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Conversations with the President



Let us ensure that the artificial intelligence revolution becomes an instrument for the development and prosperity of all our people

ADDRESS BY **PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA** TO THE **SOUTH AFRICA AND THE AI OPPORTUNITY CONFERENCE** ON THE OCCASION OF HIS WORKING VISIT TO SILICON VALLEY, SAN JOSE, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

WHEN we first gathered as a South African delegation on Sunday, I said that we had not come to Silicon Valley merely to see the future.

We had come to understand how that future is being made, to learn from those who are making it, and to determine how South Africa can become an active participant in shaping it.

We came here with a sense of purpose.We came to learn, to engage, to forge partnerships and to identify opportunities that can accelerate the economic and technological development of our country.

We came because we recognise that the world is entering a new era of technological change, one that will fundamentally transform economies, industries, institutions and societies.

And we came because we are determined that South Africa, and indeed the African continent, should not be left behind.

Over the past few days, we have visited some of the world's leading technology companies, research institutions and centres of innovation.

We have engaged with scientists, engineers, entrepreneurs and business leaders who are at the forefront of developing technologies that are changing our world.

We have seen the extraordinary pace at which artificial intelligence is advancing.

We have gained a better understanding of the immense computing power, scientific knowledge, investment and human ingenuity that are driving this transformation.

We have also gained a deeper appreciation of the opportunities that this technological revolution presents for a country like ours.

Today, we move from being visitors to being hosts. This is our conference. It is an opportunity

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for South Africa to set out its own ambitions, to demonstrate its capabilities, and to make a compelling case for investment and partnership.

It is an opportunity to explain not only what we hope to gain from the artificial intelligence revolution, but also what we can contribute to it.

For we have not come here simply to ask what Silicon Valley can do for South Africa. We have also come to demonstrate what South Africa can offer Silicon Valley, the United States and the global technology industry.

We believe that there is a compelling case for a partnership founded on mutual benefit, shared innovation and the creation of new economic opportunities.

Throughout human history, technological advances have been among the most powerful drivers of economic development and social development.

The steam engine transformed manufacturing and transport. Electricity transformed industry, agriculture and everyday life. The internal combustion engine transformed mobility, commerce and the organisation of modern economies. The semiconductor, the computer and the internet ushered in the digital age.

Each of these technological revolutions fundamentally changed the way people lived and worked. Each created new industries, new occupations, new markets and new sources of wealth. And each altered the economic balance between nations.

We are now witnessing another transformation of comparable, and potentially even greater, significance.

Artificial intelligence is not simply another technological innovation. It is a general-purpose technology with the potential to transform virtually every sector of economic and social activity.

It will change how we manufacture goods, grow food, generate electricity, extract minerals, deliver healthcare, educate our children and provide public services.

It will change the nature of work, the organisation of enterprises and the relationship between citizens and the state.

It will create industries that do not yet exist and occupations that we cannot yet imagine.

The scale of investment taking place is extraordinary. The largest American technology companies are expected to invest hundreds of billions of dollars in AI infrastructure this year alone, with estimates approaching 670billion dollars.

We are witnessing one of the greatest mobilisations of private capital in modern economic history. And yet this investment is highly concentrated.

A substantial majority of the world's advanced AI computing capacity is located in a small number of countries.

Africa, which is home to nearly one-fifth of humanity, accounts for only a tiny fraction of global data centre capacity. The implications of this concentration are profound.

The countries that control computing infrastructure, advanced technologies, data and scientific capabilities will enjoy considerable advantages in the emerging global economy.

Those that fail to develop these capabilities risk becoming increasingly dependent on technologies, products and services developed elsewhere.

This presents a particular challenge for Africa. Our continent has experienced previous technological revolutions without fully capturing their economic benefits.

We have too often supplied the raw materials that powered industrial development elsewhere, while importing the finished products at much greater cost.

We have supplied minerals to the

world, but have not always developed the industries that transform those minerals into sophisticated products.

We have produced talented scientists, engineers and innovators, many of whom have gone abroad to build the technological capabilities of other nations.

We cannot allow the artificial intelligence revolution to reproduce these historical patterns of inequality and dependence.



We cannot be content to remain merely consumers of technologies developed by others.

We must become developers, producers, innovators and owners of technologies.

We must build the capabilities that will enable us to participate across the AI value chain.

And we must ensure that the benefits of this technological revolution are widely shared among our people.

This is not simply an economic imperative. It is a developmental imperative.

It is about the kind of country we want South Africa to become and the place we want Africa to occupy in the world.

We should be ambitious about what South Africa can achieve. But our ambition must be grounded in a clear understanding of our strengths, our capabilities and the opportunities before us.

We recognise that the development of the most advanced frontier AI models requires enormous investments in computing infrastructure, specialised expertise and research.

Artificial intelligence is not a single product or a single industry. It is an entire economic ecosystem.

It begins with the minerals and materials that go into semiconductors and other advanced technologies.

It includes the electricity that powers computing infrastructure, the data centres that house it, and the telecommunications networks that connect it.

It includes research, software engineering, data development, model training, model adaptation and the creation of applications.

It extends into manufacturing, agriculture, mining, finance, education, healthcare, transport, government and virtually every other sector.

There is value to be created, investment to be attracted and employment to be generated at every stage of this ecosystem.

Our task is to identify those areas in which South Africa has a competitive advantage, to strengthen our capabilities and to move progressively into activities of greater technological sophistication and economic value.

We must not think of ourselves as being confined to one part of the value chain. We must develop the capacity to move along that chain, from supplying materials and infrastructure to developing technologies, creating intellectual property and building globally competitive enterprises.

That is how countries achieve lasting technological and economic transformation. And that is the ambition we should have for South Africa.

Our country already possesses important foundations on which to build. We have a diversified industrial economy. We have sophisticated financial institutions, established telecommunications networks, universities, research institutions and a growing technology sector.

We have a strong base of scientific and engineering expertise. We have world-class capabilities in mining, mineral processing, manufacturing, agriculture, financial services and other industries that can benefit substantially from the application of artificial intelligence.

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We have a vibrant entrepreneurial community and a generation of young South Africans who are eager to participate in the digital economy. Above all, we occupy a strategic position as a gateway to a rapidly growing African market. These are significant advantages.

We must now bring them together in a deliberate and coordinated national effort.

One of the clearest lessons from our engagements this week is that the artificial intelligence economy rests on a substantial physical foundation.

When people speak about artificial intelligence, they often think of software, algorithms and intelligent machines.

Yet none of these technologies can function without electricity, computing equipment, data centres, telecommunications networks and the physical infrastructure that supports them.

The digital economy is built on a physical economy. And the extraordinary growth of artificial intelligence is creating unprecedented demand for that infrastructure.

Around the world, access to reliable electricity, suitable land, water where required, and connections to transmission networks has become a major consideration in decisions about where to locate new computing facilities.

This presents South Africa with a significant opportunity. We have substantial energy resources, including some of the world's best solar and wind resources.

We are implementing far-reaching reforms to our electricity



sector, expanding generation capacity, strengthening transmission infrastructure and creating a more competitive electricity market.

We have made important progress in improving the reliability of electricity supply.

Our sustained reduction in load shedding demonstrates what can be achieved through focused implementation, cooperation and reform.

We now need to build on this progress to ensure that electricity becomes an enabler of industrial growth and technological development.

We also have existing industrial sites, including power station sites approaching the end of their operational lives, that may be suitable for redevelopment.

Some of these sites already have valuable grid connections, transport infrastructure and other industrial facilities.

With proper planning, technical assessment and investment, they could become centres of new economic activity, including data centres, advanced manufacturing and digital industries.

In this way, we can give new economic life to communities that have powered South Africa's development for generations.

South Africa is already a leading location for data centre investment on the African continent. We should seek to make South Africa a preferred destination for investment in AI computing infrastructure serving both our domestic economy and the wider African market.

A large data centre can represent billions of rand in capital investment. It can generate substantial demand for construction, electrical engineering, cooling systems, transformers, switchgear, energy storage and specialised maintenance services.

It can create opportunities for local manufacturers and suppliers. It can stimulate investment in electricity generation, transmission and telecommunications. And, most importantly, it can provide the computing infrastructure needed by our researchers, universities, businesses, entrepreneurs and public institutions.

We must, however, be clear that the construction of data centres alone will not deliver the employment and industrial development we seek. We must use these investments to build wider industrial ecosystems, develop skills, strengthen local supply chains and create new enterprises.

Our objective must be to turn investment in computing infrastructure into a catalyst for broad-based economic development. Infrastructure is essential, but it is only one part of the opportunity.

Another critical area is the development of AI technologies that respond to the particular needs

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and circumstances of our society.

Much of the data used to develop today's leading AI systems comes from a relatively small number of countries and languages. African languages, histories, cultures and experiences remain significantly underrepresented.

This has important consequences.

A system that does not adequately understand isiZulu, isiXhosa, Sesotho, Sepedi, Setswana, Tshivenda or Xitsonga will not serve all our people equally.

A system that has not been developed with an understanding of African farming conditions, disease patterns, educational challenges or public administration may not provide the solutions we need.

We therefore have an important opportunity to develop African datasets, strengthen research in African languages and adapt AI technologies to our own circumstances.

We must do this while respecting privacy, protecting personal information and ensuring that data is collected and used responsibly.

Our universities, science councils, technology companies and researchers can play a leading role in this work.

We should establish partnerships that enable South African researchers to work alongside the world's leading scientists and engineers.

We should develop the computing facilities and research capabilities that allow them to undertake advanced work here at home. And we should support the creation of intellectual property and new enterprises arising from this research.

We must ensure that our universities are not simply preparing graduates to work for technology companies elsewhere. They must also become centres of innovation from which new South African technologies, products and businesses emerge.

There is no reason why South Africa should not produce globally competitive AI companies.

There is no reason why our researchers should not make important contributions to advances in machine learning, robotics, language technologies and other fields.

And there is no reason why innovations developed in South Africa should not find markets across Africa and throughout the world.

We have already demonstrated that South Africans can make important contributions to the global digital economy.

Some of the foundational engineering work associated with Amazon Web Services was undertaken in Cape Town.

Our technology sector has developed internationally competitive capabilities in software engineering, financial technology and business services.

Our global business services industry employs large numbers of South Africans serving international clients.

These achievements demonstrate what is possible.

But we should aim much higher.

We should seek to make South Africa a major centre for AI research, software development, engineering, data services and technology entrepreneurship.

We should create an environment in which international technology companies establish substantial research and development operations in our country.

We should encourage them to work with our universities, train our young people, develop local suppliers and support South African technology enterprises.

And we should ensure that South African entrepreneurs have access to the computing power, finance, expertise and markets they need to succeed.



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The opportunities presented by artificial intelligence extend far beyond the technology industry itself.

For South Africa, perhaps the greatest economic benefits will come from applying these technologies to improve productivity across our existing industries.

We are a country with deep industrial capabilities, but we are also a country that urgently needs to raise productivity, accelerate economic growth and create employment.

Artificial intelligence can help us achieve these objectives.

In mining, AI can improve geological exploration, mineral recovery, equipment maintenance and workplace safety.

In agriculture, it can help farmers manage water more efficiently, identify crop diseases, improve yields and respond to changing weather conditions.

In manufacturing, it can improve production processes, reduce waste, strengthen quality control and enable firms to compete more effectively in global markets.

In energy, it can improve demand forecasting, grid management, system maintenance and the integration of renewable electricity.

In healthcare, it can support earlier diagnosis, improve the management of medical information and extend the reach of scarce specialist expertise.

