



**29 January 2019**

### **Zondo Commission – “I am a racist”, says Agrizzi**

In a dramatic twist to the proceedings of the commission of inquiry into state capture, an audio recording played on Tuesday morning revealed witness Angelo Agrizzi making racist, derogatory remarks in the company of other people.

Shortly before the recording was played, Agrizzi apologised to the commission chairperson, Deputy Chief Justice Raymond Zondo, before admitting that he was racist. “I’m ashamed of myself for ever doing that. Please, understand the context - no sleep, I was beside myself, and I’m not going to make excuses. You can even hear me slur,” he said, throwing up his hands almost defiantly.

Agrizzi is the former COO for Bosasa, and this is his third week on the witness stand of the inquiry, during which he has alleged massive corruption conducted by his former employer to obtain lucrative government contracts. He has admitted to having participating in the activities – some of which involved making cash payments of tens of thousands of rands at times, to senior public officials and politicians.

According to him, the recording was obtained dubiously by Jared Watson, the nephew of Bosasa CEO Gavin Watson, who has been implicated by Agrizzi over the nine days of his testimony. Agrizzi, Jared, and Lindsay and Roth Watson, Gavin’s daughter and son respectively, were relaxing at Agrizzi’s home after dinner in August last year when the remarks were made.

In the recording, Agrizzi makes references to people, using the k-word. He seems to imply that the people he refers to have never had to work as hard as he has. He remarks that he has worked hard, has scrubbed floors and cleaned toilets, “and these K#@s have never worked a day in their lives.”

After the recording, which he claims was circulated on social media by the Watsons, he told the commission that he had been referring to Johannes Gumede and Papa Leshabane, two of his fellow Bosasa directors. The context of the conversation, said Agrizzi, can be found in the three hours prior to the clip played. Evidence leader Paul Pretorius said be that as it may, the commission did not have access to this, but an attempt to obtain it would be made.

Because of his close association with the Watson family, it was common for the three to visit his own family from time to time. This visit, however, happened in the context of a stressful period according to Agrizzi, when the rest of the Watsons were pressurising him into entering into an agreement with them over the issue of non-disclosure of all he knew, given his departure from Bosasa two years prior.

Describing the Watsons as shrewd and cunning, Agrizzi told the commission that he suspected that he was being recorded by his visitors, but due to prolonged lack of sleep and having had an alcoholic drink before they arrived, he was not in the best state of mind to act on that.

In the days leading up to the dinner, Gavin’s brothers Ronnie and Valence had been making repeated attempts to get him to agree to a pact that precludes him from divulging information regarding the

alleged corruption at Bosasa. Agrizzi said he gave the brothers an impression that he was considering their offer, but was in fact on a mission to gather evidence to use in future engagement with law enforcement agencies. A trail of email correspondence detailing the agreement drafted by Biebuyck on behalf of the Watsons, and Agrizzi, was submitted into the commission's evidence and Agrizzi was given the chance to provide context.

Agrizzi testified that he learned through an enquiry by *City Press* six days after the recording was made, that Gumede and Leshabane had opened a criminal case against him based on the contents of the recording. He was not aware of the status of that investigation.

**Useful links:**

[Zondo Commission website](#)

[Department of Correctional Services](#)