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Conversations *with the*
President

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*Happy
Birthday*





THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS AT 114 YEARS: A MOVEMENT RENEWED, A FUTURE RECLAIMED

■ By **ANC SECRETARY GENERAL FIKILE MBALULA**

THE African National Congress marks 114 years since its historic founding in 1912. We celebrate this milestone with humility, gratitude, and renewed determination. For more than a century, the ANC has stood as a trusted home of the people, born from the collective will of Africans to resist oppression, reclaim dignity, and build a just society.

At 114, the ANC reflects honestly on its journey. We acknowledge our victories and our shortcomings. We recognise the pain and frustrations experienced by many of our people, particularly in relation to unemployment, inequality, and weaknesses in local government delivery. These realities weigh heavily on our conscience as a movement that

exists to serve. Yet this anniversary is not a moment of despair, it is a moment of renewal and hope, a collective resolve and renewed determination to continue with our vision of a better life.

Throughout our history, the ANC has risen in its most difficult moments by listening to the people, correcting its course, and



recommitting itself to the values that define it: unity, selflessness, discipline, and service. From the darkest days of colonialism and apartheid to the dawn of democracy, the ANC has repeatedly demonstrated an unmatched capacity to renew itself in the interests of the people.

This path is not new, built on the achievements of the past year where we declared to enhance our effectiveness in furtherance of the vision of the Freedom Charter. We enter this new phase guided by the understanding that renewal is not a slogan but an action that requires decisive leadership, ethical governance, organisational discipline, and a relentless focus on improving the daily lives of South Africans. The ANC is intensifying its efforts to rebuild capable local government, accelerate inclusive



economic growth, create jobs, and restore public trust in state institutions. And most importantly to re-instil society's trust and confidence in the ANC as a leader capable of advancing the National Democratic Revolution (NDR).

Encouraging signs of renewal are taking root across the movement. Organisational rebuilding is underway. Accountability mechanisms are being strengthened. Cadreship is being reaffirmed. Most importantly, the ANC is returning

to the people, not just in words, but in action, grounding itself once more in the lived realities of communities.

As we celebrate 114 years, we do so not as a perfect organisation, but as a living movement, self-correcting, resilient, and deeply rooted in the aspirations of the masses. The ANC remains the only political home capable of uniting South Africans across class, race, gender, and generation in pursuit of a shared future.

This anniversary is a reminder that the ANC was never built for comfort, but for struggle; never for power, but for service. The road ahead demands courage, honesty, and collective effort. We approach it with confidence, knowing that when the ANC reconnects with its mission and its people, it rises.



We must protect the Alliance, strengthen it and unite it

MESSAGE DELIVERED BY **PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA**
ON BEHALF OF THE ANC ON THE **31ST ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION**
OF THE **PASSING OF ISITHWALANDWE SEAPARANKOE JOE SLOVO**



WE are honoured to deliver this message on behalf of the African National Congress as we gather to commemorate the revolutionary life of *Isithwalandwe Seaparankoe Joe Slovo*.

This is an occasion of particular significance as we prepare to commemorate this year as the **centenary of the birth of Cde Joe Slovo**.

Over the course of this year, we will have opportunity to reflect on his life and his contribution to our struggle for liberation. As we celebrate his life, we must draw

inspiration, encouragement and lessons from his extraordinary leadership and impact.

This year, our country will mark the **30th anniversary** of the **adoption of our democratic constitution**. We will also mark the **65th anniversary** of the **establishment of the people's army, Umkhonto we Sizwe**.

Cde Joe Slovo played a central role in these pivotal moments in our history. These moments shaped our struggle and the society in which we live today.

Contained in our Constitution are some of the fundamental princi-

ples and values to which Joe Slovo dedicated his life.

We recall the Preamble to our Constitution, which states:

We, the people of South Africa, Recognise the injustices of our past;

Honour those who suffered for justice and freedom in our land; Respect those who have worked to build and develop our country; and

Believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity.

Fundamental to our Constitution is the right of all people to equality.

This was a defining principle of the life and struggle of Cde Joe Slovo.

It remains a defining principle of our revolutionary Alliance and the National Democratic Revolution that we pursue together.

Our Constitution asserts that human rights cannot be allocated according to race or gender or class. Freedom cannot be the preserve of citizens of one country but not another, of one religion, one culture or one race.

This principle finds expression in the Freedom Charter, in the aims and objectives of the African National Congress, and in the guiding principles of the South African Communist Party.

This principle of equality motivates what we do as a movement, as an Alliance, as a country, as communities and as individuals.

Our Constitution mandates the pursuit of equality by correcting the injustices of our past and, in so doing, to end the inequality of the present.

The Constitution mandates us to work to ensure that every person has equal access to quality health care regardless of their ability to pay.

It mandates us to transform our society, whether it is in access to education, land, employment, housing, safe and affordable transport, water or electricity.

If we are to realise the rights contained in our Constitution, we must undertake the fundamental transformation our economy. We must undo the devastating legacy of colonialism and apartheid.

We must give practical effect to the call of the Freedom Charter that the people shall share in the country's wealth.

We must fight unemployment, poverty and inequality.

Workers must become owners of the companies they work for.

Black and women South Africans must take their rightful place in all areas of economic activity. These are the tasks that our Alliance is committed and determined to undertake.



These are the tasks that were reaffirmed by the ANC's 5th National General Council held last month.

The NGC declared that national renewal and rejuvenation must be anchored by an effective developmental path for growth and social equity.

Cde Joe Slovo understood that equality necessarily meant that all people everywhere deserved equal rights and equal treatment.

He was an internationalist, who fought not only for the liberation of the people of South Africa, but for the people of our continent and for people across the world.

It is this principle that continues to guide our international outlook.

It guides our consistent stance on solidarity with the people of Palestine, Western Sahara, Cuba and everywhere where people are denied their legitimate right to self-determination.

This principle guides our support for the United Nations Charter and the need for international law

as the foundation for relations between nations.

That is why, as a country, we have stood with the people of Gaza as they have faced a genocidal onslaught that has caused untold suffering, destruction, hardship and death.

That is why we stand with the people of Sudan, as the civil strife in that country continues to cause horrific death and displacement.

It is our commitment to international law and the UN Charter that informs our deep concern at the action of the United States in Venezuela, which has undermined the territorial integrity and sovereignty of a UN Member State.

We reiterate our call for decisive action by the UN Security Council to fulfil its mandate to advance peace and security and uphold the rule of law.

It is the principles of equality and justice that inform our call for those countries that have historically contributed most to global warming to support the climate

actions of those countries that are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

As we say in the Strategy and Tactics document, we seek to build a society based on the best in human civilisation. We say that this society should find expression in the management of human relations based on political equality and social inclusivity.

As we work to build such a society, it is important that we reflect on the life and legacy of Joe Slovo. From his thinking, from his actions and from his revolutionary character is a rich store of lessons from which we should draw as we build a united, just and free society.

Cde Joe Slovo was a great strategist, born of a deep understanding of the injustices in our society and the means through which they would be overcome.

At key moments – at the formation of Umkhonto we Sizwe, during our negotiated transition to democracy, during the drafting of our new Constitution – Joe Slovo provided leadership and direction.

He was able to demonstrate how inaction – or adherence to tactics that no longer served their purpose – could set back the liberation struggle.

The achievement of the democratic breakthrough on 27 April 1994 was made possible by bold decisions at decisive moments. It was made possible by a proper reading of the changing circumstances and the identification of the most effective actions to take to advance our overall objectives.

Throughout our history, we have



been able to make great advances by holding firm to our strategic objectives, while being flexible in our tactics.

To meet the challenges of the present, we need to revive the culture of political thought and debate within the liberation movement.

There is a temptation, now that we live in a constitutional democracy, to consider ideological debate and political analysis as of little importance.

Foremost in our minds are the practical tasks of governing, contesting elections, providing services to citizens, of encouraging investment and creating employment.

And yet, these tasks are located in an economic, political, social and cultural context.

If we are to build the society we want to achieve, we need to understand those contexts.

We need to demonstrate the kind of intellectual honesty and rigour that characterised the work of Slovo and other great theorists of our movement.

We should draw on the example of Joe Slovo's leadership.

He occupied several positions of great importance within the liberation movement, as the first white member of the ANC National Executive Committee, as the General Secretary of the Communist Party, as the Chief of Staff of Umkhonto we Sizwe.

As we have noted before, he occupied these positions not because he sought them, but because he was recognised by his comrades as an outstanding leader of proven capability.

He was fearless in his critical examination of our struggle and our movement.

He understood that an honest and balanced assessment of the state of our organisation and its place in society is essential if we are to grow stronger and be more effective.

He understood critical reflection as a vital part of renewal, which was foremost among the priorities identified by the National General Council.

The NGC said that for the National Democratic Revolution to be advanced and accelerated, the ANC needs to be renewed as the leading of change.

This needs to take place alongside the reconfiguration and renewal of the Revolutionary Alliance.

This renewal requires far-reaching structural and organisational changes. It also requires a return to the foundational values and principles of the movement.

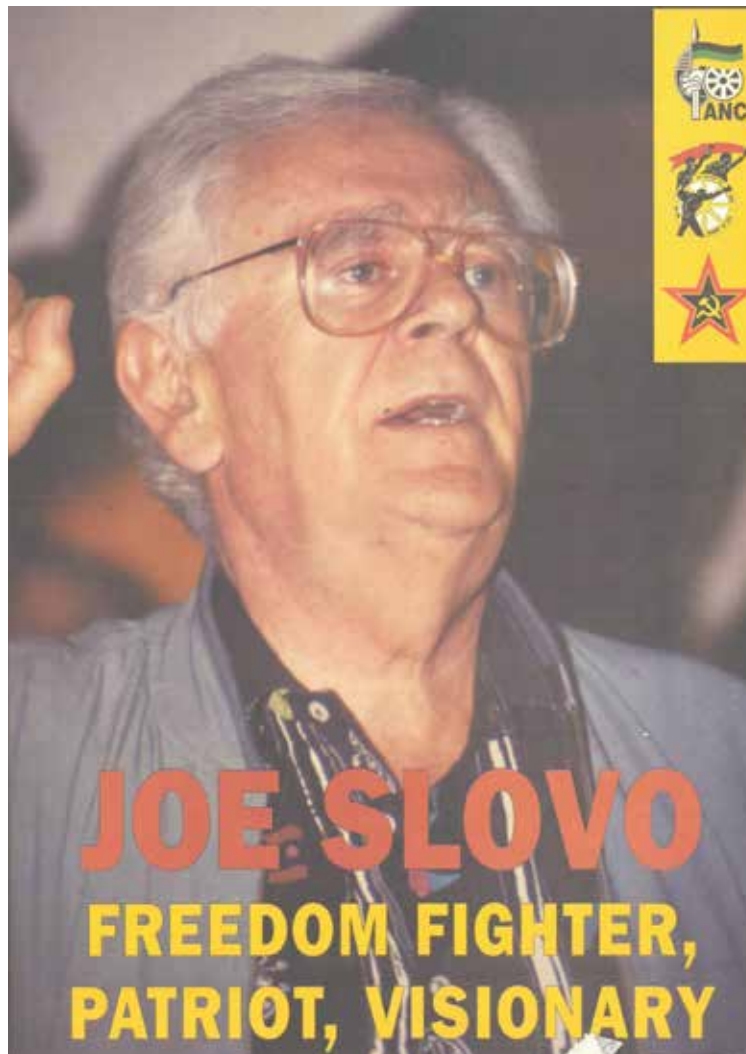
Renewal demands that all structures and processes are founded on true democratic practices.

Those elected to leadership positions should implement all agreed programmes and ensure that mechanisms of mandate and accountability are robust.

Renewal involves the continuous development of members and leaders. It involves the building of formidable structures to ensure that the Alliance is an effective instrument of liberation in the hands of the people.

As a leader of the ANC, SACP and Umkhonto we Sizwe, Joe Slovo understood the respective roles, responsibilities and objectives of each of the Alliance partners, including the progressive trade union movement.

He played an important role over time in shaping how these for-



mations worked together and in developing their common programme of action.

For him, the relationship between the ANC and the SACP was vital.

Over many decades, the SACP has been central to refining the ANC's strategic outlook.

Like many of the leaders of the Communist Party, Slovo captured political moments with precision to enable the shaping of the vision for the future.

As we face new challenges as the Alliance – as we differ over issues such as the contestation of elections – we need to draw on this well of wisdom.

We need to prioritise the advancement of the National Democratic Revolution and the realisation of our shared goal of a united, non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and prosperous society.

We must recognise that we are custodians of the Revolutionary Alliance, an alliance in which the people of this country have invested so much hope and expectation.

We must protect the Alliance, strengthen it and unite it.

We must ensure that the Alliance becomes an ever more effective instrument of fundamental social and economic change.

Despite the disagreements of the present, our common objective remains the same: the achievement of a National Democratic Society.

It is our responsibility as leaders and members of all Alliance formations to work together in pursuit of that common objective. As we do so, we must draw on the strategic insight, integrity, political honesty, commitment and deep humanity of Cde Joe Slovo.

As we commemorate the passing of one of the giants of our liberation struggle, let us honour his contribution by continuing to strive to realise the free and equal society to which he and so many others dedicated their lives.

Rescuing the revolution and reaffirming the SACP's historical mission:

A call for a special congress

■ By **PROF BLADE NZIMANDE**

1. Introduction:

The historical crossroads

The South African Communist Party (SACP) finds itself at a decisive historical juncture that calls for sober reflections. This paper is but one of the many interventions within our Party that seek to provide a principled and critical basis for evaluating our current strategic orientation and the concrete outcomes of the 5th Special National Congress resolution of December 2024, which mandated the SACP to contest the 2026 local government elections independently of the African National Congress (ANC). In light of this resolution, its ramifications and the subsequent debates that have ensued within and beyond the Party, the primary purpose of this paper, therefore, is to facilitate collective reflection within the Party and broader working-class movement on whether this resolution, especially its implementation, continues to serve the strategic interests of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) under the changing conditions of South Africa's political economy.

Reviewing the 2024 resolution is not a matter of bureaucratic housekeeping, but a profound political necessity. The conditions that informed that decision, including the deepening crisis of governance, the fragmentation of



the working-class movement and the ideological erosion within the Alliance, also continue to evolve. The contradictions of South Africa's dependent capitalism, mass unemployment and social alienation have sharpened, while new forces within and outside the Alliance continue to reshape the terrain of struggle. To ignore these shifts would be to succumb to dogmatism and while confronting them squarely is to uphold the Leninist imperative of basing strategy on concrete analysis of the concrete situation.

In this spirit, the Party must reassert its revolutionary role as the vanguard of the working class, not through rhetoric, wishful

thinking or revolutionary slogans, but through dialectical engagement with changing realities. This requires a frank appraisal of the Party's organisational posture, its mass base, and its relationship with the ANC and other progressive forces. It also demands a renewed emphasis on working-class unity and ideological clarity amidst the proliferation of populism, revisionism, reformism and class collaboration.

Whilst reaffirming the resolution to contest local government elections, it is essential that this is preceded by a careful, detailed and honest analysis of the concrete conditions in which it must be implemented. We must

be guided by the watchwords of our 15th National Congress: strategic consistency, analytical alertness and tactical flexibility. In implementing this resolution, we must guard against right-wing tendencies within the broader movement seeking to use this moment to weaken or break the Alliance, as well as ultra-left forces pursuing the same outcome. It is also increasingly evident that there are elements within the Party itself pushing to rupture the Alliance. Therefore, this paper should be read in this context.

Furthermore, the SACP's 14th National Congress and 3rd Special Congress resolved to undertake a "concrete analysis of the concrete situation" before making decisions on Party, State and Popular Power, including contesting elections. Yet, the Party has repeatedly failed to carry out this task. As a Marxist-Leninist organisation, the SACP's policies and programmes must be grounded in this method, which Lenin called the "living soul of Marxism." Without it, strategy and tactics become detached from reality, akin to "shooting in the dark."