In education, it can provide new tools to support teachers, personalise learning and expand access to knowledge.

In government, it can help us improve the delivery of public services, strengthen planning, identify inefficiencies and make public institutions more responsive to citizens.

These are not distant possibilities.

Many of these applications are already being developed and deployed.
Our responsibility is to ensure that they are adapted and applied in ways that address South Africa's most pressing developmental challenges.

We should ask ourselves how AI can help us improve the quality of education in township and rural schools.

How can it help us improve the functioning of clinics and hospitals?

How can it help municipalities detect water losses, maintain infrastructure and deliver better services?

How can it help us strengthen the fight against crime, while protecting constitutional rights and ensuring proper oversight?

How can it help small businesses become more productive and competitive?

And how can it enable emerging farmers and entrepreneurs to gain access to knowledge, technology and markets that were previously beyond their reach?

These are the practical questions that should guide our national AI programme.

We should measure the success of artificial intelligence not only by the sophistication of the technologies we develop, but by the improvements they bring to the lives of our people.

As we pursue these opportunities, we must recognise that technological progress does not automatically lead to inclusive development.

History teaches us that new technologies can create great wealth while also displacing workers, concentrating economic power and widening inequality.

Artificial intelligence presents similar risks. It has the potential to transform many occupations and automate tasks that are currently performed by people.



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It may create new employment opportunities, but it may also disrupt existing industries and occupations.

For a country already confronting high unemployment, poverty and inequality, these risks cannot be ignored.

We must therefore place the development of human capabilities at the centre of our AI strategy.

We need to equip our young people with the knowledge and skills required to participate in the emerging economy.

We need to strengthen mathematics, science, digital literacy and computational thinking throughout our education system.

We need to expand the training of engineers, computer scientists, data specialists, technicians and artisans.

We need to strengthen our universities, technical and vocational education and training colleges, and other institutions of learning.

But we must also recognise that AI will affect workers across the economy, not only those employed in technology-related occupations.

We will need programmes to retrain and upskill workers, support enterprises in adopting new technologies and assist people whose jobs are affected by automation.

Government, business, universities and organised labour will need to work together in this endeavour. Our objective must be to use technology to expand human opportunity, not to diminish it.



We should seek an economy in which AI enhances the capabilities of workers, improves productivity and creates new forms of employment and enterprise.

We should not allow the benefits of this revolution to be captured by a small number of firms or a narrow segment of society.

The gains must contribute to greater prosperity, broader participation and a more inclusive economy.

The opportunities before us will not be realised through ambition alone. They require deliberate action, effective institutions and sustained cooperation between government, business, universities and research institutions.

That is why we are developing a comprehensive national approach to artificial intelligence.

We need to move with urgency.

We must ensure that our regulatory environment provides certainty for investment while protecting the rights and interests of our people. We must strengthen our digital infrastructure and expand access to affordable connectivity.

We must improve access to reliable electricity and facilitate investment in the computing infrastructure that the AI economy requires.

We must strengthen our research and innovation system.

We must develop the skills required for this new era. And we must create an enabling environment for entrepreneurs, start-ups and technology companies.

One of the practical priorities arising from this visit should be to develop a coordinated investment proposition for companies wishing to establish AI infrastructure and operations in South Africa.

Investors should not have to navigate a fragmented system of approvals, electricity connections, land availability and infrastructure planning.

We need to bring these elements together in a coherent and competitive offering.

We should identify suitable locations for investment, assess their infrastructure requirements and work across government to remove unnecessary obstacles.

We should be able to present potential investors with clear opportunities, defined processes and credible implementation arrangements.

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At the same time, we must ensure that our approach to artificial intelligence is guided by the values of our Constitution.

We must protect privacy, human dignity, equality and the rights of citizens.

We must guard against the misuse of AI, including discrimination, disinformation, fraud and threats to security.

We must promote responsible innovation and ensure that public trust is maintained.

We should pursue technological advancement and effective governance together, recognising that each strengthens the other.

This conference takes place at an important moment in the relationship between South Africa and the global technology industry.

For many decades, American companies have invested in South Africa, established operations in our country and contributed to the development of our economy.

We value these relationships. We now have an opportunity to take them to a new level.

Our message to the companies represented here today is straightforward.

We invite you to make South Africa a strategic partner in the development of the artificial intelligence economy.

We invite you to invest in our digital and computing infrastructure.

We invite you to establish research and development facilities in our country.

We invite you to work with our universities and science councils.

We invite you to support the development of South African engineers, scientists, researchers and entrepreneurs.

We invite you to build partnerships with our technology companies and to participate in the development of applications that address African challenges.

And we invite you to use South Africa as a base from which to serve the growing markets of the African continent.

In doing so, we are not asking for charity. We are presenting an investment and partnership opportunity.



South Africa offers an established industrial economy, a sophisticated financial system, a strong scientific base, substantial energy resources, advanced connectivity and access to a large and growing continental market.

We offer the opportunities created by the African Continental Free Trade Area and the potential of a continent whose population and economic significance will continue to grow.

We also offer a government that recognises the importance of technological development and is committed to creating the conditions for investment and innovation.

In return, we seek partnerships that are meaningful and enduring. Partnerships that develop local capabilities.

Partnerships that transfer knowledge and deepen research collaboration. Partnerships that create opportunities for South African enterprises.

Partnerships that support skills development and employment. Partnerships that enable our researchers and innovators to participate in the creation of new technologies.

And partnerships that contribute to the broader development of the African continent.

We should emerge from this visit not simply with expressions of goodwill, but with concrete commitments and a programme of action.

We should identify specific investment opportunities, research

partnerships, skills programmes and areas of technological cooperation.

We should establish mechanisms to take these initiatives forward, monitor progress and ensure implementation.

The true measure of the success of this visit will not be the number of companies we have visited or the number of meetings we have held.

It will be the investments that follow, the partnerships that are established, the technologies that are developed, the enterprises that are created and the opportunities that are opened to our people.

I want to address a particular message to the young South Africans who have joined us on this visit. You are here not merely as observers of technological change.

You are here as future participants in shaping that change. You represent the generation that will lead South Africa through this new era of scientific and technological development.

Some of you will become researchers and scientists. Some will become engineers and entrepreneurs. Some will establish companies that develop technologies we cannot yet imagine. Others will use artificial intelligence to transform agriculture, mining, manufacturing, healthcare, education and public administration.

I want you to return to South Africa with a renewed sense of possibility. I want you to be inspired by what you have seen here. But I also want you to recognise that the achievements of Silicon Valley did not happen by accident.



They are the result of decades of investment in education, scientific research, entrepreneurship, infrastructure and innovation.

They are the product of cooperation between universities, government, private enterprise and investors.

They demonstrate what can be achieved when a society deliberately builds the institutions, capabilities and conditions necessary for technological progress.

We must draw lessons from this experience.

We must build our own centres of innovation.

We must nurture our own scientists and entrepreneurs.

We must mobilise our own resources and attract international investment.

And we must have the confidence that South Africans are capable of making important contributions to the world's scientific and technological progress.

The next generation of great technological innovations should not come only from Silicon Valley, Beijing, London or other established centres of innovation. Some of them should come from Johannesburg, Cape Town, Tshwane, Durban, Gqeberha and other centres across our country.

They should also come from the townships and rural communities where so much talent and potential remain untapped.

That is the future we must work to create.

We are at a defining moment. The foundations of the global AI economy are being laid now.

Decisions are being taken today that will influence the distribution of economic opportunity, technological capability and prosperity for decades to come.

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Africa cannot afford to stand on the sidelines while these decisions are made. By the middle of this century, approximately one in four people in the world will be African.

Our continent will have one of the world's largest populations of young people. It will represent an increasingly important market for goods, services, technology and investment.

The question is whether Africa will participate in this new economy primarily as a market for technologies developed elsewhere, or whether it will also become a centre of production, research, innovation and enterprise.

For South Africa, the choice is clear. We want to be builders of the future, not merely recipients of it.

We want to develop the scientific and technological capabilities that will enable us to compete in the global economy.

We want to use artificial intelligence to accelerate industrialisation, raise productivity, improve public services and create employment.

We want our universities and research institutions to contribute to the frontiers of human knowledge.

We want our entrepreneurs to establish companies that compete internationally.

We want our young people to have the skills, opportunities and confidence to participate fully in the digital economy.

And we want South Africa to play a leading role in ensuring that the African continent benefits from this technological revolution.

Our visit to Silicon Valley is an important step in this journey. But it must be the beginning of a sustained national effort.

When we return home, we must translate what we have learned into action.

We must turn our engagements into partnerships.

We must turn our partnerships into investments. We must turn our investments into productive capabilities.

And we must turn those capabilities into economic growth, employment and a better life for our people.

I hope that this conference will be remembered not simply as an occasion on which South Africa presented its ambitions to the world's technology leaders.

I hope it will be remembered as a moment when we began to forge the partnerships and take the decisions that would help transform our country's technological and economic future.

Let us approach this opportunity with ambition, confidence and determination.

Let us be bold in what we seek to achieve.

Let us be practical and disciplined in how we pursue it.

And let us ensure that the artificial intelligence revolution becomes an instrument for the development and prosperity of all our people.

We have not come to Silicon Valley to ask for a place in someone else's future.

We have come to build partnerships through which we can help shape a future of our own.





ANC STATEMENT ON MUNICIPAL COALITION ENGAGEMENTS

By **ANC SECRETARY GENERAL FIKILE MBALULA**

THE Special Extended National Executive Committee (NEC) of the African National Congress met and held robust discussions on the movement's approach to municipal coalitions following the outcomes of the 2026 Local Government Elections, which have produced an unprecedented number of hung municipalities where no political party has secured a majority to establish government on its own.

This situation has imposed on all political parties a duty to reflect and determine the best and most stable coalitions to serve the people of South Africa. The development of our country depends largely on the effectiveness of our councils, and the ANC remains committed to establishing stable and working local government.

The NEC mandated the ANC to engage all political parties, large and small, including civic movements and independents, in municipalities where no party has secured an outright majority. Engagements with various political parties are already under way, guided by the ANC's coalition framework. We have also received requests from political parties that have expressed their willingness to work with the African National Congress.

The ANC approaches these engagements with an open mind, a willingness to listen and constructively engage in the best interests of our people. Our commitment is to ensure stability in all councils and decide on the most viable and effective way to serve our communities.

Any coalition agreement must be anchored in a common minimum programme with measurable service delivery targets. The ANC will pursue stable, transparent, and accountable municipal government, with decisive action against corruption.

Local government has a constitutional obligation to ensure the provision of water, electricity, sanitation, roads, the maintenance of public spaces, safety, a clean and healthy environment, and the development of local economies. While significant progress has been made in extending basic services and the social wage since the dawn of democracy, much work

remains to address poverty, inequality, unemployment, and poor spatial planning.

In line with its Local Government Elections Manifesto, the ANC will advance transformation and deepen service delivery, with particular attention to the needs of poor households and the protection of workers' rights and interests. The ANC will issue a comprehensive statement in due course to update South Africans on the progress of coalition engagements. There will be no media engagements on this matter before this.

The African National Congress' National Negotiations Team

THE African National Congress (ANC) has constituted its National Negotiations Team, led by Secretary General Comrade Fikile Mbalula. All coalition negotiations are centralised under the authority of the Team, which will conduct engagements in line with its mandate.

