not seen for many a year. I am particularly happy to note that this meeting is not merely a gathering of loose individuals. No, we represent organisations deeply rooted in the struggle for justice, deeply rooted in the heart of our people. Indeed, I believe we are standing at the birth of what could become the greatest and most significant people's movement in more than a quarter of a century.

We are here to say that the Government's constitutional proposals are inadequate, and that they do not express the will of the vast majority of South Africa's people. But more than that, we are here to say that

what we are working for is one, undivided South Africa which shall belong to all of its people, an open democracy from which no single South African shall be excluded, a society in which the human dignity of all its people shall be respected. We are here to say that there are rights that are neither conferred by nor derived from the State; you have to go back beyond the dim mist of eternity to understand their origin: they are God-given. And so we are here not to beg for those rights, we are here to claim them.

In a sense, the formation of the United Democratic Front both highlights and symbolizes the crisis apartheid and its supporters have created for themselves. After a history of some 331 years of slavery, racial discrimination, dehumanization and economic exploitation, what they expected were acceptance of the status quo, docility and subservience. Instead they are finding a people, refusing to accept racial injustice and ready to face the challenges of the moment.

After more than three decades of

apartheid, they expected humble submission to the harsh rule of totalitarianism and racial supremacy. Instead, they find a people ready at every level of society to fight this evil system.

After more than twenty years of apartheid education they expected to see totally brainwashed, perfect little "hotnotjies" and "kaffertjies" who knew their place in the world. Instead, they find the most politically conscious generation of young people determined to struggle for a better future.

After the draconian measures of the 1960s and the ever harsher oppression of the so-called security laws, they expected a people immobilized by the tranquilizing drugs of apathy and fear. Instead, they find a rising tide of political and human consciousness that swept away complacency and shook South Africa to its very foundations.

After the tragic happenings of the seventies - the banning of our organisations and so many of those who struggle for justice; the torture and death of so many in detention; the merciless killing of our children on the streets of the nation; they expected surrender. Instead, here we are at this historic occasion telling South Africa and the world: we are struggling for our human dignity and for the future of our children - we shall never give up!

In all of this, those in power in this country have made the fundamental mistake of all totalitarian regimes who do not depend on the loyalty of the people but on the power of the gun: they have not reckoned with the determination of a people to be free. Because they depend on propaganda, deceit and coercion, they have forgotten that no lie can live forever and that the fear of the gun is always overcome by the longing for freedom. They have forgotten that it is true: you can kill the body but you can-

not kill the spirit and the determination of a people.

The most immediate reason for us coming together here today is the continuation of the Government's apartheid policies as seen in the constitutional proposals. In recent weeks some people have asked me with greater urgency than before (and I am sure this question has been put to you also) "Why do you not see the positive side of apartheid?"

Now when you are white, your children's education is guaranteed and paid for by the state; when your job is secure and blacks are prevented from being too much competition; when your home has never been taken away and the citizenship of the country of your birth is not in danger; when your children don't have to die of hunger and malnutrition and when your over-privileged position is guaranteed by security laws and the best-equipped army on the continent - then I can understand why some people believe that apartheid has its positive side.

But for those of us who are black and who suffer under this system there is no positive side. How can we see something positive in a system which is built on oppression, injustice and exploitation? What is positive about a system which destroys, systematically and by design, the human dignity of people; which makes as irrelevant and unimportant a thing as skin colour the basis of society and the key to the understanding of human relationships, political participation and economic justice? How can apartheid be positive when in the name of Christianity it spawns policies which cause little children to die of hunger and malnutrition, which break up black family life and which spell out a continuous hopeless death for millions of black people?

How can apartheid be positive when it keeps part of South Af-

rica's children manacled in the chains of unfreedom and the other part in the chains of fear? And even so, the time has come for white people to realise that their destiny is inextricably bound with our destiny and that they shall never be free until we are free, and I am so happy that so many of our white brothers and sisters are saying that by their presence here today.

Because it is true: people who think that their security, and peace lie in the perpetuation of intimidation, dehumanization and violence, are not free. They will never be free as long as they have to kill our children in order to safe-guard their over-privileged positions. They will never be free as long as they have to lie awake at night worrying whether a black government will one day do the same to them as they are doing to us, when white power will have come to its inevitable end.

But we must also ask the question: what is positive about the Government's constitutional proposals? In order that there should be no misunderstanding, let me say clearly and briefly

as possible, repeat the reasons why we reject these proposals.