Although the Party set several tasks to reach a scientifically grounded decision on contesting elections, many were not fulfilled. The Party has no interests separate from the working class, thus, leadership and the masses must be treated as a dialectical unity. Failure to do so leads to poor implementation, organisational paralysis, and internal tensions. When Marxist-Leninist methods are abandoned, bureaucratic tendencies emerge, putting unity and discipline at risk.

In this context, this discussion document calls for the conven-

ing of a Special National Congress (SNC). Such a Congress should serve as a forum for honest debate, theoretical renewal and strategic repositioning. In a nutshell, that is to review the implementation of the 5th Special National Congress resolutions, to reassess the current conjuncture, and to chart a course that secures both the unity of the working class and the revolutionary integrity of the SACP within the unfolding struggle for socialism.

Such an engagement is necessary due to several concrete realities confronting our Party, the ANC, the Alliance and the national democratic revolution as a whole. The most critical of these are worth highlighting to frame the debate and discussion:

(a) The implementation of this resolution has far-reaching implications, particularly for the principle of dual membership, which has been the fundamental glue of our Alliance, especially between the SACP and the ANC. This has already created confusion within Party ranks, with no clear, unified approach on how it should be handled. To argue that the ANC cannot simply

abandon dual membership is an infantile position, as it implies that only the SACP can determine its future.

- (b) The 15th Congress, along with earlier congresses, affirmed that where the SACP chooses to contest elections, it cannot do so alone. Hence, the resolutions on building a socialist movement of the working class and a broader popular left front.
- (c) Strategically and tactically, the communist movement has long held, as Lenin noted, that it is "criminal" to throw the vanguard of the working class into battle without the working class itself. COSATU, our closest working-class ally, has not given unequivocal support for the Party contesting the forthcoming local government elections. Contesting elections without such support would amount to going it alone.
- (d) It is equally infantile to argue that, since not all of COSATU or other progressive unions would support us anyway, we can proceed regardless of the federation's position. This



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risks dividing the progressive trade union movement and isolating the SACP within the Alliance.

- (e) The ANC has clearly indicated its willingness to engage the SACP on the implementation of this resolution. We must therefore discuss the modalities of engaging the ANC, COSATU and SANCO. Refusing to engage would amount to deliberately driving the Alliance toward division and isolating the SACP at a time when the balance of forces does not favour the working class or the consolidation of the national democratic revolution.

All these issues require careful consideration through a thorough Leninist analysis of the concrete conditions, rather than turning the SACP into a collective of “*resolutionists*.” A principled and honest debate on these matters is essential to unite the Party around a shared tactical perspective. It is not enough to simply have a resolution, its implementation is as important as the resolution itself. We are not mere revolutionists by proclamation, but a revolutionary vanguard party of the working class.

2. Some historical background and political context

Over recent years, as pointed out above, the SACP has been guided by its Marxist-Leninist principles of adhering to strategic consistency, analytical alertness and tactical flexibility. This is derived from our commitment to the long-term interests of the working class – the socialist transformation of society. Since its founding in 1921, the Party’s strategy has

been guided by the dialectical unity between theory and practice, between revolutionary ideals and concrete realities.

This historical consistency has safeguarded the Party against opportunism, sectarianism and the kind of short-term emotional reactions that often derail liberation movements once they enter the state arena.

The Party’s survival through the collapse of the Soviet Union, through the ideological confusion of the 1990s, and the dominance of neoliberal hegemony, is a demonstration of this strategic clarity. As Marx reminds us, “*Men make their own history, but not under circumstances of their own choosing.*”¹ Indeed, the material balance of class forces is never static but evolves under new contradictions. The present conjuncture that is marked by mass disillusionment, unemployment, corruption, and the widening gap between the ruling elites and the working poor compels the Party to re-examine its tactics and adjust its methods of struggle.

Analytical alertness, therefore, becomes the revolutionary imperative. The Marxist method obliges us to interpret, not merely repeat, the laws of class struggle. Lenin’s warning against “*revolutionary phrase-mongering*” devoid of organisational strength and mass consciousness remains as relevant today as it was a century ago.² For the SACP, tactical flexibility must be exercised without abandoning the strategic compass that locates socialism as the ultimate objective of the NDR. It is within this framework that the Party’s 5th SNC of December 2024 resolved to contest the 2026 local government elections independently of the ANC.

On reconfiguration and revolutionary independence

The debate around the SACP’s electoral participation is not new. Since the 11th National Congress in 2002, the Party has grappled with the question of how best to assert its independence while maintaining unity within the Tripartite Alliance. For over two decades, discussions on reconfiguring the Alliance have been met with reluctance and rhetorical commitment from the ANC. Despite numerous engagements, including the adoption of the 2019 Alliance Reconfiguration Document, the ANC leadership has failed to implement meaningful reform, instead advancing new slogans such as a “*Renewed Alliance*,” which in practice have served to delay genuine transformation.

This inertia coincided with the deepening crisis of neoliberal capitalism. The privatisation of state assets, austerity measures and the weakening of the public sector have entrenched inequality and alienated the working class from political institutions.

The Party’s 2022 15th National Congress correctly analysed this crisis as a manifestation of the structural contradictions of capitalism and called for the building of a powerful socialist movement of the workers and the poor. It warned, however, that any electoral path must be grounded in a scientific assessment of the concrete conditions and that throwing the vanguard into decisive battle before the entire class is ready would be a grave mistake.

Thus, the decision to contest elections independently was not born of frustration or factional impulse, but of historical necessity. It was a principled reaffirmation

of the Party's revolutionary autonomy and a declaration that the working class must not remain a passive observer in its own liberation. However, this autonomy must never be confused with isolationism. The SACP does not seek to go it alone in defiance of its allies and concrete realities, but rather it aims to lead from the front in reasserting working-class hegemony over the state and society. As a matter of fact, it is incorrect to characterise the decision to contest elections separately from the ANC as an assertion of our independence. The decision to contest elections in support of the ANC has always been an independent decision of the SACP. The independence of the SACP is not a narrow electoral question, but a substantive strategic and tactical capacity to lead the working class across all terrains of struggle, both electoral and non-electoral.

The 5th Special National Congress resolution

In affirming the 5th SNC resolution, it is imperative that we reflect on a coherent framework for revolutionary contestation that is rooted in the realities of South Africa's political economy. We must recognise that while the decision to contest independently was correct in principle, its implementation must be anchored in material condition and organisational strength. These, inter alia, include acknowledging that the Party currently faces structural weaknesses such as the uneven presence across provinces, and even within provinces and districts, limited visibility and fragile organisational capacity. These realities necessitate a phased, disciplined and scientifically grounded approach to electoral participation.



Nevertheless, the Congress resolved to adopt what was dubbed a "*Revolutionary Contestation Strategy*" said to be based on several key pillars:

1. Wall-to-wall contestation across all municipalities, transforming each ward into a site of struggle and socialist renewal.
2. Establishment of a revolutionary national election committee, tasked with coordinating the preparatory process, including candidate selection, campaign design, and organisational readiness.
3. Mass engagement with Alliance partners, fraternal movements and left forces to explain the decision, ensuring that the campaign builds rather than fractures working-class unity.
4. Integration of electoral contestation into the broader project of building a Popular Left Front that unites trade unions, civic movements and progressive forces under a common socialist platform.
5. Revolutionary governance

preparedness, ensuring that cadres master legislative and policy frameworks such as the Systems Act, Structures Act, and the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA), thereby transforming local government into a terrain of socialist praxis.

Of course, the implementation of such a resolution is a huge task that should begin with strengthening the Party's organisational base. Hence, the Party resolved, for example, on the institutionalisation of the Chris Hani Red Brigades across municipalities as central to this process, and the intensification of structured cadre development to ensure that members possess the ideological clarity, governance competence, and revolutionary discipline necessary for socialist transformation.

3. Analysis of the implementation of the resolution

The implementation of the 2024 resolution to contest the 2026 local government elections independently of the ANC represents one of the most significant strategic shifts in the Party's recent history. While the resolution reaffirmed the SACP's

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revolutionary autonomy and ideological integrity, its rollout has encountered both encouraging progress and serious contradictions. These mixed outcomes demand sober assessment and not to apportion blame, but to strengthen the Party's strategic coherence and organisational effectiveness. In discussing the implementation of the Party's resolution, we must, therefore, evaluate both internal and external factors, identify successes and failures and fundamentally lessons to guide the Party in reasserting its vanguard role in the contemporary conjuncture. To this end, we reflect on few crucial aspects.

On strategic autonomy and ideological clarity

Despite the controversies and distortions surrounding it, the 2024 resolution achieved several important successes. First, it reasserted the Party's political independence within the Alliance and publicly reaffirmed that the SACP is not a subordinate wing of any organisation, but the vanguard of the working class. This autonomy has reinvigorated debates across the left, reawakened grassroots interest in socialist politics, and repositioned the Party as a distinct ideological force capable of contesting neoliberal hegemony.

Second, the resolution has prompted widespread ideological reflection across Party structures and Alliance partners. Provincial and district discussions are revealing renewed engagement with Marxist theory, particularly around questions of state power, class struggle and the dialectical relationship between electoral participation and mass mobilisation. For the first time in years, our structures will be compelled to debate Lenin's writings on parliamentary struggle and Dim-

etrov's analyses of united fronts, if they are to correctly connect this debate to concrete material conditions. If these engagements are properly guided, in the short to medium term, they are likely to contribute to an ideological revival within the movement.

Third, if properly communicated, the resolution may contribute towards inspiring cautious optimism among disillusioned sections of the working class such as the youth and precarious workers. In a context where over 22 million eligible South Africans abstained from voting in 2024, the Party's decision to contest independently could assist in interpreting the bold steps towards breaking political inertia and reviving class-conscious alternatives to capitalist politics. The formation of preparatory election committees, cadre development initiatives, and early mobilisation efforts could help build organisational momentum.

However, these advances would largely exist alongside equally profound setbacks and contradictions, many of which stem not from the correctness of the resolution itself, but from uneven inability to correctly articulate it, weak organisational capacity and misinterpretation of the Party's strategic intent.

On misinterpretation, organisational weakness and strategic drift

The first and most serious setback about this resolution has been its misrepresentation both within the Party, the Alliance and in sections of the public discourse, as an anti-ANC posture. Reactionary and ultra-left currents alike have sought to weaponise the resolution for their own agendas. While

the former has sought to portray the Party as divisive, the latter has sought to push it toward premature rupture. This has created confusion among the masses and tension among cadres who remain dual members of the ANC and the Party.

Such misinterpretation stems partly from internal communication weaknesses. The resolution was insufficiently contextualised as a tactical instrument to advance working-class hegemony within, not outside, the Alliance. As a result, the Party's move was sometimes seen as an abandonment rather than an elevation of its alliance responsibilities. This political misreading has slowed coordination with Alliance partners, delayed the establishment of joint forums, and at times strained fraternal relations, especially at provincial and local levels.

Secondly, organisational limitations have constrained effective rollout. In many provinces, branch structures remain fragile and dysfunctional, while the Party's visibility at the grassroots has declined relative to its influence in the 1990s and early 2000s. The weakening of the Chris Hani Red Brigades, insufficient cadre training, and lack of resources have all hindered the Party's ability to translate strategic resolutions into sustained mass campaigns. Without consistent organisational activity, revolutionary intent risks devolving into bureaucratic proclamation.

Thirdly, ideological drift has emerged within certain quarters. Some elements within the Party have confused tactical independence with opportunistic adventurism. These elements have mistaken rhetorical radicalism for revolutionary praxis. Conversely,

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conservative tendencies within the Alliance have used these excesses to justify political marginalisation of the SACP. This mutual reinforcement of extremes has blurred the Party's ideological clarity and now threatens the dialectical unity of the revolutionary bloc.

On cohesion, leadership and ideological discipline

Internally, the Party now faces several structural and ideological challenges that impede full implementation. Chief among these is the erosion of internal cohesion. Democratic centralism, the principle of debate before decision, unity after decision, has been unevenly applied. In some structures, factional behaviour and personality-driven politics have supplanted collective leadership. This has weakened accountability mechanisms and fostered disunity, contradicting the Leninist conception of a disciplined vanguard.

Relatedly, the personalisation of leadership poses a danger to the Party's democratic culture. When individual authority overshadows collective deliberation, it creates conditions for populism and ideological drift. The Party must reaffirm that no leader, regardless of their stature, stands above the collective. Leadership legitimacy derives not from charisma or populism but from adherence to the Party programme, ideological clarity, and accountability to the working class.

Furthermore, the decline in ideological training has dulled the Party's analytical edge. A vanguard that ceases to study and interpret the material conditions risks becoming dogmatic or reactive. The implementation of the

2024 resolution has revealed uneven understanding among cadres of Marxist-Leninist electoral strategy, particularly the dialectic between mass struggle and participation in bourgeois institutions. Revitalising political education is thus essential to prevent voluntarism and ensure that tactics serve strategy, not the other way around.

On alliance dynamics and political-economic conditions

Externally, several factors have complicated implementation of the resolution. The Alliance itself is in crisis. The ANC's ideological and moral degeneration, compounded by neoliberal capture and internal corruption, has fundamentally altered the political landscape. The ANC's 2025 discussion paper, Consolidate the Unity of the Motive Forces and Cohesion of the Alliance, while acknowledging the SACP's autonomy, subtly positions the Party's resolution as a potential threat to unity. This defensive posture reveals the ANC's discomfort with ideological challenge and its reluctance to confront its own rightward drift.

The broader political economy has also shifted dramatically. South Africa's capitalist structure, shaped by financialisation, unemployment and austerity, continues to reproduce inequality and alienation. The state's embrace of fiscal restraint, privatisation and technocratic governance has undermined developmental objectives, leaving local government as a primary site of crisis. For the SACP to enter this terrain electorally without sufficient organisational strength risks confronting capitalist contradictions without the shield of a mobilised mass base.

Meanwhile, organised labour remains fragmented. COSATU's support for the Party's resolution has been uneven, with some affiliates expressing caution and others prioritising sectoral battles. Outside COSATU, unions such as NUMSA and SAFTU have expressed interest in cooperation but remain ideologically ambivalent. The Party's challenge is to rebuild class unity without succumbing to sectarianism. This requires recognising that the working class, divided across formal and informal sectors, urban and rural spaces, must be politically reconstituted as a collective force.

On grounding strategy in Marxist-Leninist analysis

The core of Marxist-Leninist praxis lies in the dialectical unity between principle and practice. The implementation of the 2024 resolution has shown both the vitality and the vulnerability of this unity within the Party. The resolution was correct in principle as it affirmed ideological independence and reasserted working-class leadership. However, its uneven execution has at times drifted toward voluntarism, acting as though revolutionary intent alone could overcome material weakness. This includes a factionalist defence of the resolution. There has been a dangerous tendency to dismiss any concerns about its implementation as if they are outright rejections of the resolution itself. Such factionalism poses a serious threat to the unity of the Party. In fact, factionalist behaviour around this resolution risks isolating the Party and weakening its vanguard role in the broader national democratic revolution.

Lenin's injunction remains rele-



vant: *“Without revolutionary theory, there can be no revolutionary movement.”*³ Theory must inform practice, not follow it. The current phase demands a sober re-evaluation grounded in a concrete analysis of South Africa’s capitalist formation. The Party must avoid both left-wing infantilism, which mistakes isolation for purity, and right-wing opportunism, which confuses alliance loyalty with submission. The correct path lies in disciplined revolutionary engagement, that is contesting elections as a means to organise, educate, and agitate, not merely to occupy positions.

The Party must also guard against electoral fetishism. Elections are a terrain of struggle, not a substitute for struggle. The purpose of participation is to expose the contradictions of bourgeois democracy, win ideological space, and demonstrate socialist alternatives in practice, particularly at the local level where communities confront capitalism’s failures most directly. Success will depend not on campaign slogans, but on whether the Party can transform local governance into an instrument of working-class power.