The ANC's Coalition Framework will guide the Team in pursuing stable, transparent and accountable governance, advancing transformation, fighting corruption and improving service delivery for all communities. The ANC National Negotiations Team comprises the following members:

- Cde Fikile Mbalula, Secretary General and Team Leader
- Cde Gwede Mantashe, National Chairperson
- Cde Nomvula Mokonyane, First Deputy Secretary General
- Cde Maropene Ramokgopa, Second Deputy Secretary General
- Cde Gwen Ramokgopa, Treasurer General
- Cde Parks Tau
- Cde David Makhura
- Cde Ronald Lamola
- Cde Zuko Godlimpi
- Cde Febe Potgieter
- Cde Mahlengi Bhengu
- Cde Nkenke Kekana
- Cde Mdumiseni Ntuli
- Cde Mdu Manana
- Cde Dickson Masemola
- Cde Enoch Godongwana
- Cde Sbongile Besani
- Cde Dumisani Magagula
- Cde Richard Mkhungo
- Cde Chris Malemetja
- Cde Tsakani Shiviti
- Cde Nokuthula Nqaba
- Cde Snuki Zikalala
- Cde Thami Ntenteni
- Cde Andries Nel
- Cde Mathew Parks



The ANC Welcomes President Ramaphosa's Working Visit To Silicon Valley

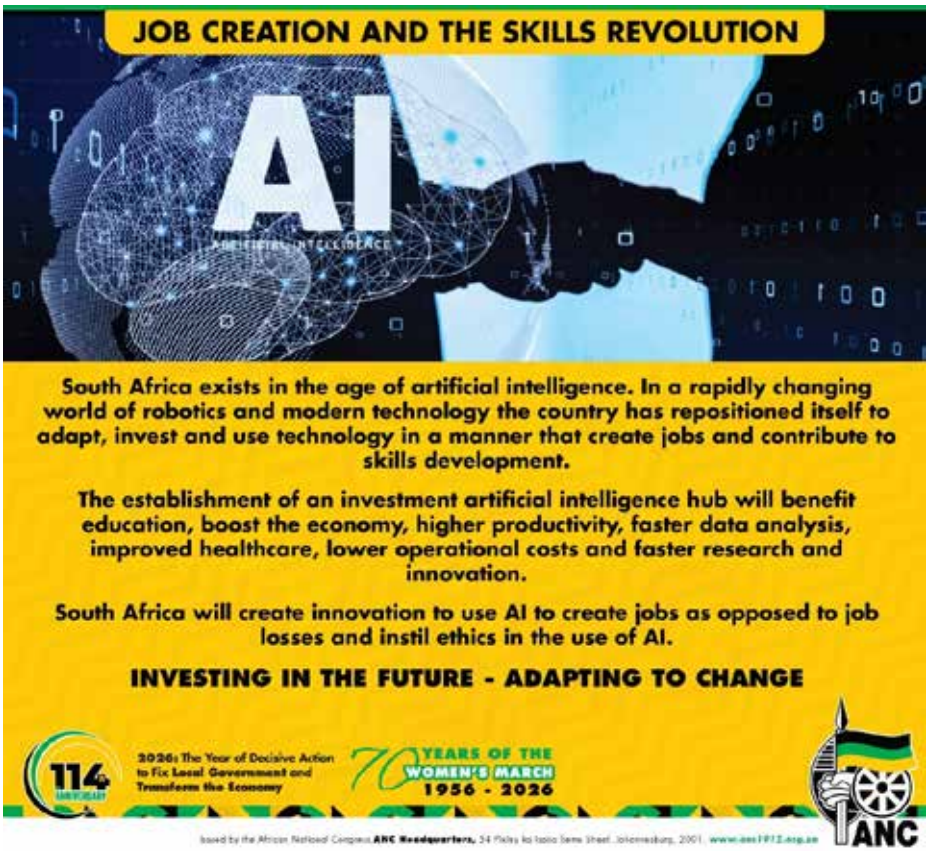
THE African National Congress (ANC) welcomes and supports President Cyril Ramaphosa's working visit to Silicon Valley in the United States of America, aimed at attracting investment, strengthening technological cooperation and positioning South Africa to benefit from the rapidly expanding global digital economy. The visit advances the ANC's 55th National Conference resolutions on economic transformation, innovation and the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which recognise the strategic importance of artificial intelligence, digital infrastructure, technological development and skills in building a growing and inclusive economy.

This is a working visit with a clear economic and developmental purpose for our nation and there is no need for the President to meet his counterpart as he is not on a State Visit nor an Official Visit to the USA. The President is not in Silicon Valley for ceremonial diplomacy, but to pursue opportunities that can benefit South Africa and its people.

The world is undergoing profound technological changes that are reshaping economies, industries and the future of work. South Africa cannot afford to stand on the sidelines watching while others position themselves to benefit from these developments. We must be where technological advances are taking place, build partnerships, attract investment and ensure that our people, particularly young people, are not left behind.

South Africa must harness the digital revolution to tackle persistent youth unemployment. This means investing in digital and technical skills, helping young people acquire new skills and build on those they already have, and supporting innovation and entrepreneurship across the digital economy. We must also help small, medium and micro enterprises adopt new technologies, reach new markets and create jobs for young people. Our engagement with global technology leaders must strengthen our own capabilities and advance economic transformation.

The ANC wishes President Ramaphosa and the South African delegation well in their engagements. We look forward to meaningful partnerships and tangible outcomes that will contribute to building a technologically advanced, competitive and inclusive South African economy.



Backing the President's AI mission:
From Silicon Valley to our communities

By **MBALI HLOPHE**

I'M writing this from the Africa Tech Festival in Cape Town, where thousands of innovators, investors and officials from across our continent have gathered to discuss Africa's place in the artificial intelligence (AI) revolution and the possibilities it holds. At the same time, I am following President Cyril Ramaphosa's delegation of about 300 South Africans to Silicon Valley, where our country is making its case to the world's leading technology companies.



In both rooms, the message from our leadership was the same. In California, the President said South Africa must build AI, and not simply consume it. Otherwise, Africa will repeat the old pattern of exporting raw materials while wealth is created elsewhere. In Cape Town, Deputy President Paul Mashatile opened the festival by calling for a century in which African countries are defined "not by what they export, but by what they create".

That is the task before us: to make sure this mission delivers for our people.

A mission shaped like the work

The Presidency deserves credit for the way this delegation was built. Eight ministers travelled, from Finance and Trade to Electricity, Communications, Small Business and International Relations, alongside business, researchers, universities and young people. That is not an entourage. It is a map of everything AI touches: the money, the trade rules, the power supply, the small businesses that must benefit and the young people who must build it.

This work began in 2019, when the President established and chaired the Presidential Commission on the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), long before AI dominated global headlines. That work gave us the Artificial Intelligence Institute of South Africa, launched in 2022 in partnership with the University of Johannesburg (UJ) and the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT). During South Africa's 2025 presidency of the Group of Twenty (G20), he placed AI on the agenda of the world's largest economies. Few South African heads of state have engaged with technology so consistently.

From planning to execution

The National Executive Committee (NEC) Lekgotla resolved that 2026 must mark a decisive shift from planning to execution. That applies to AI as much as anything else.

In the spirit of self-criticism and reflection, we should be honest that the work of implementing the 4IR Commission's recommendations remains unfinished. We should also be honest about a second problem: the 4IR and AI are being treated as different tracks, when they should be one. AI is the next chapter of the

4IR work the President began in 2019. Yet the national AI policy is being developed on its own, inside a single department, apart from the 4IR machinery that was already set up.

That machinery exists. An inter-ministerial committee (IMC) on the 4IR was approved in 2019, and the Commission later recommended a coordinating council in the Presidency, because strategies succeed only when someone has the authority to make departments move together. The national AI policy should be taken out of the single department and placed in that 4IR work, under the IMC, with the weight of the Presidency behind it. The Silicon Valley delegation shows what this looks like: ministers across government working as one. The IMC should bring together Health, Education, Police, Defence, Social Development, Agriculture, Environment and Cooperative Governance, among others, alongside the ministers who travelled. To keep it focused and able to meet, provinces and metros should be kept in the loop through existing intergovernmental structures rather than sit on it.

This is also a point of principle about where a policy of this kind belongs. A national AI policy does not belong to one department, and it is wrongly located in one. At present it sits with the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies (DCDT). This is not a comment on any minister, department or party. We would say the same if it sat in Health, Education or any other department. AI cuts across every function of the state, and no single line department has the reach or the authority to settle the trade-offs between them. The policy needs a home as wide as the technology.

AI in the Year of Fixing Local Government

The January 8 Statement declared 2026 the Year of Decisive Action to Fix Local Government. Our AI ambitions must serve that mission, not run past it.

The President rightly told investors that South Africa now has surplus electricity generation and hosts most of Africa's data centres. That is a real achievement. But generation is national, while delivery is local.

Many people do not realise how resource-hungry data centres are. They run day and night, and the International Energy Agency estimates that a large AI data centre of 100 megawatts or more uses as much electricity in a year as 100,000 households. It also estimates that, on average, a data centre of that size in the United States uses about two million litres of water a day, counting the water used to generate its power. These facilities draw on the same water systems and, often, the same local power networks as the household down the road, and electricity and water are the two services many of our municipalities already struggle to deliver.

That is why new data centre plans should be designed to be self-sufficient: powered by their own solar generation with battery storage, and cooled with recycled water. Newer cooling designs can cut water use sharply, which makes this a reasonable condition to set. It means these facilities add to our supply instead of drawing down what households and businesses depend on. If we want AI investment to land well, municipalities must be kept in the loop and consulted before deals are signed, so that they can plan for the demand instead of being left to manage the consequences afterwards.

The opportunity also runs the other way. Used well, AI can help us fix local government itself: by detecting water losses, correcting billing errors and predicting infrastructure failures before residents feel them.



What Gauteng can offer

Gauteng is ready to turn this mission into results.

A home for African innovation. Silicon Valley grew around universities, public research and companies close enough to share talent. Gauteng has those ingredients. The Innovation Hub in Pretoria, owned by the Gauteng Growth and Development Agency (GGDA), sits minutes from the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and the University of Pretoria (UP), with the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) and UJ an hour away. This corridor is ripe to become a Silicon Valley-style innovation hub for Africa: a place where researchers, entrepreneurs, universities, government and investors build together. It deserves a clear plan, developed with partners from across our continent and beyond.

A capable state that understands AI. Government cannot regulate, buy or use what it does not understand. Every public servant should complete basic AI training within three years, starting with those who serve citizens directly, in clinics, police stations, schools and municipal offices, and those who handle their personal data. In Gauteng, we are pursuing this with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), through free courses already available.

Skills for young people, at scale. In July, Google committed to a digital innovation centre at a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) college in Soweto. That is a model worth multiplying. Provinces should aim to reach 100,000 young people in AI every year, both by training newcomers and by supporting those already working in the field, such as young entrepreneurs and researchers. For newcomers, each course should lead to an internship, a job or support to start a business.

On the 90-day commitment

The President has committed to identifying practical investment, research, skills and public-service initiatives within 90 days of the delegation's return. That commitment deserves the full support of our movement and of every sphere of government.

As legislators, our role is to help make sure each commitment is written down, funded and delivered. Its benefits must reach townships, TVET colleges and municipalities, not only boardrooms.

The test of this mission will be whether a young person in Tembisa can build something with AI, and whether the communities near our data centres feel the benefit.

Silicon Valley showed us what is possible. Now South Africa must help show what is ours.

Mbali Hlophe is an ANC Provincial Task Team (PTT) member in Gauteng and Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on eGovernment and Research Development, Gauteng Provincial Legislature.





