

NEWS FROM:



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Dominic Giddy Memorial Service and Protest March

22 February 2010

Jameson Hall at University of Cape Town

Speech by Vice-Chancellor Dr Max Price

Friends, why are we gathering today? Why are we gathering yet again? What good is the march, what good will a protest do?

We are gathered once again, firstly to mourn collectively. In the last week I spoken to the Giddy family, friends of Dominic, and I have read the UCT Monday Paper, as you must have done, and seen the many touching messages that have been written. It made me feel horrible and sad that I was robbed of the chance to know this gentle, loving and fair person. We were all robbed of the gifts he would have brought to our society. We are robbed of seeing him graduate, watching him plough his knowledge back into society, making a difference, living his life and contributing to the lives of those around him.

The criminals of our society have robbed us, and have robbed us enough — and we say enough!

We are gathered for a second purpose, and that is to deal with our anger, our frustration and our fear. Our emotions are intensified because we know that some of you walked home with Dominic and walk home with friends in the same streets that he walked. You walk conscientiously, you look out for criminals, and you have safety in mind. Our staff, the students and the people in the communities around UCT shop, work and relax in the places that he visited.

We look at his death and we feel frightened and angry that we are not protected by the state, and frustrated and helpless that we seem to be unable to do anything about this. It is important to come together at moments like this to share those emotions and to say: enough!

Our emotions are intensified by the horrible knowledge that Dominic is not the exception. The compounding horror is that in South Africa this morning there are some 50 families like Dominic's who woke up with the intolerable trauma of having lost a loved one due to violence or senseless crime.

We as a UCT community have also been here before. And we have marched each time. When first-year medical student Benny Pakiso Maqobane was shot dead near his digs in Observatory in September last year, we marched near the medical school. When commercial law professor Mike Larkin was murdered in Rondebosch in November 2007, walking home in broad daylight with a bag full of examination scripts when he was killed, we did the same – we marched. When science education professor Kevin Rochford was shot in his driveway in little Mowbray in April 2008, we again registered our shock and protest. We remember all of them today with Dominic, and we say: enough!

We are gathered for a third purpose, and that is to protest at the lack of the political will that is required to help address this problem. Our helplessness, fear and trauma come from the incredible fact that in none of these cases, the four that I have just described, were criminals brought to book up to now. The murderers whose bloodied hands committed these horrendous acts to end the lives of Dominic, Benny, Mike and Kevin, people who this community loved and admired – the criminals are still walking free. Justice has not been done and has not been seen to be done.

It is a system that has failed us, and those in authority in that system must hear our message. Head of the investigations: you have failed us. Councillor for the area: you have failed us. Minister of Safety and Security: you have failed. President of the country: you have failed us. You have failed these people and you have failed the citizens.

How can we accept that no one is brought to book? How can we accept that it is okay because it is hard, because the problem is so big? We say: enough.

Apartheid was hard to bring to an end. The liberation movements led the way and did not give up when it was hard, when the problem seemed insurmountable. We demand proper systems that actually stop criminals, catch criminals and lock them away. We say: enough.

On these steps where we are standing today, several years ago some of us, some of your parents, friends, uncles, were on these steps standing up against racism, and we said then: enough is enough. Some paid by being arrested, some paid with their lives. They were frightened, they wondered what yet another march would achieve. They felt helpless, they felt frustrated, but they mobilised and in

each individual's action the difference was made. In each voice that rose up there was one more added to the critical mass that was eventually heard and caused the political will to begin to take the cry against apartheid seriously.

It is in the rise of those individual voices that the difference was made and the apartheid system was beaten. That is the will we must have to beat crime.

We call on the politicians to note our intention. We have seen what political will can do: we have a wonderful example in the 2010 soccer World Cup tournament. Politicians align, purses are opened, construction of buildings is concluded and when I visit the stadium, a veil of absolute security surrounds me that is impressive. How powerful we are if we want to be. How is it that we can bring all our talent and forces to bear to make a success of a sports tournament, but we cannot clean up a few streets in Observatory?

To politicians we say: enough. We call on you to lead us. We will support you if you do so, but if you are flippant with our lives, as you have been, we will object -- we will show the middle finger at your convoys and we will vote you out. We say: enough!

And we are gathered here today because we need to promote an active citizenry. Apartheid was broken down when civil society decided it was over. We need to decide as a community that crime is over. The dangerous thing is to become accepting of the situation. Fifty murders a day. Many people whom I approached to come to the march said: "Another march, another murder. What is so special about this murder? Why are we not protesting about the other 50 that happened today?"

And that is the point: once we start accepting that this is the normal course of events, that we should no longer feel outraged at another murder, then we would have failed. We need to protest at each murder, we need to single out the murders that can mobilise the most citizens, and we need to ensure that citizens remain active, that they keep politicians to account, but that we also contribute to preventing crime.

I ask you to support the campaign by sending an email to the UCT campaign site: wesayenough@uct.ac.za but also to assist through the national Crime Line. Take out your cellphones now and add this number to your contact list: the Cape Talk crime line number, 32211. Since its inception, 850 arrests have been made based on tip-offs. If you know a criminal, if you are asked to give a bribe and don't report that person, you are part of that crime. If you buy drugs or stolen goods, you collude with that crime and you promote it in our society. And if you find out about those activities, we all have a duty to report these, to give tip-offs. The number, 32211, should be in every one of your cellphones.

We are also gathered for a fourth purpose, and that is to show solidarity with those who are fighting crime. The police have been invited to join us today, as have the UCT Campus Protection Services, who play a major part in fighting crime, which is the reason for their existence. UCT works closely with the SAPS in Rondebosch, Mowbray and Woodstock. We see the excellent work done by committed officers. We also see that they are an under-resourced workforce and we call for an upgrade of these stations, of the work force itself and of their salaries.

We say: enough of corrupt officials that are involved in crime. We say: enough. As a community we must support and work with the police to bring the criminals to book. We do this by declaring what we know and being law-abiding citizens ourselves, by making our voices heard. We can volunteer for community policing forums, we can offer victim support at police stations. We have offered a significant reward as UCT to anyone with information on Dominic's case that can lead to an arrest and successful conviction, as well as any of the other unsolved cases related to other UCT staff and students.

So to the police we say: we will support you, but you have to show that you are professional, competent and worthy of our respect. In last week's events, where a jogger was arrested for showing a sign of frustration at a convoy of vehicles: that is not the action we require from the police force. We want you to use your powers as a police force that will use resources and time to prevent crimes, and not to bully citizens that display their frustration at government's lack of response to their needs.

So finally, we are gathered for those four reasons: To mourn collectively; to deal with our emotions of anger, fear and frustration in a more constructive way; to protest at the lack of political will in fighting and preventing crime; as well as to say we will continue to protest and hold politicians to account, to promote an active citizenry, where each one of us contributes to dealing with this, the greatest threat to the future of this country.

I would like now to express on behalf of all of you our condolences to the families that have been so seriously affected by these crimes.

ENDS

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