Therefore, these aspects demonstrate that while the implementation of the 2024 resolution has strengthened ideological confidence, but it has exposed many of the Party’s shortcomings, organisational fragility being the primary one. Although the resolution has reignited public interest in socialism, it has equally provoked reactionary resistance within the Alliance. Indeed, this resolution has assisted in clarifying the Party’s role as vanguard, yet we are reminded that a vanguard without a mobilised class base is a vanguard in name only.

4. The way forward: Toward a Special National Congress

In light of the urgent tasks that are emerging above, it becomes clear that another Special National Congress has become an urgent revolutionary necessity. This Congress must not be convened as a bureaucratic formality or an administrative review, but as a dialectical moment of renewal, a moment to reaffirm the Party’s vanguard role in leading the working class through a period of crisis, confusion and opportunity. This Congress must consolidate the Party’s revolutionary line, deepen its organisational capacity and reclaim ideological and moral authority in the struggle for socialism.

In this regard, the following urgent proposals are made for the tasks that this Congress should consider:

I. Strategic objectives of the Special National Congress

The Congress must achieve four interrelated strategic objectives, grounded in Marxist-Leninist analysis and responsive to South Africa’s evolving material conditions.

(a) Conduct a concrete analysis of the concrete situation

The Congress must revisit the 2024 resolution on independent electoral contestation not to reverse it, but to refine and recontextualise it within the shifting balance of class forces. This requires an honest appraisal of the Party’s internal weaknesses, the state of the working class and the global resurgence of capitalist authoritarianism. A sober analysis of these dynamics, nationally and internationally, will provide the scientific basis for renewed

strategy.

(b) Rebuild working-class power and mass campaigns

The Party’s strength has always resided in its capacity to connect immediate struggles with long-term socialist objectives. The Congress must prioritise campaigns that confront the daily realities of the working class such as chronic unemployment, housing, healthcare, food insecurity, climate vulnerability, and digital exclusion. Each of these must be integrated into a broader programme for socialist reconstruction which should transform struggles for survival into schools of revolutionary consciousness.

(c) Reaffirm the unity of the Alliance and the centrality of the working class

The Congress must clarify the Party’s position within a reconfigured Alliance, reaffirming both its independence and its solidarity. The SACP must insist on an Alliance led by the working class, not captured by capital or diluted by populism. This means deepening unity with COSATU, engaging progressive trade unions outside the Federation, and re-establishing ideological coherence within the broader movement. The Alliance must function as a revolutionary instrument, not a patronage network.

(d) Rebuild internal unity, restore democratic centralism, and strengthen collective leadership

Factionalism, personalisation of leadership, and ideological laxity have eroded organisational discipline. The Congress must restore the Leninist culture of democratic centralism which is premised on robust debate before decision, and unity in action thereafter. The authority of collective leadership

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must be reasserted, ensuring that no individual or faction substitutes itself for the Party as a whole. Only through renewed internal cohesion can the SACP recover the moral authority to lead the working class.

II. Proposing specific actions and policy shifts

To move from diagnosis to action, the Congress must adopt a Programme of Revolutionary Renewal, anchored in concrete initiatives that reposition the Party as a living force in the class struggle.

(a) Reinvalidate grassroots structures and political education

Each district and provincial structure must relaunch the Chris Hani Red Brigades as engines of community mobilisation and socialist education. Political schools, study circles, and ideological forums should be institutionalised across all provinces, ensuring that every cadre is equipped with the theoretical and practical tools of Marxism-Leninism. The Congress should mandate the establishment of a National School of Socialist Strategy and Governance (working with progressive public universities) to train future public representatives and administrators in socialist ethics and developmental planning.

(b) Link electoral participation to class mobilisation

The 2026 local government elections must not be treated as a conventional campaign but as a mass political mobilisation. Electoral work should serve as an entry point for rebuilding class consciousness and grassroots activism. The Revolutionary National Election Committee must be strengthened and resourced

to implement a wall-to-wall contestation strategy that focuses on working-class communities, rural peripheries, and neglected urban wards. The aim is not merely to win seats, but to use the campaign as a vehicle for politicising and organising the masses.

(c) Advance a socialist local governance framework

The Party should articulate a Socialist Municipal Charter, a policy framework for transforming local government into an instrument of people's power. This charter must outline practical measures for public ownership of essential services, participatory budgeting, community-led development, and resistance to privatisation. It should also propose mechanisms for democratic oversight, ensuring that elected representatives remain accountable to the working class, not to bureaucrat-elites or capital interests.

(d) Rebuild alliances across the left and labour movement

The Party must lead in forging a Popular Left Front, uniting COSATU, SAFTU, community movements, youth formations, women's organisations, and independent unions into a coherent front against neoliberalism.

Such unity must be rooted in programme, not expediency. The Congress should establish a Left Coordination Council to develop joint campaigns around anti-austerity struggles, industrial policy, and public sector reform. Only through a united working-class front can the Party counter the ideological and material dominance of monopoly capital.

(e) Refine the Party's media and digital strategy

The struggle for socialism in the digital age demands a new communication strategy. The Congress should resolve to expand the Party's presence in digital spaces that produces consistent political education content, building socialist digital networks, and combating capitalist propaganda. The establishment of a Digital Organising and Propaganda Unit can help bridge the generational divide, bringing young workers, students, and unemployed youth into active participation in Party life.

(f) Redefine the relationship between the Party and the state

Building on the 14th and 15th Congress resolutions on state power, the Party must deepen its analysis of the state as a terrain of class contestation.





Participation in state structures must always serve the goal of working-class power, not bureaucratic assimilation. The Special Congress should therefore review all deployments, ensuring that communist cadres in public institutions act as tribunes of the people that advance socialist transformation from within, while mobilising from below.

III. Emphasising unity, democratic participation, and mass mobilisation

The forthcoming Congress must be a festival of working-class democracy. Its success will depend on the breadth and depth of participation from below. Every district, branch, and sector must be involved in pre-Congress discussions to ensure that resolutions reflect collective experience, not top-down decrees. This participatory process should itself become an exercise in rebuilding the Party's organisational life.

Unity must be understood dialectically and not as the absence of contradiction, but as the management of contradiction in pursuit of shared revolutionary goals. The SACP's unity cannot be built on silence or conformity, but on principled debate guided by ideological discipline. The Congress must therefore reaffirm the principle that unity without ideological clarity is fragility, while ideological clarity without unity is futility. Our task is to forge both.

Mass mobilisation remains the decisive factor. The Party's revolutionary character is tested not in meeting halls but in the streets, workplaces, schools, and communities where the working class lives and struggles. The Congress must therefore commit to rebuilding a mass campaigning culture:

fighting privatisation, defending public healthcare and education, confronting gender-based violence, and leading climate and digital justice struggles. These campaigns must reconnect the Party with the everyday life of the people by transforming disillusionment into collective action.

IV. Aligning with the Party's overarching goals and the working-class struggle

The ultimate purpose of the Special Congress is to realign the Party's immediate tasks with its historic mission: to advance the NDR as the most direct route to socialism. The SACP's role is not to replace the masses, but to lead them through consciousness and organisation. Its measure of success will not be the number of seats won, but the strength of working-class power built in the process.

In aligning policy and practice, the Congress must reaffirm three foundational principles:

(i) *The centrality of class struggle*

Every programme, campaign, and alliance must be evaluated through the lens of how it shifts the balance of class forces in favour of the working class.

(ii) *The inseparability of democracy and socialism*

The Party must reject false dichotomies that counterpose democratic participation and socialist transformation. The two are mutually reinforcing but socialism is the highest form of democracy.

(iii) *The internationalist duty of solidarity*

The Congress must place South Africa's struggle within the global fight against imperialism, milita-

rism, and neoliberal globalisation. The Party should strengthen ties with fraternal movements in the Global South and the international communist movement, recognising that the struggle for socialism in one country is inseparable from the struggle for socialism everywhere.

6. Conclusion: Renewal through struggle

The call for a Special National Congress is not a matter of organisational convenience but a matter of historical urgency. The shifting balance of class forces, the deepening capitalist crisis, and the fragmentation of the working class all demand that the SACP act with clarity, unity, and revolutionary resolve. This moment requires the Party to reassert its vanguard character, not in words, but in deed, by confronting both internal weaknesses and external challenges with courage and ideological precision. The Congress must therefore be convened as an act of revolutionary renewal. It represents an opportunity to restore the moral fibre, ideological coherence, and organisational vitality of the Party. Through this Congress, we must reaffirm the SACP's central purpose: to advance the NDR as the most direct route to socialism, and to ensure that the working class leads this process as the decisive social force in shaping South Africa's future.

But such renewal will not occur through resolutions alone. It demands the active participation of every structure, every district, and every cadre of our movement. The success of the Special Congress will depend on the collective energy and disciplined commitment of the Party's membership. Every branch must

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prepare by engaging in political education, by holding vibrant pre-Congress discussions, and by grounding deliberations in the lived realities of the working class. This process must be democratic and inclusive. The Congress must not be a meeting of delegates detached from the masses, but a culmination of mass participation to include the voice of workers, women, youth, students, and communities reflected through the structures of the Party. The revolutionary principle of “*from the masses, to the masses*” must guide our work: the ideas born in struggle must return to the people in the form of revolutionary action.

At the same time, the Party must reassert the discipline that has long distinguished it from bourgeois and opportunist formations. Political freedom without organisational discipline breeds chaos; ideological independence without unity breeds fragmentation. The Leninist principle of democratic centralism must again become the backbone of our practice to ensure robust debate before decisions, and collective loyalty to the resolutions thereafter.

In the struggle for socialism, individual ambition must give way to collective responsibility, and rhetoric must be matched by work among the masses.

The Special Congress, therefore, must serve not only as a forum of reflection, but as a command



centre for renewal. It must identify concrete steps to rebuild mass campaigns, revitalise alliances, strengthen the Party’s presence in workplaces and communities, and reconnect the socialist vision with the immediate struggles of the poor and working people. The success of this endeavour will depend on our ability to unite theory with practice and to turn analysis into organisation, and organisation into action.

In this historic moment, the Party must stand firm against both defeatism and adventurism. Defeatism leads to paralysis, while adventurism risks isolation. The correct path, the Leninist path, is one of principled flexibility, guided by scientific socialism and tested in the crucible of struggle. History favours those who act decisively and collectively in the service of the oppressed, not those who waver between rhetoric and retreat. If we succeed, the SACP will re-emerge not as a commentator on crisis, but as its transformative agent, the disciplined, conscious, and united vanguard of the working class. Therefore, the Con-

gress will mark not merely a procedural milestone, but the rebirth of the revolutionary spirit that animated our founders in 1921, sustained our martyrs in exile and underground, and continues to inspire generations of communists today.

Let us therefore approach this Congress as a call to arms for renewal. Let every cadre, from the youngest

activist to the most seasoned leader, recommit to the struggle for socialism with renewed determination and revolutionary optimism. Let the Party speak once more with one voice, the voice of the working class, and let that voice echo in every factory, every township, every rural community, and every centre of power.

For in unity, discipline and struggle lies our strength. In the collective will of the organised working class lies the future of our nation. And in the revolutionary renewal of the South African Communist Party lies the hope of a humane, democratic, and socialist South Africa.

Forward to the Special National Congress!

Forward to working-class unity and socialist renewal!

Socialism is the future – build it now!

Blade Nzimande is the National Chairperson of the SACP and writes in his personal capacity.

NOTES

- 1 Marx, K. (1926). The eighteenth brumaire of Louis Bonaparte. International Publishers.
- 2 Lenin, Vladimir (1976). “Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution,” in Alliance of the Working Class and the Peasantry. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 104-20.
- 3 See Lenin, V. I. (1935). What is to be Done?. Wellred Books.



Choose Clarity Over Noise: What January 8 Requires From Us

■ By **FAIEZ JACOBS**

COMRADES, the week before January 8 is not a performance week. It is a discipline week.

It is the moment when we decide, quietly and honestly, what kind of movement we will be in 2026. Not in speeches. Not on posters. But in streets, homes, branches, workplaces, and communities where people no longer respond to vibes, slogans, or selfies. They respond to presence, truth, and reliability.

Over the past nine days, I have been reflecting deeply on our conversations, on the country, and on the global mood. One thing is clear: people everywhere are anxious, cost-pressed, and distrustful of grand claims. At home, our people are tired. They are not

asking us for perfection. They are asking us to stop confusing noise with leadership.

This is why the theme for this week must be simple and demanding: choose clarity over noise.

Clarity begins with honesty about where we are.

Yes, some systems are stabilising. Yes, there are early signs of improvement in energy availability, revenue collection, and logistics recovery. These things matter and must be defended. But stabilisation is not transformation. Reduced losses are not prosperity. Fewer power cuts are not yet energy security. We must be precise in our language because credibility is the one asset we cannot afford to lose.

When we overclaim, we insult lived reality. When we understate pain, we sound disconnected. When we dismiss criticism, we shrink the movement.

Our people know the difference between spin and truth. They live it every day.

Clarity also means understanding the moment we are in globally and locally. Across the world, surveys show that people's dominant concerns are jobs, the cost of living, safety, and corruption. South Africa is no different, except that these pressures are sharper and more personal. High unemployment, especially among the youth, continues to shape how every message is received. No recovery narrative will land if work remains a distant promise.

That is why January 8 cannot be treated as a vibe check. It must be a standard-setting moment.

What is needed from us in 2026 is not louder messaging. It is behavioural change at scale.

First, we must become a movement of measurable honesty.

If we claim progress, we must be able to explain it plainly, show where it comes from, and state its limits. If something is provisional, we say so. If something is not yet audited, we do not inflate it. This is not weakness. It is maturity. A movement that measures itself builds trust even when the results are mixed.

Second, we must stop performing politics and start practising reliability.

Door-to-door work is not a photo opportunity. It is not about visibility. It is about listening without defensiveness, explaining without arrogance, and committing to follow-up.

When a comrade knocks on a door in 2026, the question in that home will be simple: “Can we

trust you to come back?” Not for a rally. For a water issue. A broken streetlight. A clinic problem. A safety concern.

Reliability builds credibility faster than any speech.

Third, we must confront the shadow economy without ambiguity.

Extortion, construction mafias, tender corruption, illegal mining, and organised crime are not side issues. They are eating the state from the inside and taxing the poor twice. When communities see criminals operate with confidence, they stop believing in the rule of law. When honest contractors are chased away, development stalls.

In 2026, our message must be clear and our conduct even clearer: the ANC does not protect criminals, inside or outside its ranks. Where there is wrongdoing, there must be consequence. Not rhetoric. Consequence.

Fourth, we must reconnect our politics to work and dignity.

People do not experience the economy as GDP figures. They

experience it as the presence or absence of work, transport, safety, and affordable living. Every improvement we speak about must answer one question: how does this create work, lower costs, or restore dignity?

Growth that does not absorb labour will not stabilise society. Recovery that does not touch townships, rural areas, and working-class households will not rebuild trust. Our door-to-door conversations must reflect this reality. We do not promise miracles. We explain pathways. We say what will take time and what can change now.

Fifth, we must discipline our internal culture.

Factionalism, gossip, and internal sabotage weaken us far more than external attacks. A serious movement does not fight itself in public and expect the people to trust it in private. January 8 must mark a recommitment to internal respect, collective discipline, and political education that sharpens thinking rather than inflames emotion.

This does not mean suppressing



debate. It means elevating it.

Comrades, the country is watching us more quietly than before. People are no longer arguing online as much as they used to. They are observing. They are testing. They are waiting to see whether we have learned anything from the past decade.

In the last week of December, I spoke to a frontline worker who said something that should guide us this year: *“I don’t need perfect leaders. I need things to work.”* That is not ideology. That is a standard.

So as we approach January 8, let us ask ourselves hard questions.