Advancing the **Objectives of the NDR**, the **Freedom Charter** and the **Transformation Agenda** under **Coalition Arrangements**

By **SASABONA MANGANYE**

THE emergence of coalition governments in South Africa presents an important question for the National Democratic Revolution (NDR): how does the ANC advance the historic mission of social transformation, economic emancipation and the creation of a non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and prosperous society in municipalities where it does not govern alone?

Coalition arrangements must be understood within the broader constitutional and political context of South Africa's democratic transition. They do not, in themselves, suspend the objectives of the NDR or dilute the principles of the Freedom Charter. Rather, they create new institutional and political circumstances within which these objectives must be pursued.

The central challenge is to ensure that the pursuit of coalition stability, political compromise and shared governance does not displace the substantive transformation agenda.

The NDR remains the strategic objective; coalitions are a governing arrangement

A fundamental distinction must be maintained between the strategic objectives of the NDR and the tactical arrangements through which political power is exercised.

The ANC's **Strategy and Tactics** recognises that strategy must remain anchored in the ultimate objective, while tactics must respond creatively to changing conditions and the balance of forces. This distinction is particularly relevant in a coalition era.

The fact that the ANC may have to share executive authority with parties that hold different ideological and economic positions does not mean that it must abandon its historical commitment to transformation. Equally, coalition participation cannot be used to justify the imposition of policies that reverse constitutional gains or undermine the developmental character of the democratic state.

The task is therefore to distinguish between legitimate compromise on matters of governance and unacceptable compromise



on the fundamental objectives of transformation. Coalitions should be approached as instruments of democratic governance, not as substitutes for the NDR. Political agreements must be assessed not merely by the positions secured by participating parties, but by whether they create the conditions for improving people's lives and advancing the constitutional vision of a transformed society.

The Freedom Charter as the common transformational foundation

The Freedom Charter provides a framework for evaluating the substantive content of coalition agreements. Its central propositions remain relevant to the work of municipalities and other spheres of government:

- ***The people shall govern:*** Democratic participation, accountable leadership and meaningful community involvement in decision-making.
- ***The people shall share in the country's wealth:*** Inclusive economic development, local economic transformation and broad-based ownership of economic opportunities.
- ***The land shall be shared among those who work it:*** Equitable access to land, spatial justice and the transformation of apartheid spatial arrangements.
- ***There shall be work and security:*** Employment creation, support for township economies, informal traders, cooperatives and small businesses.
- ***There shall be houses, security and comfort:*** Access to dignified housing, reliable water, electricity, sanitation, transport and other essential services.
- ***There shall be education and culture:*** Accessible education, skills development, libraries, recreation, arts and cultural development.

These principles need to find practical expression in coalition programmes, municipal budgets, Integrated Development Plans (IDPs), procurement policies and performance agreements. The Freedom Charter should not become a ceremonial reference in coalition documents. It should be translated into measurable commitments that can be monitored by communities and municipal councils.

Transformation must not be reduced to political representation

One of the central questions in the coalition era is whether political participation in government translates into meaningful changes in the material conditions of the majority. The NDR is concerned not simply with access to political office, but with transforming the historical patterns of ownership, control and distribution of economic resources. This distinction is important because a coalition can achieve political stability while leaving the underlying economic inequalities largely untouched.

The transformation agenda must therefore address:

- ***Economic transformation:*** Expanding black ownership, enterprise development, access to markets and participation in municipal economic opportunities.
- ***Spatial transformation:*** Addressing apartheid geography through integrated human settlements, transport, infrastructure and access to economic centres.
- ***Land and property:*** Promoting equitable access to municipal land, public property and development opportunities.
- ***Employment:*** Using municipal infrastructure investment, local procurement and economic development programmes to expand employment.
- ***Gender transformation:*** Advancing the economic participation and leadership of women and addressing gender-based inequality.
- ***Youth development:*** Creating pathways into employment, entrepreneurship, digital skills and productive economic activity.
- ***Service delivery:*** Ensuring that working-class communities and historically disadvantaged neighbourhoods receive equitable and sustainable services.

Transformation must be reflected in the allocation of public resources, not merely in the language of coalition declarations.

Coalition agreements must protect the transformational character of the democratic state

The ANC's 5th National General Council provides an important contemporary reference point. Its resolutions reaffirm that the NDR remains the strategic project of fundamental transformation and specifically state that the ANC should only enter coalitions that uphold constitutional principles, improve service delivery and safeguard socio-economic transformation.

This provides a substantive basis for coalition negotiations. A coalition agreement should therefore contain a common minimum programme that addresses:

- A shared commitment to the Constitution and the developmental state.
- The protection and advancement of socio-economic rights.
- Transformation of the economy and historically unequal patterns of development.
- Equitable delivery of basic services.
- Protection of workers' rights and the interests of vulnerable communities.
- Ethical leadership, clean governance and accountability.
- Transparent decision-making and responsible management of public resources.
- Defined mechanisms for resolving political disagreements without disrupting government.

The national **Guidelines for Stable Coalitions in Local Government**, issued by the Department of Cooperative Governance in November 2026, reinforce the importance of written agreements, shared policy priorities, dispute-resolution mechanisms and continuity of municipal administration. They also distinguish political responsibilities from administrative functions, particularly procurement, appointments and tender decisions.

The implication is that coalition negotiations must move beyond the distribution of political positions. They must establish what the coalition intends to achieve, how it will achieve it, how progress will be measured and how disagreements will be managed.

The politics of compromise must not become the abandonment of principle

Coalition government necessarily involves negotiations, accommodation and compromise. Parties enter these arrangements with different political traditions, ideological orientations and policy preferences. However, compromise must be guided by a clear understanding of what is negotiable and what is fundamental.

There is a distinction between compromising on the sequencing of programmes, negotiating the composition of an executive or agreeing on implementation methods, and compromising on constitutional rights, economic transformation and the interests of historically disadvantaged communities.

The former are legitimate features of coalition politics. The latter raise fundamental questions about the purpose and character of the democratic state.

This does not mean that coalition partners must agree on every ideological question. It means that they must agree on a constitutional and developmental framework within which their differences can be managed.

The coalition must also recognise that political power is exercised through public institutions, not owned by the parties participating in government. Public resources cannot become instruments for rewarding coalition partners, political factions or individuals.

The developmental state and the politics of municipal transformation

Local government occupies a particularly important position in advancing the NDR because it is the sphere of government closest to communities and directly responsible for many of the services that shape everyday life. Sections 152 and 153 of the Constitution require municipalities to promote sustainable service delivery, social and economic development, community participation and the prioritisation of basic



needs in municipal planning and budgeting.

Consequently, coalition arrangements must protect the capacity of municipalities to function as developmental institutions. This requires particular attention to:

- ***Infrastructure and basic services:*** Water, electricity, sanitation, roads, waste management and the maintenance of public infrastructure.
- ***Spatial and economic development:*** Integrated human settlements, public transport, township economies, industrial development and the creation of economic opportunities.
- ***Municipal finance:*** Financial sustainability, revenue collection, responsible expenditure, consequence management and the protection of municipal assets.
- ***Institutional capacity:*** Professional municipal administration, appropriate skills, effective oversight and insulation of administrative processes from inappropriate political interference.
- ***Community participation:*** Ward committees, public consultations, participatory budgeting and accessible accountability mechanisms.

The political composition of a municipal executive may change, but the municipality's constitutional obligations remain. Coalition partners must therefore ensure that political disagreements do not interrupt the implementation of approved budgets, IDPs and service delivery programmes.

The relationship between coalition governance and the balance of forces

The NDR has always required an understanding of the balance of forces within society. Political parties do not operate in isolation from economic interests, organised labour, business, civil society and communities. Coalition arrangements bring this question into sharper focus.

Where parties with different ideological orientations share government, the content of public policy becomes an important arena of contestation. Questions concerning privatisation, municipal assets, public procurement, labour rights, public employment, land use and the role of the state may become subjects of disagreement. These disagreements should be addressed through democratic processes, evidence-based policy discussions and constitutional institutions.

The important consideration is that coalition participation must not result in the marginalisation of the very social constituencies whose material emancipation constitutes a central objective of the NDR. Working-class communities, the unemployed, women, young people, informal traders and historically disadvantaged communities must remain central to the design and implementation of municipal programmes.

The transformation agenda must be evaluated against its impact on these communities, rather than simply the political accommodation achieved among coalition partners.

The role of the ANC in a coalition era: From holding office to advancing transformation

The changing political environment requires a broader understanding of political leadership. The ANC's role in advancing the NDR cannot be measured exclusively by the number of mayoral positions, committee chairpersons or executive portfolios it occupies. Political office is an instrument through which public mandates are implemented. It is not the ultimate objective of the liberation struggle.

The ANC must therefore maintain its organisational identity, ideological clarity and accountability to communities, whether it occupies the executive, participates in a coalition or serves in opposition. Where it participates in a coalition, it must use the available constitutional and institutional mechanisms to advance agreed transformational programmes. Where it is outside the executive, it must exercise oversight, propose alternatives and hold the administration accountable for fulfilling its constitutional responsibilities.

This requires a strong relationship between the organisation, its public representatives, the Alliance, civil society and communities. It also demands that the ANC distinguish between organisational interests and the public interest.

Coalition partners may negotiate political responsibilities, but the administration of public resources must remain governed by law, transparency and accountability.

The Alliance and progressive forces in the coalition era

The coalition era also raises important questions about the role of the ANC-led Alliance and the broader progressive movement. The NDR is historically a project that draws strength from the collective participation of workers,

organised communities, progressive formations and other motive forces of transformation.

The changing political environment should therefore encourage renewed engagement with organised labour, the South African Communist Party, SANCO, the women's movement, youth formations and other progressive organisations. This engagement must go beyond electoral cooperation. It should focus on building a shared programme around economic transformation, workers' rights, public services, social justice and the strengthening of democratic institutions.

Where different progressive organisations participate in coalitions, their contribution should be assessed against the broader transformational programme and their ability to improve the material conditions of the people. The coalition era should not produce an abandonment of ideological debate. Rather, it should create opportunities for constructive engagement on the future of South Africa's developmental path.

Measuring coalition success against the objectives of the NDR

Ultimately, coalition governments must be evaluated against tangible outcomes rather than the longevity of political agreements or the number of positions distributed among participating parties.

The ANC's statement of 13 November 2026 on municipal coalition engagements emphasises a common minimum programme with measurable service delivery targets, stability, accountability, anti-corruption measures and the protection of socio-economic transformation.



Conclusion: The NDR must remain the compass in a coalition era

South Africa is entering a period in which the exercise of political power increasingly requires negotiation, cooperation and the accommodation of different political interests. This represents a significant development in our democratic experience and requires political organisations to rethink how they advance their respective programmes within shared governing arrangements.

However, changing political circumstances do not eliminate the historical challenges that gave rise to the National Democratic Revolution. Poverty, unemployment, inequality, racialised patterns of ownership, spatial exclusion and gender inequality remain central questions confronting our society. These challenges cannot be resolved through political arrangements that are concerned exclusively with access to office and the distribution of institutional power.

The Freedom Charter remains a relevant framework for measuring the content and direction of democratic transformation. Its promise that the people shall govern and share in the country's wealth must find expression in the everyday experiences of South Africans. The coalition era must therefore be approached with a clear distinction between strategic objectives and tactical arrangements. Coalitions are governing arrangements; the NDR is a programme of fundamental social transformation. The former must be evaluated by their contribution to the latter.