- Racism, so embedded in South African society, is once again written into the constitution. All over the world, people are beginning to recognize that racism is politically untenable, Sociologically unsound and morally unacceptable. But in this country, the doctrine of racial supremacy, although condemned by most churches in South Africa as heresy and idolatry, is once again enshrined in the constitution as the basis upon which to build the further development of our society and the nurturing of human relationships.

- All the basic laws, those laws which are the very pillars of apartheid, indeed, those laws without which the system cannot survive - mixed marriages, group areas, racial classification, separate and unequal education, to name but a few - remain untouched and unchanged.

- The homelands policy, which is surely the most immoral and objectionable aspect of the apartheid policies of the government, forms the basis of the



willful exclusion of 80% of our nation from the new political deal. Indeed, in the words of the proposals by the President's Council, the homelands policy is to be regarded as "irreversible". So our African brothers and sisters will be driven even further into the wilderness of homeland politics, millions will have to find their political rights in the sham independence of those bush republics; millions more will be forcibly removed from their homes into resettlement camps.

- Clearly the oppression will continue, the brutal break-up of black family life will not end. The apartheid line is not at all abolished, it is simply shifted so as to include those so-called coloureds and Indians who are willing to co-operate with the Government.

- Not only is the present system of apartheid given more elasticity making fundamental change even harder than before, but in the new proposals the dream of democracy to which we strive is still further eroded.

- So while the proposals may mean something for those middle-class blacks who think that the improvement of their own economic position is the highest good, it will not bring any significant changes to the life of those who have no rights at all, who must languish in the poverty and utter destitution of the homelands, and who are forbidden by law to live together as families in what is called "white South Africa".

It cannot be repeated often enough that all South Africans who love this country and who care for its future, black and white, Jew and Gentile, Christian and Muslim, have no option but to reject these proposals.

Apartheid is a cancer in the body politic of the world, a scourge on our society and an everlasting shame to the church of

Jesus Christ in the world and in this country. It exists only because of economic greed, cultural chauvinism, political oppression, maintained by both systematic and violence and a false sense of racial superiority. And therefore we must resist it. We must resist it because it is in fundamental opposition to the noble principles of our Judeo-Christian heritage, and of the Muslim faith. We must resist it because it is a fundamental denial of all that is worthwhile and human in our society. It is in opposition to the will of God for this country. We must resist it because in its claim to be Christian apartheid is a blasphemy, idolatry and a heresy.

To be sure, the new proposals will make apartheid less blatant in some ways. It will be modernized and streamlined, and in its new multi-coloured cloak it will be less conspicuous and less offensive to some. Nonetheless, it will still be there. And we must remember, apartheid is a thoroughly evil system and as such it cannot be modified, modernized or streamlined. It has to be irrevocably eradicated. And we must continue to struggle until that glorious day shall dawn when apartheid shall exist no more.

And so, to those who ask why we are not satisfied and when we shall be satisfied we must say in clear, patient terms: we shall not be satisfied as long as injustice reigns supreme on the throne of our land. We shall not be satisfied as long as those who rule us are not inspired by justice but dictated by fear, greed and racialism. We shall not be satisfied until South Africa is once again one, undivided country, a democracy where there shall be meaningful participation in a democratic process of government for all our people.

We shall not be satisfied until the wealth and riches of this country are shared by all. We

shall not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

We must turn to one other important question, namely the question of whites and blacks working together. This has been mentioned as a reason why the United Democratic Front has been so severely attacked by some and why they have refused to give their co-operation.

They are saying to us that white people cannot play a meaningful role in the struggle for justice in this country because they are always, by definition, the oppressor. Because the oppression of our people wears a white face, because the laws are made by a white government, because we are suffering so much under a system created and maintained by white people, they say there can be no co-operation between white and black until all of this is changed.

I would like to say to those who think this way that I understand the way they feel. We have seen with our own eyes brutalization of our people at the hands of whites. We have seen police brutality. We have experienced the viciousness and the violence of apartheid. We have been trampled on for so long, we have been dehumanized for so long. But it is not true that apartheid has the support of all white people. There are those who have struggled with us, who have gone to jail, who have been tortured and banned, there are those who have died in the struggle for justice. And we must not allow our anger for apartheid to become the basis for a blind hatred of all white people. Let us not build our struggle upon hatred and hopes for simple revenge. Let us even now seek to lay the foundations for reconciliation between white and black in this country by working together, praying together, struggling together for justice.