Are we speaking more than we are listening?

Are we measuring more than we are messaging?

Are we protecting credibility as fiercely as we protect history?

Are we showing up where it is uncomfortable, not only where it is visible?

2026 will not be won by clever slogans. It will be won by thousands of disciplined cadres who show up consistently, tell the truth plainly, refuse corruption in all its forms, and make the state feel present in people’s lives again.

January 8 is not the destination. It is the line we draw.

In 2026, let us choose clarity over noise, reliability over performance, and service over spectacle. That is how we rebuild trust.

That is how we honour the movement. That is how we carry light into the year ahead.



Will the ANC Renew Beyond Its 114th Birthday?

■ By **SELLO SHAI-MORULE**

WILL the ANC renew beyond its 114th birthday jamboree – tomorrow, perhaps in the foreseeable future, or realize decisive leadership to discharge an alternate service as far as the implementation of the Renewal programme is concerned and radical transformation of our homeland, South Africa? The ANC is at a crossroad and obviously in need of leaders who will drive sound progress, build trust and inspire confidence. To truly renew, the ANC must prioritize public participation, accountability, and inclusivity of its members in all ANC activities which are and not limited to policy developments, decision-making etc. Again, if Radical Renewal of the ANC demand of us because, the current structures are deemed ineffective, the ANC might need

to reimagine its Organisational structure. The redesigning perhaps must include establishment of both National Deputy Chairperson and Second Deputy President to be stationed fulltime in ANC HQ and Second Deputy provincial Secretary as well to be full time in various provincial offices who will focus on structures’ programme of action, monthly reports and membership.

The alignment of ANC structures to that of Government as resolved by the 1997 ANC Mahikeng National Elective Conference must be reviewed because this approach has given birth to competition of state resources and has put the ANC under serious weather. Also, we need to separate the state from the political party so that deployed cadres in government can report to the



party and not to themselves. At branch level, ANC must employ both fulltime organisers and the elected Branch Secretary must be a functionary of the organisation to make it more agile and responsive to community needs. Alternatively, rebuild from scratch whereby new ANC branches will be established, recruit new members, and develop a new leadership pipeline. As a governing party we must be ambitious and these things are possible.

The ANC's renewal is a complex and multifaceted process that requires a comprehensive approach. To achieve this, the ANC must focus on rebuilding its grassroots structures and addressing broader societal issues. The ANC must find a better way of strengthening Branch-level organisation, rebuild and capacitate branches to become effective mobilizers of communities, focusing on local issues and service delivery. A strategy of enhancing membership engagement with an endeavour to increase participation and engagement of members in decision-making processes, ensuring that their voices are heard should be number one in the priority list of ANC leadership. The ANC propaganda machinery has not been so effective in recent years. There is a need to improve its communication approach by developing an effective communication strategy to keep members and communities informed about ANC policies and initiatives.

There mustn't be any branch which does not comprehend its area of jurisdiction like a palm of its hand. This includes engaging with voters, addressing service delivery issues, and ensuring that leaders are held accountable for their actions. Broader

Societal Issues must also come ahead of the rest in terms of day-to-day politics on a locality or branch level. Issues of Economic Transformation, branches and local municipalities as well other two spheres of government must strive to implement policies to address poverty, unemployment, and inequality, such as job creation programmes and social welfare initiatives. The ANC must also use Government Social Cohesion programmes as low-lying fruit to promote unity and reconciliation, addressing issues like racism, sexism, and xenophobia in various communities as well making ensuring an accountability, transparency, and effective governance, tackling corruption and state capture with an endeavour to give good governance a chance. By focusing on these areas and engaging with diverse communities, the ANC can work towards a more inclusive and representative renewal. As part of the renewal, ANC must develop specific strategies which can it use to build trust and engagement with White, Indian, Khoisan and Coloured communities.

If we want to renew, self-introspection must be our guiding principle for the ANC to regain its footing. We can't continue to praise and celebrate a limping organisation that's struggling to stay afloat, claiming it will thrive like it did in its formative years. The ANC is over a hundred years old, and with its experience, I believe it's time for its healing with an endeavour to realise its glory which disappeared like a snore, is now or never. We can't continue to sing praises and clap hands to a limping elephant which is seriously under the weather and claim it will forage for food, use its trunk, search for vegetation and as well use its tusks to dig up

roots and bark like before when it was young and energetic. This Elephant called the Congress Movement, for heaven's sake is over a century old, with such a life experience of this being, I am convinced that the time for its re-fuelling and healing is imminent. The ANC is our heritage and the only inheritance left to us by our ancestors; hence it must be wrapped with cottonwool. This future is not ours, but it is borrowed from our children. This heritage deserves our utmost care, period.

The current ANC leadership collective must focus on the renewal of the ANC. The OR Tambo Foundation Course also remains an important intervention for valuable Political Education of both new and old members of the Congress movement respectively. It is obvious that six months before the ANC National Elective Conference of 2027, the ANC will host the National Policy Conference to review the renewal program, develop new policies as well as set clear goals and at the back of our minds we will be thinking about the possible collective cadre of leadership that will be ready for the task ahead.

This will enable us to identify capable leaders during that 2027 National Conference of ANC Branches, knowing exactly what we want to achieve. This conference must identify garden tools already knowing the type of the soil we want to till, instead of vise versa. If we want to renew, the 2027 National Elective Conference shouldn't be about electing our favourite comrades but must critically identify leaders that will be equal to the task outlined and informed by the National Policy Conference.

The local government elections

are also on our doorstep, and it is imperative that the current ANC leadership collective's eyes must remain on the ball. Instead of anticipated replica events of January 8 in various provinces, regions, sub-regional, zones and ANC branches, this year 2026 should not be treated as business as unusual, and all resources must be channelled to the local government elections campaign instead of these chains of January 8 events across the country which remains a PR to the converted. The ANC must at once start interacting with difficult and sophisticated audiences. Our forty percent 2024 General Election's outcome must be a wakeup call.

The ANC can't afford to deliver elections paraphernalia and posters at the eleventh hour or too late because of budget constraints. We must be the first to occupy strategic positions of outdoor advertisement in every municipal ward of our country as well as in mainstream and social media platforms. As we renew and with an endeavour to gain donor confidence, resources fundraised must be directed to the ANC's Elections campaign kitty not into individual leaders' pockets and it must be ANC Election's volunteer's logistical requirements etc.

The upcoming January 8 rally in Bokone Bophirima, Northwest Province this week is an opportunity for reflection. This event's format and execution have been criticized for being exclusionary and neglecting the needs of ordinary comrades mainly ANC Volunteers. I personally previously suggested in an article after the 2016 January 8th event in the same province, that instead of transporting comrades from across the country, we deploy our ANC NEC leadership to re-

gional events, linking the President's address to these venues the same day.

Exactly ten years ago, in 2016 coincidentally in Bokone Bophirima, Northwest Province during the ANC January 8 rally, we witnessed comrades who were very hungry moving around looking for leftovers, that embarrassed all of us and we obviously had to intervene. The said article was published long before the tragic event which happened 24 months ago in the 2024 when the same commemoration was hosted in the province of Kwazulu Natal at Moses Mabhid Stadium and unfortunately some comrades from Mpumalanga Province perished and some are still showing scars of that day.

To renew, we must reflect on our actions and involve the broader society. We need to instil patriotism and prioritize national pride. The government should budget for patriotism programmes and expand entities such as Brand SA. Compulsory military service could help safeguard our sovereignty as well. The compulsory military prescription must be

re-established, so that our sovereignty can be wrapped with a cottonwool. Media statements and dialogue might not rescue us tomorrow when we are confronted with military threats because the world continue to produce bullies daily. Therefore, the state must also renew, be capacitated militarily and transform as well.

If we want to renew, we must do things differently. We can't offer the same solutions time and again whilst we see that we are not improving, instead we are gradually losing power. A practical example is the strategy of a Door-to-Door campaign. This strategy might have worked for the ANC in the past but is no longer relevant because of the technical advancement of this day. Other political parties get the voters roll and data of rate payers in various local authorities and use modern communication methods for direct and intimate interaction with the voter. To the contrary the ANC will always go and knock at the doors of disillusioned dwellers of dysfunctional and poorly ANC run local Municipalities that hosts poverty-stricken individuals, unemployed community, previously



disadvantaged black masses and youth whom on a daily base put on a dark facemask of high-level of apathy against itself.

The problem with us, we never follow up on issues raised at all and instead in the next elections, we go back to the same households and ask the same questions. If we want to continue with this popular brilliant campaign of ours, then it must happen continually, daily, weekly and monthly. All members of the ANC NEC, all our structures and deployed cadres must make public participation and voter contact their priority if we want to succeed in our renewal crusade. It is an obvious fact that the African National Congress is no longer recognized like that donkey's popular story [of that innocent donkey] in the Bible. When I re-read the Old Testament just before New Year, I realized it does not explicitly mention Jesus by name, but it contains a specific prophecy in the book of Zechariah about the coming Messiah riding a donkey, which Christians believe it was Jesus during his triumphant entry into Jerusalem.

The freedom and total liberation of South Africa came through the ANC but with so many problems confronting us to this day and high levels of apathy, the ANC is seen as that donkey, the time when it came to the same place alone, without possible solution (the messiah). It is a natural phenomenon that the people forget easily, the saying "feed a man for three years and when you stop, he will forget in three days, feed a dog for three days and he will never forget you" is so true. The ANC did away with the evil government system of Apartheid and created one that serves all South Africans, transformed the coun-



try, walked extra miles till today in redressing the imbalances of the past; fostered for peace and stability in our homeland and presided over national reconciliation.

We need to renew and repair this carrier, the donkey and allow it to drive this NDR load to the destined National Democratic society. We must renew now or never. The only solution to realise the complete renewal is to go back to the people and initiate an everlasting dialogue with them. The people of South Africa must continue to see us as the messiah of their challenges beyond their commands through the ANC. Ultimately, the ANC's renewal requires a commitment to self-reflection, accountability, and transformative change.

As we commemorate the African National Congress' (ANC) 114th anniversary, we must continue to reflect on a legacy of resilience, determination, and service to the people. The ANC has been a beacon of hope for South Africans, guiding the nation towards a brighter future. As we approach the local government elections, the ANC must remain committed to delivering decisive victory and continued progress for our communities. With a renewed focus on service delivery, economic

growth, and social justice, the ANC must be poised to build on its achievements and address the challenges facing our nation. The ANC's vision for South Africa must continue to be rooted in the principles of democracy, equality, justice, strive to create a society where every citizen has access to quality education, healthcare, and economic opportunities.

We must continue to reflect on the struggles, triumphs, and resilience of our people. The spirit of revolution lives on, and we must recommit ourselves to the fight for justice, equality, and freedom. To our Khoisan and Traditional Leaders, we continue to honour their ancestral legacy and wisdom. Their leadership guides us towards a brighter future. To our business community, we urge them to join the revolution for economic empowerment and social justice. To our revered Religious Leaders, their moral compass inspires us to strive for a more compassionate society. To Civil Society, your tireless advocacy for the marginalized and oppressed motivates us to continue the fight. Let us unite in our diversity, embracing our differences, and forging a path towards a renewed African National Congress and prosperous South Africa.

Let us unite in celebrating the ANC's 114 years of struggle and triumph. Together, we can achieve a decisive victory in the Municipal Elections and build a better future for all South Africans.

Happy 114th anniversary, ANC!

Sello Shai-Morule is an ANC Member in good standing from Mpumalanga Province, writing in his personal capacity.

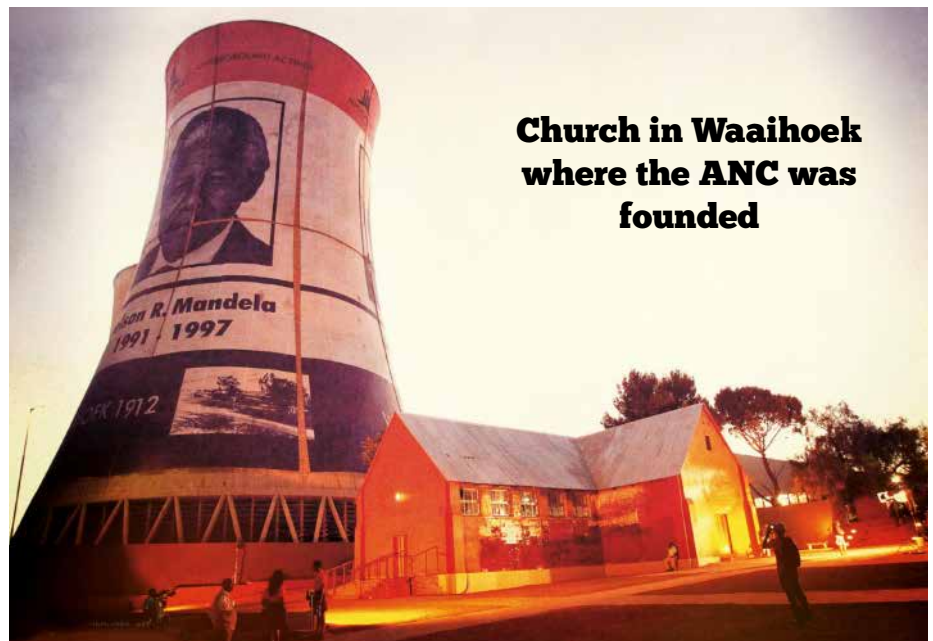
Marking January 8 in the Age of Renewal: A Moment of Revolutionary Reflection

■ By **CORNELIUS MONAMA**

EVERY year on 8 January, the African National Congress pauses for collective self-reflection and recommitment to its historic mission. January 8 is the ideological heartbeat of our movement, the day on which the ANC reaffirms its covenant with the people, reasserts its historic mission, and renews its mandate to lead society in the struggle for a non-racial, non-sexist, democratic, and prosperous South Africa. This moment is not an annual ritual to romanticise the glorious history of our struggle.

On this day in 1912, in Waaihoek, Bloemfontein, our forebears gathered to defy, oppose and resist conquest, dispossession and exclusion. This is how the South African Native National Congress (later the ANC) was born. It was born in the crucible of historic betrayal. The Union of South Africa in 1910 was a settler pact that deliberately excluded Africans, while the 1913 Natives Land Act entrenched land dispossession, stripping our people of dignity, livelihood and hope.

The ANC emerged as a powerful revolutionary weapon of national unity to reclaim the land, restore dignity and re-assert the full humanity of the oppressed majority. This marked the begin-



**Church in Waaihoek
where the ANC was
founded**

ning of a century-long struggle that culminated in the democratic breakthrough of 1994. January 8, therefore, represents an unbroken ideological thread that links the origins of the ANC to the ongoing task of social and economic transformation.

Throughout the liberation struggle, the January 8 Statement served as our strategic lodestar. Often issued from exile under conditions of extreme repression, it analysed the balance of forces, clarified the tasks of the moment and united cadres across Robben Island, underground structures, mass democratic formations and international solidarity networks. Being caught in possession of

this revolutionary document was worth imprisonment, for its content and call to action threatened the very foundation of the apartheid regime.

Today, more than 114 years since its founding, the ANC confronts a new and complex conjuncture. Political power has been attained, yet economic power remains concentrated in the hands of a few white men. Freedom has been won, yet material inequality persists. The national democratic project remains incomplete. For the ANC and the broader democratic movement, the struggle continues! *Aluta continua!*

This year's January 8 takes place

at a moment of profound domestic and international challenge. Internally, the ANC faces unprecedented pressures. Our founding values are under siege.

The corrosive effects of factionalism, coupled with the erosion of discipline, ethical leadership and revolutionary morality, have weakened the movement and contributed to declining electoral support. A dangerous culture is threatening to take root. The movement has a responsibility to confront persistent allegations of vote buying, manipulation of internal democratic processes where non-existent branches convene fraudulent Branch General Meetings (BGMs) and Branch-Based General Meetings (BBGMs) that are designed to deliver pre-determined “leaders”. These are not mere administrative weaknesses or procedural failures. They are acts of counter-revolution. They betray the very principles upon which the ANC was founded and threaten to derail the movement’s historic mission.