For the ANC, this also demands ideological clarity, organisational renewal and a deeper appreciation that political legitimacy is sustained through service to the people. Participation in government must never become an end in itself, nor should the pursuit of political stability become an excuse for postponing transformation.

The fundamental question is not simply who governs with whom, but what kind of society is being built through the exercise of political power. The test of coalition government must ultimately be whether it advances the constitutional promise of a united, non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and prosperous South Africa.

The NDR must remain the compass, the Freedom Charter the vision, and the improvement of the material conditions of our people the measure of progress.

To Govern with the ANC Is Not a Betrayal. It Is Democracy.

By **MPHO BUNTSE**

THERE is a strange new consensus forming in our newsrooms, on our panels and across our timelines: that any party that dares to govern with the ANC is committing political suicide.

The argument is that a coalition with the ANC is inherently dangerous, unprincipled and bound to be punished by voters. At its worst, that position is politically immature, constitutionally illiterate, and deeply disrespectful to millions of South Africans.

You cannot minimise the ANC vote simply because you dislike the ANC.

In the 2024 national election, the ANC received about 32% of the vote. In the 2026 local elections, it has again emerged as the largest party nationally and in several of the country's biggest metros. Those are democratic facts, not footnotes.

The ANC's historic role in setting up South Africa's democracy does not give it a permanent entitlement to govern. But neither does losing its majority mean that its voters, or the party itself, lose the right to participate in government through a lawful coalition.

A coalition exists because voters have entrusted different parties with portions of the responsibility for governing their communities. When no party wins a majority, voters have divided their support. The task of elected leaders is then to do what voters could not do on a single ballot: build a workable majority that reflects that divided mandate.

That is not a betrayal of the vote. That is the vote.

Yet we are told, often without much qualification, that governing with the ANC is inherently dangerous. Dangerous to service delivery? To stability? To democracy itself? Those claims deserve to be tested against reality rather than repeated as political instinct.

The ANC remains the party with the broadest national footprint, with structures, governing experience and institutional memory across all nine provinces and across different types of municipalities. That experience has often been badly used, and it cannot substitute for competence or integrity. But coalitions are difficult and fragile. They require negotiation, compromise, dispute resolution and the ability to govern at scale. Excluding the party with the deepest national reach is not an obvious route to stability.

The ANC is also not a monolith. It is a broad and contested movement that has in its ranks; reformers and conservatives, pragmatists and ideologues, competent officials, and compromised leaders, as do many large political organisations. Treating it as a single, toxic bloc is analytically lazy.

In any municipality, the relevant question should be whether the parties involved can agree on a credible programme and implement it. A coalition is not an



endorsement of a party's entire history. It is an agreement, in a particular place and at a particular time, to deliver specific services on agreed terms.

Nor should parties assume that voters automatically punish any organisation that works with the ANC. Voters punish failure: broken promises, dry taps, uncollected refuse, collapsing finances and leaders who prefer posturing in opposition to the hard work of governing.

If a DA–ANC, ActionSA–ANC, IFP–ANC or MKP–ANC coalition stabilises a council, passes a budget, improves services, and restores dignity, voters are capable of recognising that. If a party chooses permanent opposition in the name of purity while avoiding governing responsibility, voters may remember that too.

None of these amounts to a blank cheque for the ANC or for any other party. Working with the ANC is defensible only when the arrangement is based on a transparent written coalition agreement, measurable service-delivery commitments, public accountability, and a credible right to withdraw if the terms are breached.

Such an agreement should identify the priorities of the coalition, assign responsibilities, set timelines and explain how performance will be measured. It should also make clear how disputes will be resolved, how budgets will be protected from political horse-trading and what happens when a party refuses to honour its obligations.

The public should not have to infer the terms of a coalition from leaked messages, anonymous briefings or statements made after the fact. Coalition negotiations should be open enough for voters to understand what is being agreed in their name. I find Penuel Mlotshwa's call on X persuasive: *"coalition talks should be filmed live and made public and not be done in private/secret."*

Transparency cannot end when the agreement is signed. Coalition partners should publish regular progress reports, account to councils and residents, and accept scrutiny from opposition parties, journalists and civil society. A coalition that cannot explain its decisions publicly is unlikely to sustain public trust.

The right to withdraw must be more than a clause on paper. If a party repeatedly misses agreed targets, undermines oversight or uses its position to protect misconduct, its partners must be able to leave through a clear and lawful process. Cooperation without consequences is not coalition government; it is surrender.

This standard applies equally to every party. No organisation should be judged solely by which other party is in the room. Coalitions must be assessed by their agreements, their conduct and their results.

There are legitimate reasons to worry about working with the ANC. The party must answer for corruption, state capture, controversial cadre-deployment practices and the damage caused by years of poor administration in too many municipalities.

Coalition bargaining can become opaque and self-serving. Councils can be destabilised by patronage, personality clashes and the pursuit of office rather than public service.

These concerns are not inventions of hostile commentators. They are real political and administrative risks. Any party entering a coalition with the ANC must therefore strengthen oversight, protect professional officials, insist on clean procurement and make service delivery – not access to positions – the measure of success.

I am an ANC defender. That is a political position I state openly, not a credential that should exempt me from scrutiny. Defending the ANC's right to participate in government does not require denying its failures. The party must renew itself, confront corruption and rebuild public confidence, or it will continue to decline.

But criticism is not erasure. Accountability is not contempt. And losing a majority is not the same as losing the right to govern in coalition.

Some commentary about ANC coalitions appears to be driven by more than concern about governance. There is, at times, a desire to see the party humiliated or permanently excluded, even at the cost of unstable councils, ungovernable metros or repeated elections. That may be understandable as a political preference, but it is not necessarily a sound governing strategy.

There is a difference between principled scepticism and a demand for exclusion. The former asks whether a coalition can work and how the public will be protected. The latter treats engagement with the ANC as disqualifying before the terms of the agreement, the quality of the programme or the results are known.

South Africa did not vote for one-party rule in 2024 or in 2026. It voted for shared power. It voted for parties to talk, compromise and govern together, even when those parties distrust one another.

That does not mean every coalition is wise, and it does not mean every coalition should survive. Parties must be willing to reject arrangements that lack transparency, measurable commitments, accountability or a credible exit route.

Voters deserve more than an announcement that rivals have reached a deal; they deserve to know what the deal is meant to achieve and how failure will be addressed.

To govern with the ANC on clear and enforceable terms is not, in itself, dangerous. It can be an expression of democratic responsibility: a recognition that no party has a monopoly on virtue, that no party has a monopoly on vice, and that voters cannot be wished away because their choice is inconvenient.

What is dangerous is a political culture in which parties are told that listening to ANC voters is a crime, and that the only respectable coalition is one that excludes them. That is not democratic accountability. It is an attempt to replace the voters' divided mandate with an outsider's preferred outcome.

Democracy means that all voices count, including those with which we disagree. Especially those with which we disagree.

If we forget that, we will have lost far more than an election.



The ANC and the Peril of its Own Extinction:

CAN WE STILL SALVAGE OUR REVOLUTION?

By **AMBASSADOR PHATSE JUSTICE PIITSO**

THE key objective of every revolutionary strategy and tactic remains the conquest of political power. In achieving this, at every turn of every historical situation, revolutionaries are always guided by objective and subjective factors. At every given historical epoch, our analysis of the balance of power cannot be the same when there is a revolutionary situation as when there is no revolutionary situation.

But if it is indeed true that the recent extraordinary meeting of the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the African National Congress (ANC), in its analysis of the post- local government elections, came to a scholastic determination, faulting the catastrophic electoral decline of our support base on the coalition of our democratic movement, the ANC, with the Democratic Alliance (DA) within the political framework of the Government of National Unity (GNU), then, if this is indeed true, history is presenting us with a possibility that a revolutionary situation is capable of depriving the people themselves of their own revolution.

The meeting of the NEC of the ANC would have deprived its membership and the majority of the people of our country of an ample opportunity for a thoroughgoing and correct evaluation and appraisal of the strengths and weaknesses of the national liberation movement, and its capacity to fulfil the tasks of our National

Democratic Revolution (NDR). The question we must ask ourselves is: how can the leadership of our democratic movement arrive at such dogmatic conclusions, misrepresenting the true realities of our historical conditions?

The fundamental truth is that, in executing the political and historical mandate of its leadership role, the NEC of the ANC has floundered in the revolutionary project of the unity and renewal of our movement and society, and in its entrusted revolutionary task of rejuvenating the moral and political consciousness of our membership and the majority of our people. The leadership has abdicated its revolutionary duty of being a political temple, providing a correct examination of the objective and subjective situation defining the present phase of our democratic revolution.

The reality of the political situation remains that the ANC and the revolutionary alliance formations have been captured by criminal syndicates, whose historic mission is to turn our democratic state into a mafia state. The unfolding events in our country are a manifestation of how the enemy of our revolution has deeply infiltrated the structures and leadership of our revolutionary movement across all levels.

I am of the firm view that the correct theoretical hypothesis of the true realities of our situation is this: if it is indeed true that the DA represents the aspirations of the minority of our population, those who want to preserve the privileges of white monopoly, and the forces opposed to the transformation of the socioeconomic foundations of our democratic state, the question is: why is there a substantial and growing number of our people steadily placing their trust in such a party, representing the aspirations of the white minority, the party of counter-revolution?

What is it that, in the prevailing circumstances, the DA is doing that the ANC cannot do? What is it that is attracting a growing number of our people to vote for the DA that cannot attract them to vote for the ANC? Considering the subjective and objective probabilities, is it because, in the ordinary eyes of our people, the DA has become the party of renewal, whilst the ANC has become a dinosaur, at the virtual end of its extinction?

The answer to the question is that, in its posture towards renewal, the DA seems to be meeting the expectations of a growing number of our people as the party representing the wishes and aspirations of the people, whilst the ANC has stagnated, eroding the historic birthmarks of the true values, culture and traditions it represents. The ANC is becoming the opposite of a true revolutionary movement, a movement of disciplined and devoted leadership, capable of resolving the challenges facing our society.

Our democratic revolution is faced with a growing danger of the influence of mafia syndicates. Our revolution is predominantly in the hands of its own enemy, in the hands of the forces of counter-revolution. What the domestic and international forces of counter-revolution have achieved is the reversal of the gains of our revolutionary struggles, diminishing the very same noble idea of the struggles for humanity and freedom, and of building a non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and prosperous society.

Walking through the edges of our glorious history, our revolution stands at the peril of its own extinction.





The ANC must return to its revolutionary character and organisational discipline

By **THABANG MASEKO**

As events are proceeding at an unimaginable pace, demolishing the rich monument of the struggles of our people, the question is: what is to be done? Is it too late? But what I know is that, in a revolution, a year becomes a decade, a decade a century, and, at the same time, a decade can become a year, and a century a decade. It cannot be too late. It is still possible to salvage our revolution, our monumental ANC, the heritage of the struggles of our people. It cannot be allowed to perish.

The ANC represents the future, the ANC is the future. We cannot allow the wrenching hand of the enemy to determine our own destiny. We have to be emboldened, not to let it die in the hands of its own adversaries.

Our revolutionary movement cannot be vanquished before our lifetime. It is upon all of us, the freedom-loving people of our country, to bestow upon our shoulders the revolutionary task, in the best interests of our future generations. After much consideration of the political milieu, I am of the firm view that the NEC of the ANC must resign from its position of leadership responsibility, paving the way for the tried and tested leadership of the ANC Veterans League and the uMkhonto we Sizwe Liberation War Veterans, assembling a contingent of dedicated men and women capable of taking forward the revolutionary task of the unity and renewal of our movement.

