

Greetings and ice breakers.

Being nervous and this being a result of my respect for everyone and the programme. Mention the importance of how many women there are in the room.

My overall submission to you tonight, is that I hope you grab the opportunity to think the unthinkable. I intend to start some conversations and leave more questions than answers.

There's something very obscene about the way we are living in South Africa. We waste too much, and share too little. Crass materialism and conspicuous overindulgence on one hand, and abject poverty on the other.

There is something very frustrating about poverty in South Africa. It is in your face and slippery at the same time. We have observed S.A poverty for years. The first Carnegie inquiry into poverty was in 1922, there was another in 1983 which detailed the appalling conditions of black people. We have since seen glimmers of hope. Heard all sorts of experts claiming all manners of progress. I myself have been active in this regard and have always felt a modicum of achievement. A lot of work has been done but poverty remains, despite it all.

It is easy to look at numbers and get sucked into a narrative that makes sense on the surface. Numbers give us things to draw trends out of and reach conclusion and build opinions. But sometimes context gets lost. The poor do not have the time nor luxury to read graphs and plan that poverty will end in the next 30 years. A poor person is poor today.

Today we live in the most unequal society in the world. It properly dawned upon me last year, when we had the conversation. I had always been aware of this, i could always see it. But the reality and gravity of it fully came to bear for me, what it means to be THE most, in the WORLD. There's a lot of things you could be, number on at. To lead at this disparity, this particular one, wealth inequality. Given our history, given the moral requirement for it to be addressed and corrected, given all the efforts of the past. It is profoundly disturbing that poverty still stands. Poverty with known origins, known dimensions, poverty – even – with known beneficiaries. This is all part of why I implore you to grab the freedom to think the unthinkable. See, many ideas have been developed and applied to varying extents and with varying levels of success but none have achieved the ultimate, the eradication of poverty.

However, is there any social ill that exists on an island? I doubt highly. What other poverties exist at the foundations of, or at some point in the cycle that manifests poverty? We can talk about poverty of leadership, poor governance, and poor whatever. I think that the poverty we are more immediately concerned with in this space is here (point at head). Is there an intellectual poverty in S.A? Poverty of Ideology? Is there a poverty in the ways in which we appreciate what problems we face?

Anyway, one of the things that are being done to address this latter form of poverty is that you are here. Even if there is an intellectual poverty it will not be so bad in this room. There is a lot of knowledge and intellect in this room and I believe in its power. I want to impress upon you that the freedom to think the unthinkable, lives here. The freedom is what you will discover as you move

along in the course. It lies between you, in the bonds you will form as a collective here, now and in future.

At FHAS I came to understand the architecture of the problems we face. I had been thinking about it for years prior but not in such stark and clear terms. I met people here who could put it to me in measurable terms, such as in the after-hours sessions we had with Nompumelelo and Khwezi.

Khwezi showed me a graph detailing the violent crime stats for 1998 to 2014 and it had a particular curve. We then looked at another graph describing the inequality stats for a slightly wider time period, but encompassing the same time period as the first, it looked exactly the same.

At FHAS I began to get a grip of the handles to the tools with which i could fight the good fight. A lot of what I picked up last year moved from opinion to operational principle. I don't have dreams anymore, I have goals.

I think we came to the understanding that this country is not built for success. The rainbow nation was never designed to achieve the things we are asking of it. We came to understand how S.A is complicit in the problems that are. A respected comrade of mine puts it this way; "Racism is not a shark in the waters that are South Africa, it is the water." South Africa is not the solution, it's the setting, the fertile ground upon which problems rise and succeed. South Africa in its inception was a racist idea, aimed at the subjugation of the native peoples. It was never about us! And we can see that in the Socio-political and economic mechanisms that exist and uphold a particular flow of resources and value.

The economy is arrested and is built to be arrested. There are gatekeepers at each level and we have come to know who they are.

We suffer in that prison, stuck there at those gates of an arrested economy in an arrested continent with arrested cultures. Arrested not only in the obvious existential and physically manifest way but also in an intangible, intellectual way. We suffer under the weight of imported paradigms such as democracy and GDP's, foreign means of measuring what we are doing domestically. This is why I call you to embrace the challenge to think that which has not been thought before. To break the mould.

We sort of recognise this challenge but there remains fogginess, and it is frustrating that despite knowing so much we continue to grapple with numbers and jargon and never fix ultimate problems. I hope that one of the things you will come out with is renewed thought and actual solutions to problems.

In closing, Tessa Dooms once said that the time to be future leaders is now over. We are all leaders right now in our respective areas of concern, and it is time to embody that.

I hope that you form the friendships that I believe take shape naturally after what you will put through here and that like me, you finally find expression in the space, and all other spaces it touches.

M.L.