These tendencies must be confronted with relentless resolve, sparing neither strength nor effort, until they are completely exorcised from the ranks of our movement. They are a fundamental affront to the values and principles of a movement whose cadres are expected to serve selflessly and with humility without any expectations of material rewards or leadership positions.

Beyond the movement itself, the counter-revolutionary onslaught aimed at weakening and liquidating the ANC continues unabated. The enemy not only funds traditional opponents of the national democratic revolution but also actively identifies individuals within our ranks who can be used



to form breakaway parties. These reactionary projects are hugely resourced in order to weaken the ANC and fragment its electoral base so that it can eventually lose state power and therefore its capacity to transform society and deliver a better life for all.

Globally, progressive forces are facing coordinated attacks from international right-wing and imperialist powers. The democratic gains of the twentieth century are under sustained assault. The ANC and the broader democratic movement across the world are targets in this global struggle. These forces seek to impose a world order that prioritises profit over people. In this context, the task of renewal is both domestic and international. As the rank and file of our movement, we therefore look up to the NEC January 8 Statement for political guidance and strategic clarity as we grapple with these complex organisational, domestic and international challenges.

As we approach January 8, we must ask ourselves uncomfortable but necessary questions: Have we advanced the interests

of the working class and the poor? Have we built a developmental state that serves all? Have we defended the revolution against corruption, careerism, and factionalism? Have we been true to our commitment to the renewal agenda?

Given the state of our movement today, renewal is not optional. It is an existential necessity. We must restore revolutionary morality, organisational discipline and ethical leadership. We must isolate and defeat parasitic tendencies, cleanse the movement of corruption, and reassert the ANC as a leader of society and a movement rooted in service and sacrifice.

January 8 is also a call to reclaim the ANC’s role as the moral and intellectual vanguard of society. We must once again become a movement of ideological clarity and ethical leadership. We must go back to being a movement that shapes national consciousness and mobilises the people for radical and inclusive development.

As we mark this historic day, we

must do our best to rescue January 8 celebrations from some un-ANC tendencies. It is not a festival of crass materialism and excess. The vulgar display of wealth and the commodification of revolutionary symbolism represent a profound betrayal of our struggle tradition. It is not Durban July. It is not a stage for tenderpreneurs and slay queens to flaunt ill-gotten wealth. Such excesses alienate ordinary citizens, erode the movement's moral authority and weaken the ANC's role as leader of society.

In an environment of mass unemployment, poverty and deepening inequality, January 8 must restore hope and not alienate. January 8 must demonstrate that the ANC is a movement that understands the aspirations of the people, correctly reads the moment, and acts with urgency and purpose.

Throughout history, the ANC has faced and overcome formidable challenges. Today, the task before us is to defeat complacency, moral decay and internal erosion. Renewal is thus not only an existential imperative, but it is a prerequisite to restoring our movement to its former glory.

January 8 is therefore a call to our conscience and to action. It is a call to restore the ANC as a disciplined, ethical and revolutionary movement. It is also a call to place the poor at the centre of transformation. Let us remain firm and unwavering in our commitment to the people until the promise of 1912 is fully realised.

Cornelius Monama is a member of the ANC (King Nyabela Mahlangu Branch, Montana, Tshwane). He writes in his personal capacity.

ANC President, Cde Cyril Ramaphosa with H.E. Kgosi Pilane



The Forgotten Centrality of the Bakgatla in South Africa's Liberation History

■ By **GOMOLEMO MOTHIBI**

AS the African National Congress gathers in Moruleng to mark its January 8 celebrations, it is both symbolic and overdue. Symbolic, because Moruleng sits at the heart of Bakgatla ba Kgafela kingdom; overdue, because Batswana communities have for far too long been treated as the stepchildren of South Africa's liberation narrative, as if they stood idly by while others bled for freedom.

This distortion of history is not accidental. It is convenient. It erases the political agency, sacrifice and principled resistance of African polities that confronted colonial conquest long before liberation movements were formally constituted and that later refused to

collaborate with apartheid's grand deception: The Bantustan system.

The Bakgatla and the Long Arc of Batswana Resistance

Long before the formation of the ANC in 1912, African resistance to land dispossession and political subjugation was already entrenched. Across what is today the North West and Northern Cape, Batswana kingdoms mounted sustained, organised resistance to colonial encroachment. The Bakgatla ba Kgafela were not passive spectators to this history; they were central protagonists in the struggle to defend their sovereignty, land and dignity.

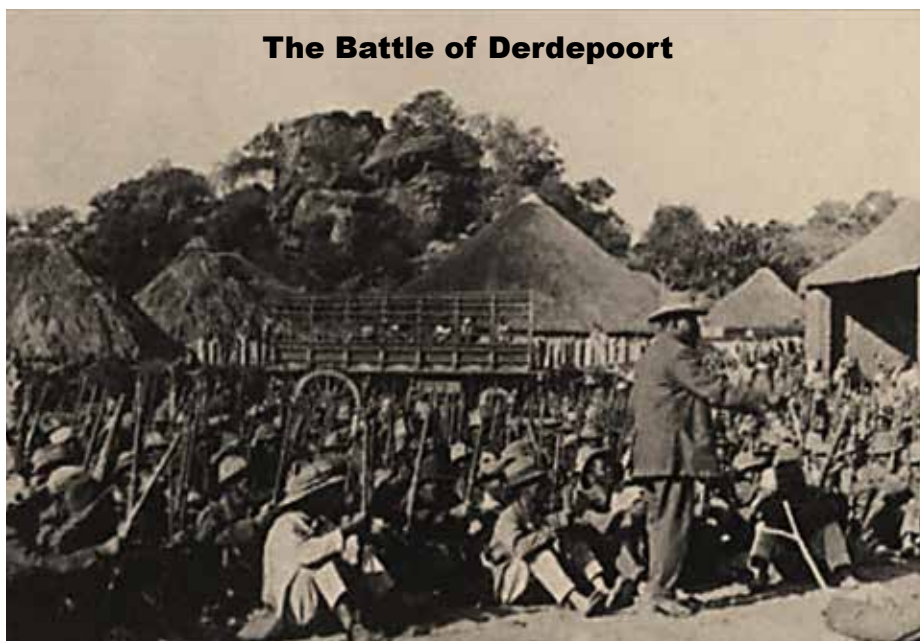
The Battle of Derdepoort in 1897/99 stands as a searing reminder of this reality. When the Bakgatla resisted encroachment by Boer forces and colonial authorities, the response was a brutal collective punishment. Their villages were attacked with the assistance of colonial-aligned forces, cattle were looted and women and children were enslaved and killed.

Derdepoort was not merely a skirmish; it was a declaration by colonial power that African autonomy would be crushed wherever it dared to assert itself. This moment of resistance was not isolated.

Around the same period, other Batswana leaders were engaged in similarly fierce struggles against colonial land grabs. The Battle of Langeberg (1896–1897), led by the visionary and defiant Kgosi Luka Jantjie of the Batlhaping accompanied Kgosi Toto and Galeshewe was a direct response to settler expansion, forced taxation and land dispossession.

Jantjie's resistance was ultimately crushed through overwhelming military force and he was executed by colonial authorities. However, his struggle stands as one of the clearest expressions of African political consciousness and refusal to submit to imperial domination and subjugation.

Likewise, the Siege of Mahikeng during the South African War (1899–1900) further exposes the myth that African communities were mere bystanders in white conflicts. While British and Boer forces fought for imperial control, African populations bore the brunt of dispossession, starvation and displacement.



The Battle of Derdepoort

Batswana communities around Mahikeng navigated coercion, forced labour and violence, all while defending their land against a war that was fundamentally about who would control African territory.

Taken together, Derdepoort, Langeberg and Mahikeng reveal a continuous epistemological trajectory of Batswana resistance. These were not spontaneous uprisings but politically grounded struggles against land theft and colonial domination. That they are rarely foregrounded in mainstream liberation history tells us more about modern political science and its amnesia than about Batswana agency.

Therefore, resistance did not begin with conferences and manifestos, it began with communities defending land with their lives.

Why the Bakgatla Shunned Lucas Mangope

This long tradition of principled resistance explains why the Bakgatla chieftaincy refused to collaborate with Lucas Mangope and his so-called Bophuthatswa-

na homeland.

Unlike many leaders who were coerced, co-opted or corrupted by apartheid's Bantustan architecture, the Bakgatla understood that Bophuthatswana was not self-determination but dispossession dressed up as independence.

Mangope's regime represented a betrayal of African unity and historical truth. It fragmented African polities, turned traditional leaders into administrative extensions of Pretoria and weaponized ethnic identity to undermine political liberation.

The Bakgatla's refusal to recognize or submit to Mangope was therefore not obstinacy, but ideological clarity rooted in a much older resistance tradition. This refusal resulted in harassment, marginalisation and deliberate underdevelopment.

Yet history has vindicated that stance. Bophuthatswana collapsed under the weight of its illegitimacy, while those who resisted it stand today on the right side of history.

The Bakgatla and the Underground Infrastructure of Liberation

The Bakgatla's commitment to liberation was not only expressed through open resistance to colonialism and apartheid structures, it was also quietly and courageously demonstrated through material support for the liberation movement during its most vulnerable moments.

When political activists were forced into exile in Botswana, many found themselves in precarious conditions. The Botswana government, constrained by its small economy and fearful of economic and military reprisals from apartheid South Africa, often adopted a cautious and restrained posture. Official support for South African liberation movements was limited, inconsistent and shaped by the imperative of state survival.

It was under these conditions that the Bakgatla chieftaincy stepped forward. Using their own resources, networks and authority, the Bakgatla provided shelter, financial assistance and logistical support to political activists in

exile when official avenues were closed or unreliable.

This was not symbolic solidarity, it was practical, costly and dangerous. To assist exiles was to invite surveillance, intimidation and retaliation from the apartheid security apparatus and its regional proxies.

Bakgatla did not retreat nor relent on the course to see South Africa independent and free.

This support was extended not for recognition or political favour, but because the chieftaincy understood that the liberation of South Africa was inseparable from the liberation of African people as a whole.

In doing so, the Bakgatla functioned as part of the liberation movement's unofficial infrastructure, a reminder that freedom was sustained not only by formal organizations but by communities and traditional authorities who assumed enormous risk without public acclaim.

That this contribution remains largely unacknowledged in main-

stream liberation historiography is itself an indictment. It reflects a persistent bias that privileges urban, formal political activity while marginalizing rural, traditional and cross-border forms of resistance that were no less essential to the defeat of apartheid.

The Sale of Land and the Birth of Sun City

Nothing exposes the moral bankruptcy of the Bantustan project more clearly than the sale of Bakgatla land on which Sun City now stands. This land was not Mangope's to sell. It belonged and belongs to the Bakgatla people.

Under the guise of "development," communal land was commodified and handed over to private capital, creating a playground for apartheid elites and international celebrities while the rightful owners remained impoverished.

Sun City became a global symbol of apartheid decadence: entertainment built on stolen land, sustained by structural injustice.

That these land questions remain



ANC President, Cde Cyril Ramaphosa, accompanied by ANC 1st Deputy Secretary-General, Cde Nomvula Mokonyane, paid a courtesy visit to Kgosi Pilane of the Bakgatla ba Kgafela in the North West Province.

unresolved today is not accidental. It is the direct inheritance of Bantustan governance, which normalized elite enrichment at the expense of African communities.

Why This History Matters Now

This history is not an academic exercise. It is profoundly relevant today, particularly in a moment where some South Africans, disillusioned or forgetful, flirt with the idea of voting white conservative forces into power.

To do so is to ignore history's most consistent lesson: that white conservatism in South Africa has never been neutral, benevolent or interested in African freedom except where it protects privilege. The same ideological current that justified land dispossession, colonial conquest and Bantustans cannot be rehabilitated through clever rebranding.

The Bakgatla experience situated within the broader Batswana resistance from Langeberg to Mahikeng, teaches us that liberation is not merely about changing faces in government, but about defending land, dignity and political agency against all forms of dispossession, whether colonial, apartheid or neoliberal.

Reclaiming a Complete Liberation Narrative

As the ANC celebrates January 8 in Moruleng, it must do more than commemorate its own founding. It must acknowledge the deeper, broader liberation history rooted in African resistance traditions like that of the Bakgatla ba Kgafela



la and other Batswana kingdoms. Batswana were not spectators

to liberation, they were its foundation stones. From Langeberg to Derdepoort, from the Mahikeng Siege to the rejection of Mangope, their story is a mirror held up to South Africa itself.

To forget this history is to risk repeating it. To remember it fully and honestly is to safeguard the future.

Moruleng is not just a venue. It is a reminder.

Gomolemo Mothibi is a Mahikeng based activist and co-founder of the Maftown Book Club. She writes about people, politics and the continuous democratic project that is South Africa.

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The Indecency of Blame

■ By **MOSS NGWENYA**

If you were to press me, as one presses a button, and ask why I felt compelled to write this note, my honest answer would be simple: I do not know – because I truly do not. Perhaps it is an unarticulated urge to probe the conditions under which empathy and sympathy might survive among human beings. Or perhaps it is provoked by a troubling reflex, increasingly visible in public life, to assign blame even after death has rendered all recriminations futile – and indecent.

Émile Durkheim argued that society is an interdependent organism, shaping the conduct of institutions and their members. Yet this insight has often been abused as a moral alibi. “Society” has become a convenient abstraction onto which personal failure and unmet expectations are endlessly displaced. Responsibility is diluted until it vanishes.

Grown men and women must unlearn the corrosive belief that their livelihood is the obligation of others. Dependency, elevated into entitlement, ceases to be a social ethic and becomes a moral pathology.

This is not an argument against solidarity. Assistance is noble precisely because it is voluntary. Acts of care derive their meaning from empathy and sympathy freely exercised – not from coercion, factional loyalty, or retrospective claims dressed as moral duty.

Most people belong, loosely or formally, to organisations of various kinds. Some join political organisations, exercising personal agency. Political organisations are not welfare bureaus; they exist to advance societal interests, not to guarantee the material security of members. To confuse the two is to fundamentally misunderstand politics.

Yet this confusion is pervasive. Many wrongly expect members of the same political organisation to be responsible for one another’s livelihoods – and, grotesquely, for one another’s misfortunes. This expectation surfaces predictably when a member dies. Moments that should be governed by dignity are instead weaponised; mourning becomes accusation. The dead are transformed into instruments for settling political and personal accounts.

This reflex is intellectually dishonest and morally bankrupt. Death does not create obligations that did not exist in life. Nor does it retroactively assign guilt. To insist otherwise exploits tragedy to mask a failure to distinguish between solidarity and entitlement, compassion and opportunism.

Death demands dignity, not debt – and grief should never be conscripted into the service of blame.



A society that cares for its members in life honors them in death

A RESPONSE TO COMRADE MOSS

■ By **FEZILE KIES**

COMRADE Moss, your assertion that death does not create obligations that did not exist in life warrants consideration. You might want to reflect on the idea that, even if death does not create new obligations, it highlights the responsibilities that were neglected during life. This is, in itself, quite sad, as our entire existence as comrades reveals that death can bring to light the obligations we overlooked while alive.

I wish to start by what I find deeply worrying in your beautifully written article.

You posit a world where assistance is noble only when “*voluntary*,” and you sharply distinguish this from “*coercion*” or “*moral duty*.” This creates a false choice. A decent society is built on both: the empathy of individuals and the obligations of institutions. The social contract is not a “*corrosive belief*”. Framing all expectation of support as “*entitlement*” and “*moral pathology*” pathologizes the very concept of community. It suggests that we owe each other nothing, which is a recipe for a cold and brutal world.