Ambassador Phatse Justice Piitso *is a member of the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP). He writes this article in his personal capacity.*

ONCE again, let me express my profound appreciation to the loyal members, supporters and voters of the African National Congress, particularly those in the Eastern Cape, the birthplace and cradle of many of our movement's finest leaders and revolutionaries.

The outcome of the recent local government elections must serve as a defining moment of political introspection for all of us. It must be a wake-up call to the entire ANC. We can no longer afford to take our people, our membership and the sacrifices of those who built this movement for granted.

There are comrades who remain deeply committed to the ideals and historical mission of the ANC but have increasingly withdrawn from active participation. Not because they have abandoned the movement, but because they feel alienated, marginalised and increasingly convinced that their voices no longer count in the organisation.

That is a serious indictment of our internal democracy and organisational culture. The ANC has the historical mandate, political experience and ideological foundation to rebuild its support across all spheres of government. However, that requires more than electoral mobilisation and campaign slogans. It requires a fundamental process of organisational renewal, political reorientation and the restoration of public confidence.

We must never lose sight of the fact that the freedom we enjoy today was secured through immense sacrifice. Many gave their

lives, endured imprisonment, torture, exile and persecution so that future generations could live in a democratic and free society. Their sacrifices impose an enormous political and moral responsibility on us: to govern with integrity, deliver services and advance the material conditions of our people. This responsibility cannot be discharged without rebuilding the ANC itself, both politically and organisationally.

The construction of a developmental state and the implementation of the priorities of the National Democratic Revolution depend on a strong, strategically coherent and ideologically grounded ANC. Organisational renewal must therefore be understood as a political necessity, not an administrative exercise or a convenient conference resolution.

It is about rebuilding a mass-based, multi-class, disciplined and transformative movement of the left, firmly rooted in the aspirations of the working class and the poor, and capable of providing strategic leadership to both the state and society.

I remain convinced that the ANC can recover from the electoral setbacks and the steady erosion of its support. However, recovery will not come through political rhetoric alone. It will require honest introspection, accountability and a willingness to confront the contradictions that have weakened the organisation.

The Democratic Alliance may speak of township development and the transformation of historically disadvantaged communities. However, these political claims must ultimately be tested against the material conditions of poor black communities. The coming term of government will provide an opportunity to scrutinise whether the DA's development agenda translates into meaningful improvements in the lives of those communities.

I have written extensively about the ideological and organisational challenges facing our movement over the years, including contributions published in ANC publications. Among these was an article titled "It's Our Turn to Eat Has Never Been in Our Policy Guide or Discussed."

My reflections on the regional elective conferences held in 2025 reinforced one fundamental concern: factionalism has become a destructive force within the ANC. It is fundamentally incompatible with the founding principles and historical mission of the liberation movement.

The ANC was established as an instrument for uniting South Africans across racial, ethnic and class divisions and advancing the struggle for national liberation. It cannot fulfil that historic mission while its internal life is dominated by factional contestation, political patronage and the pursuit of positions.

When money begins to determine who leads, when political office becomes a vehicle for personal enrichment and when loyalty to individuals supersedes loyalty to the organisation, we must ask ourselves a difficult question: whatever happened to a movement whose legitimacy was founded on the commitment, sacrifices and collective aspirations of its membership?

That is the question we must confront honestly if we are serious about rebuilding the ANC. In my assessment, many of these contradictions became increasingly pronounced after 1994, when the ANC transitioned from a liberation movement operating under conditions of repression to a governing party with access to state power and public resources.

Before 1994, the movement was sustained by a relatively small but committed core of disciplined activists operating within the broader mass democratic movement. Their political consciousness was shaped by selflessness, sacrifice, collective responsibility and an unwavering commitment to liberation. There were no guarantees of personal advancement, material reward or political office for participating in the struggle. These included members of uMkhonto weSizwe and underground operatives who understood the enormous risks associated with their political involvement. Between the prosecution of the liberation struggle and the attainment of freedom lay detention, torture, death and disappearance.

These were real and terrifying possibilities, sufficient to discourage anyone concerned about personal safety from participating in such a dangerous undertaking for a freedom whose arrival could not be predicted.

We did not know when liberation would come. We lived with the constant threat to our lives and physical wellbeing. Yet, driven by our commitment to the ultimate victory of the revolution, comrades persevered.

It is therefore necessary to reflect critically on the political developments that derailed aspects of that revolutionary ethos and identify the lessons that must inform our organisational renewal.

One of the significant ideological shifts was the emergence of the discourse around the creation of a so-called patriotic bourgeoisie within the ranks of the ANC.

This development raised fundamental questions about the class character and ideological orientation of the National Democratic Revolution, particularly when considered against successive ANC conference resolutions reaffirming the working class and the poor as the motive forces of the NDR.



We were never adequately informed about the criteria through which individuals would be selected and elevated into this supposedly patriotic capitalist class. Nor was there sufficient clarity about how this emerging economic elite would remain accountable to the broader objectives of the revolution.

The consequences of the intersection between political power, economic opportunity and personal enrichment have become a major organisational concern.

Corruption has evolved into a deeply entrenched challenge within the broader governance and political environment. Hardly a few months pass without public allegations involving individuals entrusted with political and administrative responsibility.

I am not advocating a witch-hunt, nor should every allegation made in the media be treated as proof of wrongdoing. However, an organisation of the ANC's historical stature cannot afford to respond to persistent allegations with indifference or political defensiveness.

It is not sufficient to repeatedly declare that anyone with evidence should approach law enforcement agencies. Such a response risks reducing the ANC to a passive observer of its own organisational decay.

The organisation must demonstrate political will, exercise internal accountability and ensure that its own disciplinary and ethical mechanisms are capable of confronting wrongdoing, irrespective of the positions occupied by those implicated.

The revolutionary principles of selflessness, sacrifice and collective responsibility were progressively undermined by the emergence of political careerism – the transformation of political activism into a pathway to personal wealth, influence and material accumulation.

In the post-Mafikeng ANC, the growing influence of careerism was accompanied by the consolidation of patronage networks and personality-driven leadership politics. Political loyalty increasingly became associated with access to opportunities, while the cultivation of individual leaders sometimes took precedence over ideological debate and organisational accountability.

This created an environment in which criticism could be interpreted as disloyalty, while allegations of corruption and misconduct were sometimes met with selective outrage or political silence.

Such tendencies are fundamentally incompatible with revolutionary morality. Corruption is not merely a governance failure; it represents a betrayal of the ethical foundations upon which the liberation movement was built.

It also undermines the credibility of the National Democratic Revolution and weakens the ANC's capacity to mobilise society around its transformative programme.

We must also revisit the ideological foundations of our movement and the manner in which we understand the relationship between political power, national oppression and economic exploitation.

The NDR thesis recognises that national oppression in South Africa was inseparable from the economic exploitation of the black majority, comprising Africans, Coloureds and Indians. Political exclusion and economic dispossession were mutually reinforcing instruments of the apartheid system.

The struggle for political liberation

was therefore never intended to end with the attainment of formal political rights. It was equally a struggle to dismantle the structural inequalities and economic relations that sustained racial oppression.

This is why the transformation of the economy, the empowerment of the historically disadvantaged majority and the improvement of the material conditions of the working class and the poor remain central to the NDR.

We cannot claim to be advancing the revolution while the material conditions of the majority remain fundamentally unchanged.

The resolutions adopted at the ANC's 52nd National Conference in Polokwane, particularly those relating to organisational renewal and rebuilding the ANC, must therefore be approached with the seriousness they deserve.

They are not historical documents to be dusted off whenever the organisation approaches an elective conference. They represent enduring political imperatives that require consistent implementation. Building the ANC must be treated as socially critical, politically indispensable and historically urgent.

Ultimately, the question before us is whether we still possess the political will to restore the ANC as a disciplined, principled and people-centred liberation movement, or whether we will continue to allow factionalism, patronage and careerism to erode the very foundations of the organisation.

The answer will determine not only the future of the ANC but also its capacity to fulfil the historic mandate of national liberation and social transformation.

Part 3

BEYOND POLITICAL ELITISM: WE KNEW – SO WHY DID WE NOT ACT?

By **MOJALEFA NALE**

THERE is something more troubling than a political movement failing to understand its problems. It is a political movement understanding them, documenting them, debating them and repeatedly warning itself about them, yet failing to arrest them. That is the deeper question arising from the crisis of the Revolutionary Alliance.

The first part of this series examined how the democratic breakthrough changed the terrain of struggle and created new material incentives around political leadership. The second examined how factionalism and political elitism contributed to the fragmentation of working-class organisation, with the crisis in COSATU representing one of the clearest manifestations.

But these developments raise a final and more difficult question: Why, having recognised the dangers, did the movement allow them to become embedded in its organisational life?

The Movement Knows

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of this discussion is that none of it is revelation. The movement diagnosed careerism, condemned factionalism, identified patronage, warned against manipulation of membership and lamented declining political consciousness. It adopted renewal, revisited renewal and repeatedly



committed itself to organisational change. The problem is therefore no longer principally one of diagnosis, but the widening distance between diagnosis and consequence. Leadership, members, Alliance partners and communities recognise these tendencies, yet they continue to reproduce themselves.

Why is a movement capable of diagnosing its own deterioration proving less capable of arresting it? There is an uncomfortable possibility that must enter this debate. Inaction does not always arise from ignorance or incapacity. Sometimes a system becomes difficult to confront because some of those required to challenge it have, at one point or another, benefited from its methods. This does not mean every leader is compromised, but it points to something subtler and potentially more disabling: mutual vulnerability. Those living in glass houses become reluctant to throw stones.

The Politics of Mutual Protection

One faction may hesitate to expose another because its own practices could then be scrutinised. Patronage is condemned selectively when one's allies have also benefited from deployment, while manipulation of organisational processes becomes difficult to confront where similar methods may previously have assisted one's own political ascent. A tacit equilibrium emerges: do not look too closely at mine and I will not look too closely at yours.

Yesterday's misconduct becomes today's defence. The question is no longer whether something is wrong, but why one side should be held accountable when another has allegedly done the same. This is fatal to organisational discipline because wrongdoing acquires historical protection, allowing leadership to condemn undesirable tendencies generally while remaining hesitant when confronted with their concrete manifestations. A revolutionary movement cannot renew itself through resolutions against tendencies it has become afraid to confront.

Nor can responsibility be deposited entirely at leadership's door. Factions need followers, and members participate in slates, attend factional meetings, manipulate processes and defend conduct because the perpetrator belongs to *"our side"*. Political morality becomes factionalised: wrongdoing is unacceptable when others commit it, but suddenly requires context and explanation when committed by one's own camp. This is how tomorrow's elitism is manufactured today. Factionalism does not merely protect existing elites; it manufactures the next generation of them by teaching activists that loyalty to a political camp can eventually be rewarded with advancement.

What Did We Lose?

The answer cannot simply be COSATU's congress or the SACP's decision to contest elections independently. These may be important developments, but they are manifestations of a much longer process. We lost step somewhere in the transition from one terrain of struggle to another.

The liberation movement mastered extraordinarily difficult terrains, including illegality, underground organisation, prison, exile, armed struggle, mass mobilisation, international solidarity and negotiation. The democratic breakthrough presented a different challenge: how to exercise state power without allowing state power to remake the movement. Could the movement deploy cadres without creating a political labour market, improve the material circumstances of leadership without producing political elitism, and conduct democratic leadership contests without institutionalising factions? Could it preserve worker unity while unions became centres of institutional power and accommodate ideological differences without allowing the strategic centre of the Alliance to disintegrate?