No, the nature and the quality of our struggle for liberation

cannot be determined by the colour of one's skin, but rather by the quality of one's commitment to justice, peace and human liberation. And in the final analysis, judgment will be given, not in terms of whiteness or blackness, whatever the ideological content of those words may be today, but in terms of the persistent faithfulness we are called to in this struggle.

Besides, the very fact that we are talking about the constitutional proposals already reveals the paradox in this argument. The government have been pushing ahead with these proposals precisely because they have been supported and accepted by some people from the black community who think that the short term economic gains and the semblance of political power are more important than the total liberation of all South Africa's people. So our struggle is not only against the white Government and their plans, but also against those in the black community who through their collaboration seek to give credibility to these plans.

But there is something else that we must say. South Africa belongs to all its people. That is a basic truth we must cling to tenaciously for now and for the future. This country is our country, and its future is not safe in the hands of people who despise democracy and trample on the rights of the people whether they be white or black.

Its future is not safe in the hands of people - black or white - who depend upon economic exploitation and human degradation to build their empires; Its future is not safe in the hands of people - black or white - who need the flimsy and deceitful cloak of ethnic superiority to cover the nakedness of their racialism; Its future is not safe in the hands of people - white or black - who seek to secure their unjustly required privileged positions by



violent repression of the weak, the exploited and the needy.

Its future is not safe in the hands of people - white or black who put their faith simply in the madness of growing militarism. So for the sake of our country and our children, whether you be white or black, resist those people, whether they be white or black.

So let us not be fearful of those who sit in the seats of power, their lips dripping with the words of interposition and nullification. Let us not be intimidated by those who so arrogantly, so frighteningly, echo their master's voice.

We are doing what we are doing not because we are white or black, we are doing what we are doing because it is right. And we shall continue to do so until justice and peace embrace and South Africa becomes the nation it is meant to be.

In the meantime let me remind you of three little words, words that express so eloquently our seriousness in this struggle. You don't have to have a vast vocabulary to understand them. You don't need a philosophical bent to grasp them -

they are just three little words. The first word is ALL. We want all of our rights. Not just some rights, not just a few token handouts the government sees fit to give - we want all our rights. And we want all of South Africa's people to have their rights. Not just a selected few, not just "coloureds" or "Indians" after they had been made honorary whites. We want the rights of all South Africans, including those whose citizenship has already been stripped away by this government.

The second word is the word HERE.

We want all of our rights here, in a united, undivided South Africa. We do not want them in impoverished homelands, we don't want them in our separate little group areas. We want them here in this land which one day we shall once again call our own.

The third word is the word NOW.

We want all of our rights, we want them here and we want them now. We have been waiting so long, we have been struggling so long. We have pleaded, cried, petitioned too long now. We have been jailed, exiled, killed for too long. Now is the time!

And as we struggle let us remember that change does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless efforts and hard work of those who are willing to take the risk of fighting for freedom, democracy and human dignity.

As we struggle on, let us continue to sing that wonderful hymn of freedom: Nkosi Sikilel i Afrika! I know today we are singing that hymn with tears in our eyes. We are singing it while we are bowed down by the weight of oppression and battered by the winds of injustice. We are singing it while our old people languish in resettlement camps and our children are dying of hunger in the homelands.

We are singing it now while we suffer under the brutality of apartheid and while the blood of our children is calling to God from the streets of our nation.

But we must work for the day when we shall sing it when we are free. We shall sing it on that day when our children shall no longer be judged by the colour of their skin but by the humanness of their character.

- We shall sing it on that day when even here in this country, in Johannesburg, Cape Town, in Port Elizabeth and Durban the sanctity of marriage and family life shall be respected, and no law shall require of man to put asunder what God has joined together.

- We shall sing it on that day when in this rich land no child shall die of hunger and no infant shall die untimely; and our elderly shall close their eyes in peace, and the wrinkled stomachs of our children shall be filled with food just as their

lives shall be filled with meaning.

- We shall sing it when here in South Africa white and black will have learned to love one another and work together in building a truly good and beautiful land.

With this faith, we shall yet be able to give justice and peace their rightful place on the throne of our land

With this faith, we shall yet be able to see beyond the darkness of our present into the bright and glittering dayling of our future;

With this faith we shall be able to speed up the day when all of South Africa's children will embrace each other and sing with new meaning:

NKOSI SIKILEL I'AFRIKA!

GOD BLESS AFRIKA - GUIDE HER RULERS - BLESS HER CHILDREN GIVE HER PEACE!