We have been together – and hopefully we still are – in the trenches for a prolonged period, navigating the various challeng-



es that this struggle entails. Together – and again, it is hoped that we are still united – we have experienced firsthand the unpaid labor of community organizing, emotional support, and activism. Of course, we are not advocating for a permanent burden, nor are we endorsing endless suffering.

Your argument, while elegantly constructed, rests upon a fundamental mischaracterization of human society and moral responsibility. It mistakes accountability (for each other both collectively and individually) for indecency, conflates solidarity with entitlement, and presents a vision of

human life that is both atomized and emotionally sterile.

The individual (a comrade, a cadre) is shaped by social facts – institutions, norms, collective sentiments. To then claim that “*society*” is merely an “*abstraction*” for displacing personal failure ignores the reality that societal structures create the conditions for both personal success and failure.

A society that generates inequality, exclusion, or precarity bears a share of responsibility for the fates of its members. This is not about displacing blame, but about accurate diagnosis.

Your claim that *“political organisations are not welfare bureaus”* reflects a limited view of their purpose, especially in the context of the ANC. If this were true, we would have long dismissed our veterans and cadres facing hardships. Comrade Thomas Nkobi’s report to the 49th conference demonstrates how the ANC has supported its members in a welfare-oriented manner. Political entities have a responsibility to protect citizens from destitution, and the welfare state concept emerged from this understanding. Smaller organizations, such as unions and community groups, thrive on mutual aid, which enhances individual security. Ignoring this diminishes politics to mere ideology, devoid of human concern.

You state that *“death does not create obligations that did not exist in life.”* But often, death reveals obligations that were neglected in life. The question asked after a tragedy – *“Could this have been prevented?”* – is not indecent. It is the essence of learning and moral growth. To silence this question in the name of “dignity” is to privilege politeness over justice.

Mourning is not weaponized by asking whether a comrade died from neglect, or whether a system failed them. It is weaponized when such questions are asked in bad faith for factional gain. But to categorically rule out any connection between death and accountability is to demand a silence that serves the powerful and neglectful. True dignity for the dead can include seeking answers. Grief and accountability are not opposites; they can be complementary.

Your argument rightly cautions

against opportunism masquerading as compassion. But your solution is to discard the framework of collective responsibility altogether, lest it be abused. The answer is to sharpen our moral discernment – to distinguish genuine solidarity from cynical blame – not to retreat into a world where

“grown men and women” (your words) are isolated.

A society that cares for its members in life honors them in death. To foreclose that care in the name of avoiding blame is not a defense of dignity. It is a surrender to indifference.

Moss Ngwenya writes...

Comrade Fezile,

I receive your response with appreciation and respect. It is thoughtful, principled, and rooted in a shared history of struggle and care. Our exchange is not adversarial; it reflects comrades grappling honestly with difficult moral questions.

Let me be clear at the outset: I do not deny collective responsibility, nor the historic role of political movements – particularly the ANC – in sustaining their members through solidarity and mutual aid. Your reminder of that tradition is important and well taken.

Where we differ is one of emphasis. My argument was not an appeal to indifference, but to caution. Death can indeed illuminate neglected obligations; I accept that. My concern is that grief, powerful as it is, can sometimes outrun judgment, turning tragedy itself into the basis for immediate moral verdicts.

When I say that death does not create obligations that did not

exist in life, I mean only that accountability should be grounded in evidence, process, and proportion – not generated by tragedy alone. The question “Could this have been prevented?” is legitimate and necessary; it simply requires patience and restraint if it is to serve justice rather than sentiment.

You rightly warn against indifference and neglect. I warn, in turn, against instrumentalisation and moral compulsion. Both dangers are real, and our political history has known them well.

If there is common ground, it lies here: grief and accountability can coexist, but only when held together by ethical discipline and fairness. To care deeply does not require abandoning restraint, and to exercise restraint does not mean abandoning solidarity.

In that spirit, I receive your intervention not as opposition, but as a contribution that deepens the conversation we are obliged to have as comrades.

What happened to “ANC a caring organisation”?

■ By **NOMI KONDLO**

THE African Proverb has always represented what humanity means in an African context that we proudly refer as *Ubuntu*, that “*it takes a village to raise the child*” and further cautions us that “*the child who is not embraced by a Village will burn it down to feel its warmth*”.

These proverbs underscore the collective duty a community, a society has over its people (using the “child” as reference) and failure of this collective community; “*the village*” may invoke ruin from the very child/children who may suffer neglect from the village.

Growing from and in a revolutionary home, family and village under progressive thought, we learnt that “*a comrade is more than a friend*”, actually we came from broken families by design of colonial subjugation and apartheid, and never felt naked as we got aunts, uncles, siblings, and all beyond blood relations, but what we fondly know as “*camaraderie*” and “*brothers in the trenches*”.

When the late ANC President OR Tambo referred to the young lions “*oovukayibambe*” this would be accepted as a noble gesture and embrace from the father



and head of the family in pride bestowed upon his beloved children, why even today such reference is sacred amongst generations, and not because OR would have known each of the young comrades closely – that’s no requirement nor expectation in the village, moreso in this revolutionary village, the Congress.

We are revolutionaries because ours is to eliminate oppressive systems, backwardness and exploitation in all its forms, especially its value system/s in our lessons about “*superstructure and base*”, where the ideas of the dominant and exploiting class must be radically transformed so a new society, the National Democratic Society rises.

It is in this society that old values of human subjugation, suffering, aloofness and all are replaced

by an advanced society, an advanced thinking and values of kindness, of *Ubuntu*, of collective coexistence as espoused by the notion of *Ubuntu – umntu ngumntu ngabantu*.

If we refuse in our daily acts first amongst ourselves and towards each other to rid self, and collective formation of our revolutionary village the ANC of unkind behaviour, inhumane acts and thoughts then we cannot claim the ultimate price, stature and place of being called “*leader of society*” as the saying goes, we ought and must “*lead by example*”.

We can’t succumb and accept ordinariness, as ours is to exorcise the demon of “*ordinariness*” to “*advance men and women*” that Lembede spoke of, of transforming in us a “*member*” into a “*cadre*” where such values no longer need to be gossiped upon, but become inherent in our daily undertakings and interaction with society, so through our walk as men and women that are above reproach we win hearts and minds that bear testimony that indeed it is possible to be a better and greater human being.

The ANC is a caring organisation at all material times.



■ By **SEPHOKA DAVID SEKGOBELA**

SOUTH Africa's relationship with the US had been hanging on the rocks for some time. 2025 had been a rollercoaster year in which SA-US relations have been at the lowest ebb ever. It is pretty obvious that 2026 is not going to be better either, especially in the wake of the latest developments in which the US attacked Venezuela and abducted its President, Nicolas Maduro, in violation of the UN Charter, drawing worldwide condemnation.

There have been frantic attempts by SA to mend the SA-US relations that seem to have been irretrievably broken down. The US was purportedly willing to make some "concessions" if SA could meet certain demands that include, inter alia, the following:

1. Withdrawal of SA's case against the genocidal Israeli regime at the ICJ and withdrawal of cases before the ICC against bloodthirsty war-

lords, Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, and former Israeli Defence Minister, Yoav Gallant.

2. Exclusion of American businesses from SA's economic transformation policies and/or regulations.
3. Review of SA's land reform policy directives and/or legislative instruments.
4. Withdrawal of SA from BRICS and disassociating itself from BRICS member states, particularly China.

Donald Trump is a hypocrite of the highest note that is very difficult, if not impossible, to please. As Mbhazima Shilowa stated, *"Donald Trump doesn't act based on principles, but is transactional. He is currently negotiating with the same communist China that we aren't supposed to associate with through our BRICS membership. The same Trump has concluded a trade agreement with India, another BRICS member"*.

Donald Trump's two Presidential terms are separated by Joe Biden's lacklustre term, in which Trump claimed to have been cheated in the elections. However, Donald Trump's first term was not as dramatic as the second one. He came back vengeful like a wounded lion, and seems to have a score to settle with many people. Donald Trump's and the Republicans' victory apparently makes him one of the most powerful leaders in the world, and he is forcefully pushing his hard-line and protectionist MAGA policies down all other nations' throats. It actually doesn't matter whether Donald Trump is likeable or not, because a majority of Americans voted him back into power. Donald Trump is a reflection of anyone who voted for him – good or bad. It also doesn't matter which party or individual is leading the US, because it makes no difference whatsoever, as both the Democrats and the Republicans are just two sides of the same

coin. Whoever leads the US, does so on the basis of American policies and laws. The difference could just be the approach in implementation of the US supremacist policies. Diplomacy is not in Donald Trump's vocabulary, nor one of his strengths.

One of the valuable lessons to learn from the Venezuelan *coup d'état* is that, it is every nation for itself. What would have happened if Venezuela was already a member of BRICS? Though BRICS is more about trade relations, would BRICS member countries leave one of their own in the lurch? International solidarity is meaningless if powerful nations could just do as they please with the meek. China, for instance, has direct economic interest in the Venezuelan oil. What China would or wouldn't do to safeguard its own economic interests says much about China itself for failing to stand up against US bullying in defence of its own interests.

Most local organisations and individuals – ANC, SACP, EFF, MKP, COSAS, etc. have joined other critics, including DIRCO, in openly condemning the US attack on Venezuela and capturing its President on trumped-up charges. However, SA itself is a divided house. There are already sectors of the community like FF+, who are denouncing government stance, saying that **the ANC cannot speak on behalf of the country on Venezuelan issue, or, international policy.** Whilst still grappling with the repercussions of referral of Israeli genocidal regime and its warlords to the ICJ and ICC respectively, a wish in some quarters was that, this time around, SA could just stay out of absolutism, tone down a bit, and not stick its neck out. There are sentiments that,



“we cannot afford to act brave only to invite far away trouble to ourselves” and “we need to learn to mind our own business”, and “this time around, SA should take a backseat, because SA cannot afford to go toe-to-toe or pound-for-pound with the US”.

When SA initiated the ICJ process against Israel, we certainly were not that naive not to expect some sort of backlash from the culprits and their allies. SA already endured a lot of insults and unfair condemnation from the US politicians, but it was never expected that SA would indeed suffer economic sanctions for doing the right thing.

Should disinvestment or economic sanctions deepen, that could actually be a blessing in disguise, because SA would have to develop self-reliant survival strategies like what apartheid SA did when facing almost similar situation. Hence, SA must go flat out to diversify into new trade relations

with progressive nations based on terms and conditions that would not be repressive and patronizing. International trade relations and/or investment should be based on mutual respect amongst the nations.

No matter what SA does, trying to please the US, SA is likely to ultimately lose even AGOA benefits through the US-South Africa Bilateral Relations Review Act of 2025 that was recently presented and voted in favour of before the US Assembly. Whilst pushing for SA's removal from AGOA, US Senator, John Kennedy, declared, *“South Africa is our enemy... they are a unique problem for America..... they are our enemy right now. They are buddies with all of our enemies. And they have been very critical of the United States.”* According to the US Trade Representative, Ambassador Jamieson Greer, *“South Africa has been slapped with 30 percent reciprocal tariff which is much higher than the*

rest of the continent....because i think they are a unique problem”.

The more SA tries to mend trade relations with the US, the more the gap widens. The sooner SA forgets about any reasonable prospects of resuscitating civil relations based on mutual respect with the US, the better, because that is not going to happen anytime soon, for as long as Donald Trump is still the President of the US, and whilst the Republicans are still in charge of the Senate.

The US's bullying, aggression and violation of SA's sovereignty is on steroids – trying to unduly interfere in the SA domestic affairs, and it looks like they would stop at nothing to instigate regime change in SA. What happened to Venezuela can easily happen to SA as well.

Negotiating with the Trump Administration to ease tensions in economic trade relations seems to be a futile exercise. The Americans have already made their unreasonable demands in clear and unambiguous terms, including withdrawal of SA's progressive and transformation policies and legislative instruments. What mandate do the SA trade relations negotiators have to set aside hard-earned transformative policies and legislative instruments duly passed by the SA government? It is indeed true that negotiations is a give and take process, but how much backward are SA negotiators supposed to lean to accommodate the US Administration's unjustifiable demands based on blatant lies and distortion of facts?

SA trade relations negotiators cannot make concessions on, for instance, the reversal or relaxation of transformation poli-

cy directives and/or legislative instruments such as B-BBEE, BELA Act, Expropriation Act, and many other laws falsely regarded as racist by Donald Trump and/or the US Administration.

Diversification into alternative markets is indeed not something that could happen overnight. It is a process that would lead to hardships due to joblessness, and probably even disappointments for the markets not picking up faster than expected. The process could be overdrawn. However, once diversification takes place, SA economy would bounce back and grow exponentially, and SA would not be bullied anymore and/or subjected to the whims and wishes of Donald Trump and the US.

Is South African envoy to the US, Mcebisi Jonas, part of trade relations negotiators or not? He was apparently supposed to normalize SA diplomatic relations with the US, but his silence feeds into the narrative that he, just like Ebrahim Rasool, had also been declared a persona non grata by the US Administration.

On the other hand, is SA obliged to accept conservative Leo Brent

Bozell as the US Ambassador-elect to SA? No! If the US has the right to accept or deny SA ambassador or envoy, what prevents SA from doing the same? SA does not need the likes of Leo Brent Bozell III as US Ambassador to SA. He should be outrightly rejected as a persona non grata in SA. He is already determined to interfere in SA domestic affairs, and makes no bones about it. How could SA accept the credentials of someone who is determined to undermine our policy directives and legislative instruments, and by implications, our Constitutional Democracy and sovereignty?

Whatever Ebrahim Rasool and Mcebisi Jonas said about Donald Trump and/or the US cannot be compared to a bile of rubbish spewed by Leo Brent Bozell about SA. It would not only be folly, but betrayal of the country, for SA to lean backward to accommodate this hateful racist in SA as the US Ambassador. What is good for the goose, should also be good for the gander. The Americans should also be given a taste of their own medicine as well. We do not want bigots meddling in our domestic affairs, all in the name of nursing trade relations.



TRIBUTE TO JULY MAWEWE, A LOYAL AND SELFLESS ANC CADRE

■ By **TSAKANE MAHLAULE** and **SY MAKARINGE**

AFRICAN National Congress (ANC) stalwart and loyal cadre Magondweni July Makaringe, the first-born son of once-flourishing livestock farmer Mawewe Makaringe, was born at Nwa-Matatani Village in the present-day Limpopo Province on 25 July 1910 but spent most of his childhood and early adulthood years under the care and guidance of his maternal grandparents in Mozambique.

He returned to Nwa-Matatani Village at the age of 22 in 1932 but proceeded to Johannesburg the following year to seek work in the fast-growing gold mining industry. He was first employed as a labourer at the City Deep Fresh Produce Market, an entity of the Johannesburg City Council, where he worked for four years before he took a transfer to the municipality's Doornfontein depot.

It was during this time that July Mawewe was drawn into politics. Driven by the desire to help free black people from the yoke of racial oppression, exploitation and economic deprivation, July Mawewe joined the ANC in 1942 during the presidency of Dr AB Xuma.

Over the years he worked tirelessly on the ground to help build



the organisation, spreading its revolutionary messages and recruiting new members from various communities. Despite his otherwise limited formal educational qualifications, he rose to become the chairperson of the ANC branch in White City Jabavu, Soweto, where he lived.

He was one of thousands of ANC members and volunteers who were arrested during the Defiance Campaign in the early 1950s following the introduction of unjust

apartheid laws, including one that required black people to carry passes.

When the ANC was banned by the apartheid government on 8 April 1960 many of its cadres fled into exile, while others went underground. For his part, July Mawewe left his employ at Johannesburg City Council, now known as the City of Johannesburg, to join Circle Dry Cleaners in Hillbrow, in the Johannesburg inner city, as a cover for his underground activities, clandestinely using the dry cleaners' customer networks in the black townships to distribute banned ANC literature and deliver communication material from the organisation's leadership in exile to their members in the country, right under the noses of his white bosses.