These were not peripheral questions after 1994. They became central to the future of the revolution. Somewhere in answering them, we lost step.

An Intergenerational Conversation is Required

There is nothing unusual about ANC leaders debating through articles, given the movement's rich tradition of intellectual polemic. We need more thinking, not less. However, when those writing are members of senior leadership structures, members are entitled to ask whether the same arguments are being pursued with equal vigour within the structures where those leaders carry responsibility.

If political elitism threatens COSATU, it belongs on the Alliance agenda. If independent SACP electoral participation changes the strategic character of the Alliance, it requires collective consideration; and if factionalism is consuming the ANC and the wider Congress movement, diagnosing it in documents is insufficient.

An article can illuminate a crisis, but it cannot manage one. Leadership must lead.

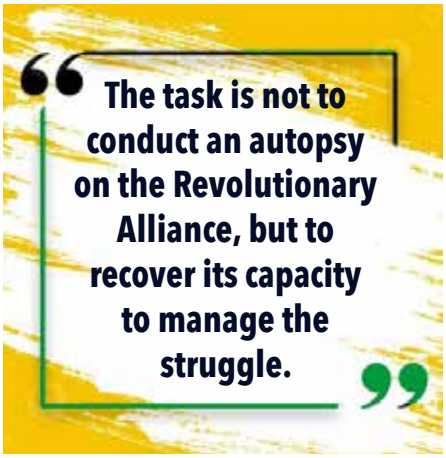
The stalwarts of the liberation movement are another indispensable constituency in this conversation. Many were at the helm when the terrain changed and managed the transition from liberation movement to governing movement. They witnessed the emergence of careerism accompanying political office, factionalism, changing patterns of deployment and the gradual weakening of worker unity and Alliance coherence. Their contribution is required not merely as hindsight, but as institutional memory accompanied by accountability.

What did they see, when did they recognise that something fundamental was changing, and what interventions were attempted? Which compromises were made, which dangers were underestimated, and why was the slide not arrested when the authority and organisational cohesion to do so were stronger?

These questions should not be asked disrespectfully, but reverence cannot place leaders beyond interrogation. We do not need nostalgic accounts of how much better things once were. We need an honest intergenerational conversation about how we arrived here.

Renewal Cannot Mean Simply Changing Leaders

If the problem is political culture, changing personalities alone will not solve it. Factions can produce new leaders without producing a new political culture, and replacing one faction with another merely changes who sits at the table.



Renewal must restore the supremacy of mission over office, organisation over faction, capability over populism, political education over conference arithmetic, worker unity over institutional fragmentation, accountability over mutual protection, and service over entitlement. Above all, leadership must recover the courage to act upon what it already knows.

This is where Dr Saul is right to place political elitism before us. But elitism itself requires explanation. The deeper question is how a revolutionary movement that recognised the danger, wrote about it and repeatedly warned itself nevertheless watched as that danger became embedded in its organisational life.

Recovering the Management of the Struggle

The task is not to conduct an autopsy on the Revolutionary Alliance, but to recover its capacity to manage the struggle. That requires current leaders and ordinary members, workers and intellectuals, former leaders and stalwarts. It also requires voices outside the Alliance, because those who have stepped away may sometimes see what those absorbed in internal battles no longer see.

The purpose should not be to romanticise the past or declare the Alliance dead, but to establish whether its constituent organisations can recover the strategic discipline required to make political differences serve the mission rather than consume it.

The unemployed young person still needs work, the worker still needs protection, the community still needs water, and the country still needs capable institutions. South Africa's material challenges will not wait for another conference, leadership slate or factional settlement.

The people do not experience the Revolutionary Alliance as an organisational diagram; they experience it through whether their lives improve. That is ultimately the test. The historical legitimacy of a liberation movement cannot be sustained indefinitely by its history. It must continually be reproduced through service, organisation, accountability and the capacity to advance the interests of the people under changing conditions.

History proves that the movement once possessed the capacity to manage difficult terrains. The question is whether it can recover that capacity in the terrain it occupies today. Perhaps the discussion should therefore end where it began, with two brutally simple questions:

Where did we lose step? And: Why, having recognised that we had lost step, did we allow ourselves to keep walking in the wrong direction? The answers will determine whether renewal becomes another organisational slogan or the beginning of recovering the management of the struggle.

The 25% Illusion: The DA's Ceiling, the ANC's Floor, and the Case for One Roof

By **RAYMOND S. MAHLATHI**

READ last week's headlines and you would think a political giant had woken. The Democratic Alliance finished at 24.64% in the 2026 local government elections, up about three points, and now leads in five of the eight metros. Strip away the metro maps and what is left is a number South Africans have seen many times: roughly one vote in four. That is not a breakthrough. It is a ceiling, and the DA has been pressing its head against it for three decades. What changed in 2026 is not the size of the DA. It is the condition of everyone else.



Thirty-two years under one ceiling

The DA is the product of mergers among the parties of the apartheid Parliament. Its liberal spine runs from the Progressive Party and the Progressive Federal Party to the Democratic Party of 1989. In 2000 the DP joined the New National Party, successor to the party that built apartheid, to form the DA. The NNP soon walked out and dissolved into the ANC, but its white, coloured and Indian voters stayed, while the Freedom Front Plus kept the hard Afrikaner nationalist flank. The names changed. The electorate did not.

In all fourteen national and local elections since 1994, this bloc has never once broken 27%. It dipped to about 15% in 2004, when the NNP collapsed, and recovered to the low twenties once the DA had absorbed the NNP electorate. The line is not flat at the bottom; it is flat at the top. The one exception proves the rule: under Mmusi Maimane, its first black leader, the DA reached about 27% in 2016, slipped back to 20.8% by 2019, and then returned to its traditional base. Black leaders, rebranding, Cape Town's governance record and a seat in Cabinet have all failed, because most voters keep their votes inside parties they regard as rooted in the liberation struggle.

The mirror image is just as stubborn. Since 1994, 70 to 80% of voters have backed the ANC or a party from the same political family, alongside newer black-led parties such as ActionSA, RISE Mzansi and BOSA. Not all of these share the transformation agenda, a point I return to below, but their voters have stayed on this side of the line. In 2026 the ANC fell almost 15 points to 30.76%, yet the DA gained only about three. The rest went to the MK Party, ActionSA, the UDM, the SACP and others, or stayed home. Voters leaving the ANC did not walk into the DA. They walked into other rooms in the same house.

Phase two: divide the majority

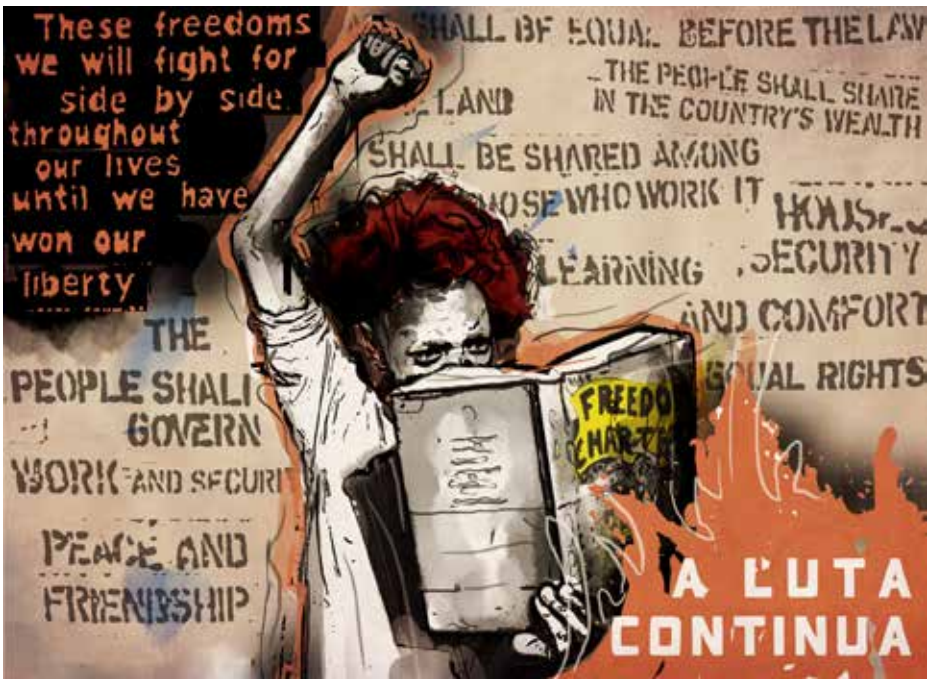
Unable to win the black majority, the DA and the donors who finance it found another route: ensure the majority no longer votes together. Party funding disclosures show the same small circle of very wealthy donors who finance the DA also financing the newer black-led liberal parties.

Members of the Oppenheimer family have given to the DA, ActionSA, BOSA, RISE Mzansi and the IFP; Martin Moshal has spread tens of millions across the DA, ActionSA and BOSA. These are matters of public record.

I do not claim that these parties are run from DA headquarters, or that their leaders are insincere. My claim concerns function. A portfolio of market-friendly, black-led parties, funded from the same sources, peels the black middle class away from the liberation movements without asking anyone to vote for a party they see as white. They share a scepticism toward B-BBEE, employment equity, land reform and the developmental state: the very instruments of redress. Twenty-five per cent looks commanding when no rival exceeds 31%; it looked modest when the ANC was above sixty. Just as 25% is the DA's ceiling, 31% may be the ANC's floor. The danger is not that the DA reaches 50%. It is that it never needs to.

What the struggle was for

The liberation struggle was never only about the vote. The Freedom Charter, adopted at Kliptown on 26 June 1955, declared that ***The People Shall Govern***, that ***The People Shall Share in the Country's Wealth*** and that ***The Land Shall Be Shared Among Those Who Work It***. The National Democratic Revolution, set out in the ANC's Strategy and Tactics at Morogoro in 1969, gave that vision its strategy: the liberation of black people in general and Africans in particular, driven by the working class, the rural poor and the black middle strata, toward a united, non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous society in which a child's race no longer predicts the life that child will lead.



1994 ended only the first phase of that revolution, the capture of political power. Land, wealth and opportunity remain racially skewed, and every instrument of redress now faces opposition from the old-order quarter and its liberal partners. A divided majority cannot defend them. The NDR has also been undermined from within: the ANC itself warned of the *"sins of incumbency"*, the careerism, patronage and private accumulation through which some custodians of the Charter became its betrayers.

A moment for sacrifice

The ANC must be honest with itself. Corruption, factionalism, state capture and failed services have badly damaged its brand, and its own secretary-general has conceded since the election that former supporters are disillusioned. But the answer is not to abandon the movement. The ANC remains the oldest liberation movement on the continent, with branches in every ward and, even at its lowest ebb, the largest single share of the vote. The parties that broke away from it gave voice to real frustration, but none has matched its reach, and their separation has divided the majority. What must be sacrificed is not the ANC, but what has corrupted it: the factions, the patronage networks, the compromised leaders, and the comfort of a partnership with the DA that has cost the ANC its own voters.

