

'Send teen moms away'

Girls must focus on school, says Zuma



JACOB ZUMA

EMSIE FERREIRA and KAMCILLA PILLAY

PRESIDENT Jacob Zuma has reiterated that teenage mothers should be separated from their babies until they have completed school – several years after he first caused outrage with the suggestion.

And, again his comments have been met with dropped jaws from those in the know.

"They must be taken and be forced to go to school, far away," he said in his response to the debate after his annual address to the House of Traditional Leaders in Parliament yesterday.

"They must be educated by government until they are empowered and can take care of their kids; take them to Robben Island or any other island, sit there, study until they are qualified to come back and work to look after their kids."

Zuma acknowledged that when he first expressed the view during his 2008 election campaign, it stirred controversy and would probably do so again, but he said allowing teenage mothers to leave school was proving an untenable burden on society and the state's welfare bill.

"The women protested, I want to take their kids away from them and blah, blah, blah. I kept quiet, because I was saying in no way can you have young kids being mothers and young boys being fathers, they know nothing of it."

He said by forcing teenage mothers to complete school, society would correct a trend of grandparents "using what is supposed to be their pension" to raise the children.

"We make you take care of your kids so that we don't have to give a grant, and that is my view. We need to take a decision about it. It is crucial in my view and I am sure if we work together we can do something."

Zuma said his suggestion was part of nation-building, but knew it would meet resistance.

"I am sure people are going to protest as I am talking now."

"The reality is you have got kids with kids. They don't know how to grow a child, how to look after them. They have become a burden to grandmothers, to society. Why should we just sit and look?"

He said teenage pregnancy was something alien when tradition was respected.

"There were no pregnancies of teenagers and people built families at the right time. Why can't we do it?"

He also suggested that welfare grants should be paid in vouchers and not cash.

"Should we give the money or should we have vouchers? Either to buy food or uniforms or to pay for the schools – so the money will not be used for anything except the needs of the child. It is a matter to talk about... because there is no mother who is going to take a voucher and go to this, what is this for hair? A salon?"

Reaction to the president's comments was bewildered.

Canny Geyer, the programme director for Save the Children SA, said the organisation could not support mothers being separated from their children.

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Fury over lack of housing



Police clean up burnt tyres and rubble after residents of the Isipingo transit camp close to the M35 causing diversions between Folweni and uMlazi today. The protest was sparked by the slow delivery of housing promised after the residents were moved from uMlazi's D-section to make way for parking and other infrastructure at the King Zwelithini Stadium before the 2010 World Cup. Others were moved from D-Beach and Malukazi after their homes in the 2009 flooding.

Thekweni Municipality's Human Settlements and Infrastructure Committee chairman, Nigel Gumede, said housing earmarked for these residents had been invaded by members of the uMkhonto weSizwe. ' (municipality) are in the process of seeking an urgent court order to have them removed,' Gumede said.

He said the residents had taken their anger to the streets with approaching the municipality for clarity on the slow delivery. Police spokesman, Colonel Naicker, said the protest started at about 3am and involved about 400 people. No injuries had reported and police were monitoring the situation, he said.

PICTURE: SEBUSISO

Mom dead, dad, son critical after shooting

NOSIPHO MNGOMA

"WHAT kind of a human being pulls a trigger and pumps a bullet into a 3-year-old?"

This is the question a devastated Musa Sokhela is asking after discovering his toddler son, Siyanda, lying bloodied and injured on the floor of their home.

Sokhela's elderly mother, Wezi, was murdered while his father, Thiyephi Sokhela, was injured in a hit apparently meant for the 28-year-old yesterday.

This comes barely three weeks after Sokhela was shot in the head and left for dead. He was discharged from hospital six days ago. Sokhela was in a nearby house in the quiet, rural area of KwaNgcobo.



MUSA SOKHELA

ing he wanted to smoke outside.

"I don't know what happened outside... I just heard a bang. We were in such shock we just sat there."

The suspects then pointed the

he had to break a window to enter the house as his bewildered relative had locked the door after the gunmen "casually" walked out.

"My mother just looked like her head was bowed but she was still and I knew she was gone," he said. "My father and son were still moving."

On Monday Sokhela had accompanied police to point out the scene of his own shooting.

On February 18, he was picked up by men known to him and driven around before they stopped at a secluded area near Inanda.

One man asked to use his phone, but opened the car door and pointed a gun at Sokhela.

In the split second it took a petrified Sokhela to turn around to

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No reference to father's education

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"The first 1 000 days of a child's life are crucial to his or her development, so the baby needs to be with his mother," says Geyer.

"It is the responsibility of government and civil society to make sure this happens."

Dr Maheshvari Naidu, social anthropologist and senior lecturer in the School of Social Sciences at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, said while teenage pregnancy and early motherhood were critical issues in developing countries, Zuma's solution was "straight out of a Monty Python movie!".

This was equivalent to "emotional castration" for the teenagers, who, having given birth, would be forcibly separated from their babies to rehabilitate them into normal sexual behaviour.

"Teenage pregnancy is embedded in a wider web of socioeconomic and gender asymmetries. Put simply, to treat the symptom (the teenage pregnancies) is nowhere near addressing the causative factors," she said

However, the president was "quite right" saying grandparents should not carry the financial burden.

"However, this too is deeply

entangled within other social structures, wide kinship networks and extended family configurations within many African communities.

"While it taxes the grandparent financially, it does not, however, deny the benefit of the love and relationships that is available to the teenage mother, or to the baby born," Naidu said.

There was also no reference to the father and his education.

Katharine Hall, senior researcher at the Children's Institute at the University of Cape Town, said early childhood was a sensitive developmental period.

"Quite apart from the proven benefits of breastfeeding, the process of bonding in the early years is important for the emotional and cognitive development of the child as well as the mental health and parenting skills of the mother."

She said the president's suggestion was clearly ludicrous and uninformed, presumably made in jest to build rapport with traditional leaders.

She said there was a widespread belief teenage pregnancy was an escalating problem. But a survey had found those giving birth before 20 had decreased from 30 percent in 1984 to 23 percent in 2008.