From that time, he led a cat-and-mouse existence, with Special Branch police officers on his trail day and night but failed to pin him down. In a bid to evade the security police net, he used to arrive home at 116C White City Jabavu from his underground work at 2am, only to leave it again four hours later. The only person they found every time they pounced on his home was his third wife, Mijaji N'wa-Maboko, who was always clad in her signature traditional xibelani regalia.

He was eventually arrested one Saturday morning in 1962 in Doornfontein while he and his wife, whom they recognised by her distinct and colourful traditional clothing, were on their way to Gezani Outfitters, an Indian-owned clothing shop in Jeppestown specialising in VaTsonga garbs, to buy some snuff to sell in the township. He was taken away and detained without trial before he was later slapped with a five-year banning order that effectively put him under house arrest.

The banning order prevented him from attending political gatherings; confined him to his new home in 3798 Mazibuko Street, Tshiawelo, Soweto, between 6pm and 6am, only allowing him to go to work; limited the number of visitors he could receive to three at a time; and forced him to report to the local police station once a week. Members of the notorious Security Branch of the South African Police would regularly arrive at his home unannounced, at any time of the day, to check if he was not in breach of the banning order.

Although the banning order put a restriction on the number of visitors he could receive, he never chased away the throngs of people who came to seek his counsel on a variety of matters, especially on weekends, daring the Security Police to arrest him.

After apartheid Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd, the architect of apartheid, was stabbed to death by Dimitri Tsafendas in Parliament on 6 September 1966, Comrade Magondweni, as he was known among his fellow cadres, taunted the Security Police assigned to monitor his movements when he cheekily displayed on the wall of his living room a framed Rand Daily Mail



article on the assassination.

The enraged white police officers ordered him to pull it down, but he flatly refused. It only disappeared days later after his wife, who was worried something horrible might happen to him, removed it without his say-so and hid it in the back garden, where it was later unintentionally trampled upon and subsequently buried into the wet ground overtime.

When the government failed to break him down, its agents approached him with an offer to build him a fully stocked retail store in Bend Store, in the Giyani central business district, in Limpopo so he and his family could lead comfortable lives. Accordingly, Cde Magondweni rejected the offer with the contempt it deserved. He told them he was not for sale and that he would never betray the just cause of the liberation struggle for selfish and narrow interests.

When he retired from his dry-cleaning job in 1981, July Mawewe returned to his rural

home at Tomu Village, Nkuri, near Giyani. Instead of riding into the sunset, he continued from where he left off with relentless political vigour in an area where struggle politics was, at the time, rather muted or subdued due to a variety of factors, including the lack of political awareness and exposure and concerted apartheid propaganda.

With his unwavering intolerance of undemocratic tendencies, he began to mobilise communities around injustices perpetrated against them by the then authoritarian tribal leadership, who owed their allegiance to Pretoria. These traditional leaders had been indoctrinated to take the view that ANC political activists and those who had taken up arms outside the country to fight the racist apartheid government were terrorists.

He started raising political awareness among the locals at a time when Nelson Mandela and his comrades were demonised and labelled as terrorists by their political detractors and those who

had been brainwashed. He also mobilised people not only around political issues such as the call for the release of Nelson Mandela and the unbanning of the ANC but also around burning community issues that had been left unattended by the authorities.

His fearless political activism soon earned him the ire of pliant local traditional leadership and drew the wrath of Malamulele-based Special Branch police, particularly the ruthless and notorious Lieutenant-Colonel Solomon Moyane, who arrested him for pursuing the aims of a banned organisation and put him in jail before putting him under 24-hour surveillance.

Contrary to what some people believe, July Mawewe recognised the sanctity of traditional leadership. But he deeply abhorred chiefs who had meekly submitted or succumbed to apartheid oppression at the expense of their people. He, with equally measure, detested the homeland system, which he said had been designed to weaken African unity as it was based on divisive tribal lines. To that extent, he refused to have his pension paid by the Gazankulu homeland under Chief Minister HWE Ntsan'wisi, whom he branded a sellout for betraying the struggle for the total emancipation of Black people as a whole.

He felt that receiving his old-age pension from the Gazankulu homeland would be a betrayal of the liberation struggle and an admission of defeat. On that basis, he opted to rather travel to his Tshiawelo, Soweto, home every month to collect his pension, at an exorbitant cost to himself. He stopped travelling to Johannesburg after his family was in-

formed that his pension had been transferred.

Despite apartheid's unrelenting intransigence, July Mawewe's fearlessness at Tomu Village continued. As he did so, he injected political consciousness in the community and inspired a new generation of ANC cadres such as Tsakane Mahlaule, Mika Mahlaule, Dyson Vukeya, Gloria Makamu, Basikopo Makamu, Walter Mathebula, Goodman Mitileni, Moses Mitileni, Nomsa Khandhela, Eric "Penny Penny" Nkovane, Carlson Chavalala and many others.

July Mawewe died on 9 January 1990, just three weeks before the unbanning of his beloved organisation, the ANC, and a month before the release from detention of his long-time comrade, Nelson Mandela. He also missed what it feels like to live in a democratic country by a mere four years and three months. He left behind three wives and nine children.

Many likens with the biblical character of Moses, who led the Is-

raelites out of bondage in Egypt, guided them through the harsh and difficult conditions of the wilderness over a period of 40 years but died on the eve of the Israelites entering the Promised Land after God had told him to go to the top of a mountain outside Jericho so he could catch a glimpse of it.

While July Mawewe was deeply despised by the system during the struggle, he was highly respected by his community for the role he played in their freedom. It was for this reason that local ANC structures decided to posthumously honour him by naming their branch after him. Over time, they built the ANC July Mawewe Branch Ward 5 into one of the strongest and formidable in the Greater Giyani Mopani District and in the whole province. This is where his mortal remains are resting.

This article was co-authored by Tsakane Mahlaule and Sy Makaringe, a former journalist at the Sowetan and youngest son of the late July Mawewe.



THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

1–16 January 2026

Source: *SA History Online, O'Malley Archives, Africa Today/Yesterday, The Africa Factbook and Amazwi SA Museum of Literature*

1 January 1972 First women enlisted in the South Africa Police

On 1 January 1972, for the first time in the history of the South African Police (SAP), policewomen were enlisted as 'full members of the force'. More women began basic training at the police college in Pretoria on 1 March 1972. On the surface this looks 'progressive' but the women were still excluded from certain SAP units to the extent that a separate women's police section was instituted to deal with female related issues. This took place despite the instruction of the Public Service Commission in 1971 that there should be no discrimination between male and female members and that there should be no differential treatment of females. As a result, women employed from 1972 were not optimally utilized for general police functions, such as patrols and disposal functions. Women were mainly employed in the areas of victim support and administration, and were given functions such as typists, issuing of licenses for firearms, compiling of medical boards, etc. Only later in the 1970s and at the beginning of the 1980s were women allowed to work on patrol, under-cover and do investigative work. Since democracy, the SA Police Services (SAPS) has become a more gender representative organisation than most police services elsewhere in the world. This includes being led by its first female Police Commissioner, General Riah Phiyega, from 2012-2015.

3 January 1994 Millions regain Citizenship

Restoration of South African citizenship, announced on 15 December 1993 by then President F.W. de Klerk, became effective 4 months before the first South Africa non-racial polls of 27 April, 1994. More than seven million people in the former bantustans, forced to accept citizenship of their various homelands, regained their South African citizenship. The Restoration and Extension of South African Citizenship Act No 196 of 1993 was part of a package agreed upon at the CODESA negotiating.

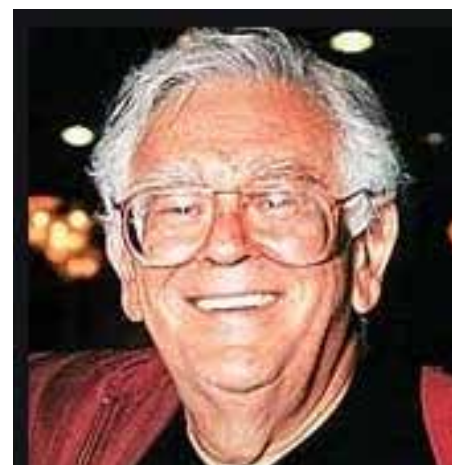
3 January 2008 Lungi Sisulu passed on



On 3 January 2008 Mlungisi Sisulu, the grandson of Albertina and Walter Sisulu died in London from cerebral malaria. Lungi was born on 20 August 1966 in Moscow to Max Sisulu and Mercy Vuthela, two young South African exiles studying in the Soviet Union. Lungi came to South

Africa at the age of 5 and settled in Soweto with his grandmothers, Greta Ncapayi and Albertina Sisulu. He was a member of the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) and chaired the Dube branch of the Soweto Youth Congress (SOYCO). In 1986 he was detained for 9 months; the third generation of Sisulus, alongside his grandfather and uncle Zwelakhe to be jailed at the same time. In 2006 he was appointed First Secretary of the South African Embassy in Khartoum, Sudan, where he married Kundi Jangano in 2007.

6 January 1995 Joe Slovo passed on



ANC and SACP stalwart Joe Slovo, who was amongst the masterminds of South Africa's national reconciliation, died after a long battle with cancer. He was long-time General Secretary and National Chairperson of the South African Communist Party, and also the first Minister of Housing.

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

7 January 1919

ICU formed under Kadalie

The Industrial and Commercial Union (ICU) was founded by Clements Kadalie, a young Nyasaland who spoke no indigenous South African language, but used English to spread the message of worker unity. Formed in the stormy years after World War I with a membership of only twenty-four, the Industrial and Commercial Union made its first powerful impact when Cape Town dock workers went on strike in December 1919. From small beginnings as a union of dock workers it quickly spread across the country, enrolling about 100,000 members.

7 January 1957

Alexandra Bus Boycott starts

Following hefty bus fare increases by PUTCO, the Alexandra People's Transport Committee (APTAC) was formed on this day to spearhead a bus boycott. The boycott, which originated in Alexandra, quickly spread to Sophiatown, Germiston, Edenvale and Pretoria townships such as Atteridgeville and Lady Selbourne. After months of walking to work and constant harassment by police, the commuters and the company finally reached a compromise on 1 April of that year. The commuters could then purchase tickets with the old price on condition that the government did a study on the need for a wage increase.

8 January 1912

South African National Native Congress formed

The South African Native National Congress (SANNC), later known as the Africa National Congress (ANC) was founded on the 8 January 1912. At SANNC's inaugu-



ral conference, Rev. John Dube was elected as its first President in absentia. The organisation's establishment occurred under conditions of racial exclusion and oppression under the new Union of South Africa, 1910. For the first time on 8 January 1972, ANC President Reginald Oliver Tambo delivered a statement outlining the ANC's programme for the year ahead. This was repeated on the same date in 1979, and became an ANC tradition, known as the **January 8th Statement**.

8 January 1978

Activist Rick Turner assassinated

A passionate lecturer pioneering the teaching of radical political philosophy, Dr. Richard Turner, was assassinated. Turner met his untimely death on the night of 8 January 1978 when he was shot through a window of his home in Durban and died in the arms of his 13-year old daughter, Jann. Turner's murder came in the wake of renewed attacks on the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS). His death added to a bleak political situation in South Africa as the country was still mourning the death of Steve Biko with whom Turner formed a close friendship and himself (i.e. Biko) died in police custody on 12 September 1977. Turner is author

of *The Eye of the Needle – Towards Participatory Democracy In South Africa* and was active in the trade union movement in Durban.

9 January 1973

Durban strikes started



On 9 January 1973 around 2 000 workers in the Coronation Brick and Tile factory in Durban downed tools after the employers rejected their demand for a wage increase. Subsequently, workers in various sectors around Durban also went on strike demanding higher wages and better working conditions. The strike spread to other parts of the country, and forced employers and the apartheid government to concede to the demand for the recognition of black trade unions.

9 January 1960

Building of the Aswan Dam on the River Nile starts

The building of the world famous Aswan High Dam was started on the River Nile in Egypt. The Nile is the longest river in the world, and its drainage basin covers eleven countries: Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, DRC, Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, South Sudan and Egypt. It is the main source of water for Sudan and Egypt. Since its completion in 1970, the Aswan High Dam provides irrigation and power supply for the

whole of Egypt. It was regarded key to Egypt's post independent development and industrialization led by that country's leader, Abdel Nasser.

9 January 1994 Photographer killed in Kathlehong



On 9 January 1994, Abdul Shariff, a freelance photographer was shot in the back and killed while covering an African National Congress (ANC) delegation visit to Kathlehong near Johannesburg. Shariff was hit by fire from a hostel occupied by Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) supporters. It is believed that the gunshots were intended for Cyril Ramaphosa and Joe Slovo who were leading the ANC delegation. Shariff was born in Verulam, Natal and began fighting against apartheid from an early age. He was involved in the student political movement at high school and was active in early documentary projects for student publications, going on to make a career as a news photographer. Shariff's photographic work continues to appear in major news publications.

10 January 1946 First meeting of UN General Assembly held

The United Nations Organisation

(UN) succeeded The League of Nations which was founded just after the end of World War I. It is intended to ensure avoidance of war amongst nations through dispute resolution, condemnations and imposition of sanctions. The League was dissolved in 1945 and replaced by the United Nations Organisation (UN). The UN held its first general assembly in London in 1946, attended by delegates from 51 countries. The UN General Assembly (UNGA) has been held every year since. It also meets during elections, special sessions and emergency special sessions at the call of the United Nations Security Council. The General assembly debated crucial issues over the years, including apartheid in South Africa. The UN now has over 192 members.

11 January 1904 Herero uprising in Namibia starts

The Herero people, led by Samuel Maharero, revolted against German colonization and oppression. This uprising that lasted until 1907 was defeated with the help of the Afrikaner governments from the then Zuid Afrikaner Boer Republics. Following the crushing of the rebellion, the Herero people were near exterminated through poisoning of wells and with mass killings of men, women and children. In 2016 the German government considered making an apology to the Herero people, but balked because of the possibility of having to pay reparations.

11 January 1962 Mandela makes appearance in Addis Ababa

Nelson Mandela left South Africa early 1962, to drum up support for the armed struggle. He arrived in Ethiopia and was granted an Ethi-



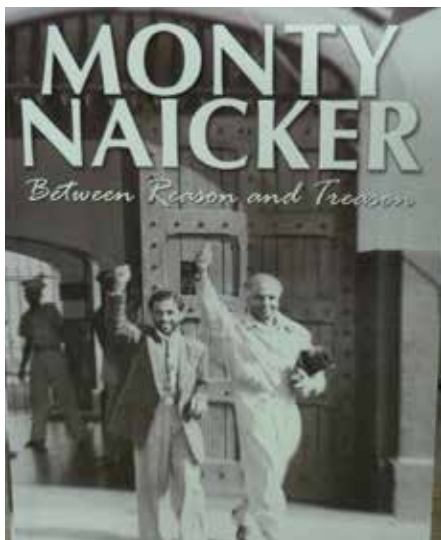
opian passport by Emperor Haile Selassie. Mandela was classified as a journalist, under the name David Motsamayi, which allowed him to travel the region. On 11 January 1962 he made a surprise appearance at the Pan-African Freedom Movement Conference in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Mandela addressed the conference on behalf of the ANC, speaking about the decision to engage on armed struggle, a few weeks after the first sabotage attacks on 16 December 1961 by Umkhonto we Sizwe

11 January 1982 International Year for Sanctions against Apartheid initiated

The United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid launched the International Year of Mobilisation for Sanctions against South Africa. The Special Committee against Apartheid was established by the General Assembly under resolution 1761 (XVII) of November 6 1962, with a view to keep the racial policies of the South African Government under review throughout the year.

