



**SPEECH MADE BY CHAMBER OF MINES SENIOR EXECUTIVE JEANETTE HOFSAJER AT
THE REBURIAL OF UNIDENTIFIED CROWN MINES REMAINS
FRIDAY 12 AUGUST 2016, BRIXTON CEMETERY**

Programme director, mineworkers, representatives of the Department of Mineral Resources, trade unions, the Mine Health and Safety Council, South African Heritage Resources Agency and the mining industry.

We are here, observing this solemn moment in Brixton, close to where so much of our industry worked so intensively for much of the last century.

While it is easy to focus on the positive impacts of the mining industry in South Africa – which are undisputed – we too often allow ourselves to look away from the industry's difficult past, from the negative impacts it had on the country and on its people.

We have said it before, and will say it again – whenever we speak of the benefits of the industry, of the gains that the extraction of minerals provided to our country and our people, we must acknowledge the mixed history that accompanies those benefits.

We do not know the names of the men – and perhaps women – who are being reburied here today – but we do know them.

They were fathers, brothers, sons and husbands. They may include mothers, sisters, daughters and wives.

They were bread winners, heads of families, youngsters excited to make a contribution to their families for the first time, people with ambitious plans for the future, and hopes for retirement back home.



They would have come from across the country and the sub-continent – from Lesotho and Mozambique and Botswana and Malawi, from KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape, and from the areas and settlements around Johannesburg.

Some may have come willingly to eGoli, many more would have felt they had no other option.

We know that they were, each and every one of them, precious and beloved.

We don't know how they died, or when. They should not have ended their lives in unmarked, unrecorded graves so far from home. That they did is a deep source of shame and regret to us.

The migrant labour system that provided South Africa's mines with the never-ending supply of labour they decided they needed to chase gold, diamonds and profit is one of the most shameful aspects of our country's history.

That, in the quest to ensure the mines had the labour they needed, successive South African governments chose to entrench a system which did so much indiscriminate damage to so many – a damage that continues today, that reverberates in families and communities generations later – is a lasting legacy, and a challenge that remains with us in the present da in the mining industry and beyond

It is a challenge that sometimes seems beyond our ability to repair. The migrant labour system was part of the foundation of the country's primary industries – mining and agriculture. Its adverse social and economic consequences became part of the fabric of our society. We have barely begun to conceptualise what the solutions may be.

Any solution will require co-operative work by the industry, government, organized labour and civil society if we are to truly begin to lift the historic burden.

In this women's month, we want to also acknowledge the dreadful impact this system had on the women of South and Southern Africa – who, over the course of a century or more - saw their husbands, sons and brothers leaving their homes and loved ones to search for better livelihoods and

the promise of a better future in the mining industry. Many never came home, and of those who survived almost all would have been scarred in some way. It was the women who suffered the pain, the fear, the doubt – and who had no choice but to keep the home fires burning, to raise their children in daily struggle, to keep hoping.

As we lay these remains to rest, finally, acknowledging their individual humanity – even while we cannot know their names – we must acknowledge that not nearly enough has been done, and that more must be done, to repair the impact of this system on South Africa, our neighbours and so many of our people.

As I end, I want to thank all those who played a role in ensuring that the bodies found at Crown Mines in 2010 were preserved, exhumed, safeguarded and finally brought here for reburial today, especially the staff of the South African Heritage Resources Agency, who have played a key role since the discovery was first made, the Department of Mineral Resources and the trade unions.

May our unknown dead finally rest in peace.