12 January 1978 Monty Naicker passed on

Gagathura Mohambry (Monty) Naicker, medical doctor and prominent politician, was born in Durban. Naicker played a crucial



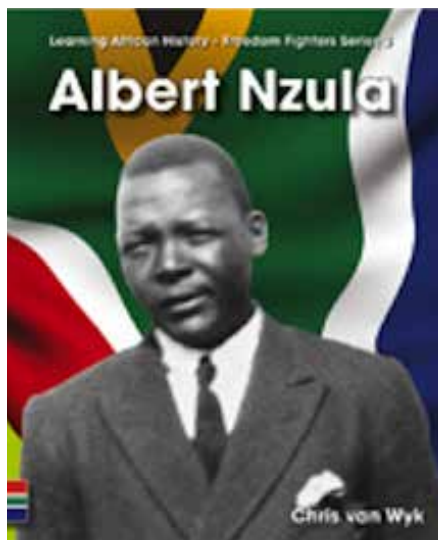
role in the history of South Africa and his name is well documented amongst political icons of the liberation struggle. As early as 1948, he called for a united front amongst the oppressed political organisations. He fought during the Defiance Campaign and was arrested and was served with several banning orders. Naicker died, age 67, on 12 January 1978.

12 January 1991 Sebokeng massacre

As third force violence continued to sweep through parts of KZN and Gauteng (then PWV), on the night of 12 January, 1991, more than 30 people were killed while attending an all-night vigil in Sebokeng. Mourners at the vigil were paying final respects to their comrade and community leader, Chris Nangalembe who was a member of the African National Congress (ANC) and killed in the violence.

14 January 1934 Albert Nzula dies in Moscow

Albert Nzula, teacher, journalist and leader of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), died of pneumonia in Moscow, USSR. He left SA in 1931 to



study in Moscow. Nzula was the first black general secretary of the Communist Party, a teacher trained at Lovedale college, member of the Industrial Commercial and the ANC, born in Rouxville in the Free state in 1905. Nzula co-authored the book *The Working Class Movement and Forced Labour in Negro Africa* (1933). (Other sources give his date of death as 17 January 1934)

14 January 1991 Five women stoned to death

Five women who were accused and convicted of adultery in Hargeisa, Somalia, were publicly stoned to death by villagers. The stoning was carried out in accordance with Sharia law. Nothing happened to the men involved in the adultery. United Nations (UN) officials who witnessed the incident were helpless, as they feared for their lives. The practice continues to this day, including punishing women who were raped. In 2008, Amnesty International reported on the 13-year old Aisha Ibrahim Duhulow who was stoned to death for adultery in Kismayo, after she was raped. A law on Rape and Sexual Offences was introduced and finally ratified in early 2020 in Somaliland.

16 January 1971 First Cape to Rio race takes place

The first Transatlantic yacht race between Cape Town and Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) took place on this day. SAS (South African Ships) Tafelberg served as guardship for the voyage which started from Table Bay in Cape Town. The race of about 5 800 kilometres takes between 12 and 30 days to complete.

16 January 1989 UN Security Council supports Namibian independence

The Security Council, in response to the 22 December signing by Angola, Cuba and South Africa of peace treaty, adopted two resolutions on the question. In the first, the Council expressed support for the peace treaty, and requested the Secretary-General to keep the Council informed on the implementation of the resolution. In the second, the Council decided that implementation of the plan contained in its resolution 435 (1978) for the independence of Namibia would begin on 1 April 1989.

16 January 2006 Dr Ellen Johnson Sirleaf Inaugurated as Liberian President



Dr Ellen Johnson Sirleaf became the first elected woman as Head of State in Africa and her historic inauguration as President of Liberia was on 16 January, 2006. She was the 24th President of Liberia since the founding of the state, a culmination of decades of fighting for freedom, justice and equality in Liberia. In 2011 President Johnson-Sirleaf shared the Nobel Prize for Peace with two other women, fellow Liberian Leymah Gbowee and Tawakkul Karman of Yemen.

13 January 1991

Soccer disaster in Orkney

Kaizer Chiefs and Orlando Pirates met in a pre-season friendly at the 23,000-seater Oppenheimer Stadium, near Orkney, North West. At least 30,000 were let into the venue, meaning it was significantly over its capacity. Chiefs were awarded a dubious goal, resulting in Pirates turning violent as they attacked rival supporters whilst they fled. Fighting between rival team supporters inside the Oppenheimer Stadium caused a stampede that left approximately 100 injured and 42 people dead.

13 January 1985

Worst African train disaster in Awash, Ethiopia

An express train carrying seven cars and an estimated 1,000 people destined for Addis Ababa, derailed when it reached a curve 125 miles east of the capital. It was suspected that the train engineer failed to reduce speed at the curve which resulted in the train derailing and plunging into a ravine. About 400 people died and about 500 were injured in the accident. The accident occurred in the town of Awash, over a bridge above a ravine on the Awash River, on the Addis Ababa-Djibouti line. Seven

of the train's coaches plummeted into the ravine. The Ethiopian Red Cross played a crucial role in rescuing the injured. The engineer of the train was arrested for failing to reduce speed on approaching a curve. It is the worst train disaster ever in Africa.

14 January 1991

Five women stoned to death

Five women who were accused and convicted of adultery in Hargeisa, Somalia, were publicly stoned to death by cheerful villagers. The stoning was carried out in accordance with Sharia law. Nothing happened to the men involved in the adultery. United Nations (UN) officials who witnessed the incident were helpless, as they feared for their lives. The practice continues to this day, including punishing women who were raped. A law on Rape and Sexual Offences was introduced and finally ratified in early 2020 in Somaliland.

BIRTHDAYS

1 January 1906

Dr Benedict Vilakazi, poet and writer, is born in Groutville, Kwa-Zulu Natal, home to Nobel Peace Prize winner, Chief Albert Luthuli. He was the first Black South African to receive a Doctorate in literature and wrote the first book of Zulu poems to be published.

1 January 1948

Zakes Mda, poet, playwright and author of amongst other books *We Shall Sing for the Fatherland and Other Plays* (1980), *And the Girls in Their Sunday Dresses* (1993), *When People Play People* (1993), *She Plays with the Darkness* (1995), *Mel-*



ville 67 (1998), *Ways of Dying* (2002), *Fools, Bells and the Habit of Eating* (2002), *The Heart of Redness* (2002), *She Plays with the Darkness* (2004), *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2004), *The Whale Calle* (2005), *Cion* (2007), *Sometimes there is a Void. Memoirs of an Outsider* (2011), *Our Lady of Benoni. A Play* (2012), *Nothing but the Truth* (2012), *The Sculptors of Mapungwe* (2013), *Black Diamond* (2014), *Little Suns* (2015), *Rachel's Blue* (2016), *Justify the Enemy* (2018), *The Zulus of New York* (2019).

2 January 1950

South African artist, **Richard Mzama Mzama**, is born in Alexandra, Johannesburg. He started drawing and carving without any instruction and worked for a variety of firms until 1985, when he became a guest artist at the AIA (African Institute of Art) at Funda until 1987.

2 January 1967

Springbok rugby captain **Francois Pienaar** was born in Vereeniging, Gauteng. Born into a working class Afrikaner family, he captained the South African national rugby team from 26 June 1993 until 10 August 1996. He led Many the Springboks to victory in the 1995 Rugby Union World Cup.

4 January 1893

Anthropologist, **Professor Raymond Arthur Dart**, is born in Brisbane, Australia. Raymond Dart discovered the Taung Child skull fossil near Taung in North West, South Africa. In 1922, Dart became the head of the newly established department of anatomy at Wits University, South Africa.

6 January 1906

Walter Battiss, abstract artist, is born in Somerset East. His formal art studies started in 1929 at the Wits Tech Art School (drawing and painting), followed by the Johannesburg Training College (a Teacher's Diploma) and etching lessons. Battiss continued his studies while working as a magistrate's clerk, and finally obtained his Bachelor's Degree in Fine Arts at UNISA at the age of 35. On 24 October 1981, the Walter Battiss Art Gallery at Somerset East was officially opened. Battiss died in 1982.

7 January 1959

Peter Mokaba, militant student and youth activist, first president of the South African Youth Congress (1987-1990) and of the ANC Youth League after its relaunch in 1991, was born in Shesego, Polokwane on this day. Mokaba spent time on Robben Island during the 1980s and went on to become a Member of Par-

liament and Deputy Minister of Environment and Tourism. Moka-ba died on 9 June 2002.

8 January 1993

Rapper **Anathi Bhongo Mnyango**, stagename Anatii, was born in Bisho, Eastern Cape on 8 January 1993. South African rapper, Anatii, produced and wrote the hit "When It Rains" for hip hop artist L-Tido in 2009 and was commissioned by Lebohang Morake to produce four songs for the Coca-Cola "Summer Yama Sum-mahh" compilation album.

9 January 1871

Eugene N Marais, poet, naturalist and author of the work *The Soul of the White Ant* (1925-36), a ground-breaking study on termites, and also of the Waterberg cycad tree. An accomplished author, Marais published his first work at the age of 12, and at age 20 became owner of a newspaper, dedicated to local politics.

11 January 1859

John Tengu Jabavu, newspaper editor, preacher and the second Black matriculant in South Africa was born in Healdtown district, in the Eastern Cape.

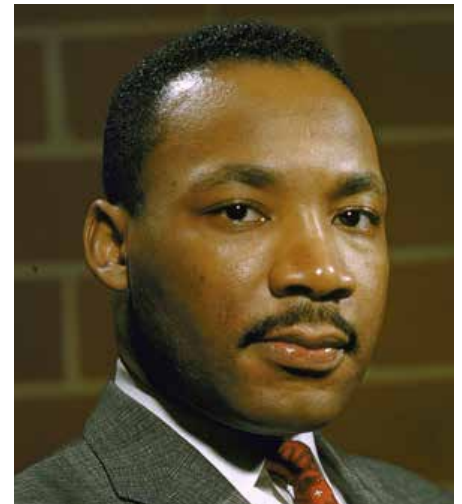
11 January 1974

The **Rosenkowitz sextuplets**, three girls and three boys, were

born to couple Susan and Colen Rosenkowitz, the first sextuplets known to survive their infancy.

14 January 1951

Judas Mahlangu, South African graphic artist, was born in Brakpan, on the East Rand. In 1982 Mahlangu started working at the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) as a graphic artist. He is a member of the Soweto Art Society (SAS) and produces mono- and polychromatic etchings. Mahlangu participated in group and solo exhibitions locally and abroad, including group exhibitions in Germany, Israel, Portugal and New York. Several corporate and private collections contain examples of his work.

15 January 1929

African-American clergyman and leader of the Civil Rights Movement who orchestrated social change through non-violent methods, **Martin Luther King Junior**, was born on 15 January 1929 in Atlanta, Georgia. Martin Luther shaped and articulated the message of the American civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. King led the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955-1956, an action stimulated by the arrest of Rosa Parks.

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL DAYS

1–16 January 2026

Source: www.un.org, www.au.int, *The Africa Fact Book (2020)*, www.daysoftheyear.com

1 January

African Continental Free Trade Agreement celebrates five years since becoming operational



The African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) on 1 January 2026 celebrated five years since its operationalization on this day. The AfCFTA was signed by all African Union Member states, except Eritrea. It lays the foundations for an African common market, with ratifying countries pledging to eliminate import tariffs on 97% of goods traded between African states. The Agreement was adopted by the 10th Extraordinary Session of the AU Assembly in Kigali, Rwanda on 21 March 2018, and entered into force on 30 May 2019. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is one of the Flagship Projects of Agenda 2063 Africa's development framework. It aims at accelerating intra-African trade and boosting Africa's trading position in the global market by strengthening Africa's common voice and policy space in global trade negotiations.

4 January

World Braille Day



Braille is a tactile representation of alphabetic and numerical symbols using six dots to represent each letter and number, and even musical, mathematical and scientific symbols. Braille (named after its inventor in 19th century France, Louis Braille) is used by blind and partially sighted people, using touch, to read the same books and periodicals as those printed in a visual font.

14 January

World Logic Day

Logic, the investigation on the principles of rea-

"Logic rules the structure of the world, and if we only let it, also our actions in the world. Logic is our strongest ally in being coherent in reasoning, fair in criticizing, and clear-headed about the scope and limits of thinking."

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

soning, studied by civilisations throughout history, played and continued to play an important role in the development of philosophy and the sciences. The day was initiated by UNESCO, in association with the International Council for Philosophy and Human Sciences.

15 January Wikipedia Day

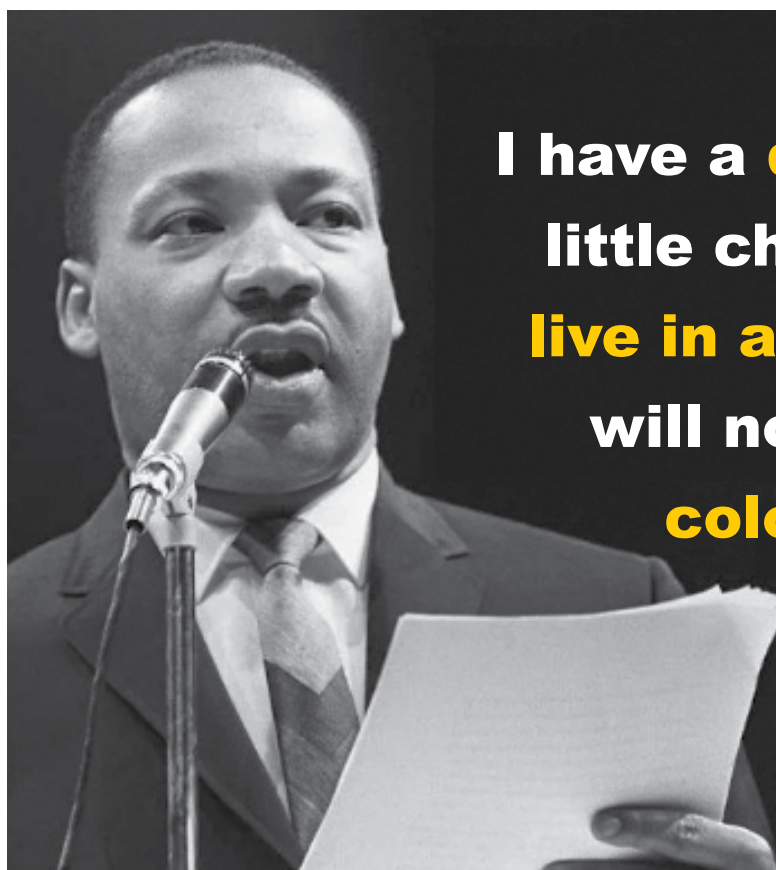
The massively popular, free, multilingual, online encyclopedia, Wikipedia has changed the way people do research and get information. Wikipedia Day celebrates the anniversary of the creation of this user-generated online source. Three films to date explore the phenomena of Wikipedia, namely *The Truth According to Wikipedia* (2008). Wikipedia and the *Democratization of Knowledge* (2021) and *Truth in Numbers* (2010).

15 January Pothole Day

Potholes are a constant annoyance to motorists everywhere, but they've existed since the very earliest roads around, and it's from those times they take their names. Modern potholes are caused by wear and tear on the road caused by rain and sun and



repeated travel by heavy vehicles across the road. Hot-patch is often used to fix it, but the next major rainstorm will see this temporary patch pushed right back out again as the road swells and contracts from the changing heat of the road. Potholes got the name from roads built during the Roman Empire. Roads were built on a bed of clay, topped with gravel, and topped by hard-baked bricks. Potters would break open the road's surface to get at the good potting clay underneath. This was a great source of clay for the potters and a miserable source of trouble for the chariots and wagons that traveled those roads. Pothole day reminds us of their long history, and our responsibility to help get them taken care of. (<https://www.daysoftheyear.com/days/pothole-day/>)



“

I have a **dream** that my four little children will one day **live in a nation** where they will not be **judged by the color of their skin**, but by the **content of their character**.

Martin Luther King Jr



JAN
8TH
2026



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