Renewed in this way, the ANC can lead a liberation bloc, not a new party. The ANC, PAC, EFF, MK Party, IFP, UDM, SACP, AZAPO and other left-leaning formations would each keep its own identity but govern together on one common programme rooted in the Freedom Charter. The door stays open to the black-led parties now drawing from the DA's donors, but only if they pass two tests: a binding commitment to the Charter's redress agenda, and full transparency about who funds them. The bloc must be led by the most reputable and competent among us, and bound by seven commitments:

- **The Freedom Charter as the common programme**, against which every policy and coalition agreement is measured.
- **Measurable, audited targets** for land, black ownership of productive assets, youth jobs and basic services.
- **The motive forces at the centre:** labour, civics, students and women's structures, so no elite captures the agenda again.
- **An end to the sins of incumbency**, through an integrity commission, lifestyle audits and a ban on leaders' families doing business with the state.
- **Competence as a revolutionary duty:** a manager who cannot keep the water running harms the NDR as surely as any opponent of redress.
- **Non-racialism as the Charter intended**, centring African liberation while open to all who share the transformation agenda.
- **Clean money:** every donation and loan published. A movement that asks the poor for their votes cannot be owned by the rich.



Follow the money

The scale of political money has grown since 2024. In the three months to June 2026, the last full quarter before the local elections, parties declared R116.8 million in donations to the IEC. The DA alone received R104 million, or 89%, including R55 million from two Fynbos investment companies, and the same donor overlap continued, with Martin Moshal again giving to both the DA and ActionSA. RISE Mzansi declared R30 million from *"We are the People"*, a loan converted into a gift, from an entity My Vote Counts found has no website, no listed directors and no company registration. The rules have moved in the donors' favour: in 2025 the annual donation cap was doubled to R30 million and the disclosure threshold to R200,000, and only 31.8% of parties' private funding in 2023/24 was visible to the public. Loans need not be disclosed at all. The disease is not confined to the right: the IEC has repeatedly flagged the ANC for late and incomplete declarations. A progressive bloc that exempts its own side from this scrutiny will deserve no one's trust.

The research is clear. In a landmark 2014 study of 1,779 US policy decisions, political scientists Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page found that economic elites and business groups had substantial independent influence on policy while average citizens had little or none. Larry Bartels found that US senators responded to affluent constituents but barely to the poor. The OECD warns that weakly regulated party finance invites "policy capture", and the French economist Julia Cagé shows that private donations come overwhelmingly from the very wealthy, who in effect buy a louder political voice. In the most unequal society on earth, a party that can raise R104 million in a quarter from a handful of donors is not competing on a level field. It is operating in a market, and what is traded is influence over who governs.

Isolate the money, not the voters

The first step is coalitions. The liberation and left parties, which on their own command a clear majority, should agree, in the coalition talks now under way and in every election that follows, not to govern with the DA, the VF+ or any party that fails the two tests. Parties that function as proxies for organised business will fail one or both by their own choice. This does not silence the quarter who vote for them; they keep their councillors, their seats and their right to oppose. A majority elected to transform is entitled to choose partners who share its mandate, and it will need the discipline not to break ranks for a mayoral chain.

Political donations are an investment, and today the return comes through coalition leverage. Close that door and the investment stops paying. South Africa has already run the experiment: the Multi-Party Democracy Fund, which shares voluntary private donations among all parties by formula, raised only about R7 million in 2023/24 and stood at zero by early 2026, even as direct donations surged. When donors cannot choose the recipient, most stop giving. Sooner or later capital will conclude that its money cannot buy the status quo, withdraw its selective support, and leave politics to the democratic will of all classes. Business will still hold what the political

scientist Charles Lindblom called its "privileged position" through investment, but a progressive government could then bargain with it in the open, at Nedlac and in Parliament, rather than behind the doors of party fundraising.

Overhaul the GNU now

The second step is national, and it must be taken now. The Government of National Unity formed in June 2024 brought the DA and the VF+ into Cabinet and gave the old-order quarter a powerful brake on transformation. The DA went to court over the 2025 budget, has challenged the Expropriation Act and opposed the ANC's bid to reinstate excluded candidates. Business confidence improved, but fixed investment fell to 13.9% of GDP in 2025, and the ANC's own voters punished it at the polls.

On 12 November the ANC's National Executive Committee resolved that the DA should be a municipal coalition partner of "last resort", and insiders report it will call for the DA's removal from the GNU. That is the right instinct, but "last resort" is not enough and a review next year is too slow. The ANC should reconstitute the national government now, around the liberation bloc and a common minimum programme drawn from the Charter, and without the old-order parties whose isolation this article has argued for from the outset.

The numbers make the case. Of the 400 National Assembly seats elected in 2024, the old-order DA and VF+ hold 93, or 23%: the same quarter they have held at the ballot box since 1994. The liberation and left parties hold 279, or 70%, and the 70 to 80% family as a whole holds 289. A national government needs 201. There is no national majority that requires the DA or the VF+.

Replacing the DA with another party funded by the same donors, such as ActionSA, would change the face of the government but not its substance unless that party passes the same two tests. Critics will warn of the markets' reaction; but a stable bloc with a clear programme is a sounder basis for investment than a coalition at war with itself.

Democracy, not a donor market

A quarter of this country has never voted for transformation; three-quarters has never voted against it. Money has learned to do what votes could not: divide the majority, buy leverage in hung councils and keep redress off the table while unemployment stays above 30% and inequality among the deepest in the world. The progressive parties must therefore do three things: stand together in one liberation bloc led by a renewed ANC; close the door of coalition government to the DA, the VF+ and every party that fails the tests of redress and transparency, in 2026 and in every election after; and overhaul the national GNU now. When capital learns that its rands can no longer buy the status quo, it will stop spending them on politics. What remains will be what Kliptown promised: ***The People Shall Govern***. Not the donors. The people, of every class. The Charter's promise is not yet kept. It is still ours to keep.

Raymond S. Mahlathi *is an independent political economist. The views expressed are his own.*



Let Her Lead

The people of Collins Chabane deserve answers to more important questions

By **MIKE RAMAGOMA**

THERE are moments when a society must pause and decide what it will tolerate in its public discourse.

The degrading attacks directed at Hlulani Matshebele, the newly elected Mayor of Collins Chabane Local Municipality, because of perceptions about her gender or sexual orientation constitute such a moment. At a time when communities confront deep political, social and economic challenges, it is disturbing that her inauguration should have been followed by commentary questioning whether *"she is a woman or a man."*

Let us be unequivocal: this is not legitimate political criticism. It is bullying, it is backward, and it has no place in the democratic South Africa that generations struggled to build.

Every mayor must be scrutinised. Every public representative must account. Governments must answer for failure; corruption must be exposed; incompetence must be confronted without fear or favour. But none of these democratic obligations requires the humiliation of another human being because of how we imagine that person should look, dress, speak, love or identify.

That is not accountability. It is prejudice masquerading as public debate.



Mayor Hlulani Matshebele

Return politics to the questions that matter

Our history should have taught us that once human dignity becomes conditional, prejudice will always find another victim. Democracy therefore demands more than the holding of elections. It asks us to build a social ethic in which differences of race, gender, generation, culture, sexuality and background cannot be weaponised to deny another person her humanity.

Of course, this principle does not grant public representatives immunity from criticism. On the contrary, it demands criticism that is more political, more substantive and more exacting. Can the mayor help secure reliable water for communities? Can the municipality improve roads and electricity, strengthen financial governance, restore administrative discipline and use infrastructure to support local economic activity? Will young people see opportunities created closer to home? Will the municipality listen to its residents and account honestly for its performance?

Those are political questions, but speculation about her sexuality is not.

The Mayor has chosen the correct terrain by refusing to be drawn into this online bullying, electing instead to identify roads, water and electricity provision as her key priorities. That response deserves respect, not because she should be spared scrutiny, but because she is effectively saying: judge me by my work. The public should accept that invitation and hold her to it.

Generational renewal must also renew the quality of leadership

Hlulani Matshebele's election also places an important question of generational renewal firmly within the conversation about the future of South African politics. At 36, she represents a generation that is increasingly being called

upon to assume greater responsibility in public life. However, the significance of her elevation should not be reduced simply to the fact that she is young, nor should youth be treated as something for which she must compensate by proving herself more than anyone else.

Too often, younger leaders are approached with an almost automatic presumption that experience belongs elsewhere, and that youth must first overcome a deficit of credibility before they can be entrusted with serious responsibility. That is neither a fair nor particularly useful way of understanding renewal. The better question is whether a prospective leader, young or older, possesses the capacity, preparation, integrity and political grounding required for the responsibility they are being asked to assume.

In Hlulani's case, her emergence should be understood in that context. She emerged through a selection process in which candidates for municipal leadership were considered on their suitability based on merit.

She is also not a leader introduced to Collins Chabane from somewhere else: she comes from Roodhuis village outside Malamulele and brings the political advantage of being rooted in the community whose aspirations and difficulties she is now expected to help address.

That combination matters. Generational renewal is most convincing when opportunity is opened to younger leaders not as an act of political charity, but because they have demonstrated that they are capable of carrying responsibility. It becomes even more meaningful when



such leadership emerges from among the people themselves, understands the lived experience of communities and can connect the authority of public office with the everyday realities of those it serves.

A meaningful generational transition must involve more than just replacing older faces with younger ones. It must produce a better political culture: disciplined administration, intolerance of corruption, respect for institutions, closeness to communities and the courage to take responsibility when things go wrong. It should strengthen ethical leadership, competence, humility and a public-service ethos anchored in the understanding that political office is ultimately a responsibility entrusted by the people.

That is precisely why the debate around the new Mayor should be elevated rather than diminished. A young woman, rooted in her community, has been entrusted with significant public responsibility. The legitimate political question is what she will do with that responsibility and whether the promise represented by generational renewal will translate into better government and improved lives.

To reduce such a moment to prejudiced speculation about her identity is therefore not merely an insult to her dignity. It impoverishes our politics. It substitutes prejudice for political argument and distraction for the serious examination of leadership. If we are genuine about renewal, then our responsibility is to give emerging leaders the space to lead, subject them to the same rigorous standards of accountability expected of every public representative, and judge them ultimately by their integrity, their leadership and the work they do for the people.

A municipality born of painful contestation and the later betrayal of leadership

There is a further reason why the politics of Collins Chabane must remain firmly anchored in governance. The municipality carries a difficult and painful history. Its establishment followed intense protests and bitter contestation over municipal boundaries, representation and service delivery.

Those events became entangled with linguistic and ethnic anxieties, leaving wounds that responsible leaders should seek to heal rather than reopen.

We need not rehearse the merits of every claim made during that period to recognise its enduring lesson.

When communities believe that they are unseen, unheard or unfairly served, institutional questions can quickly acquire an ethnic character. Political leadership must therefore resist every temptation to mobilise difference for short-term advantage. It must govern fairly, consult meaningfully and ensure that no community

experiences the municipality as the possession of another group.

The point is not to return Collins Chabane to the polarisation of its birth. It is to remember that the municipality was born from demands for recognition, representation and better services. Its democratic promise can only be fulfilled by building a common municipal identity founded on equal citizenship, social cohesion and visibly fair development.

That past is compounded by the municipality's approximately R120 million unlawful investment in the now-defunct VBS Mutual Bank. The scandal exposed grave failures of financial oversight and betrayed communities whose public resources should have improved their lives.

After such experiences, accountability cannot be reduced to whether a mayor conforms to somebody's preferred conception of womanhood. It must ask whether public money is safe, procurement is clean, officials are accountable and resources reach the communities for whom they are intended. The municipality's commitments to transparency, responsiveness, professionalism and integrity must now become the practical yardstick of the new administration.

If the Mayor fails those standards, she must be criticised without hesitation. If her administration wastes or steals public money, it must be exposed. If it neglects communities, those communities must organise and demand better. Equally, if the administration succeeds, we should possess the political maturity to acknowledge, support and defend that success. That is democracy: neither uncritical praise nor prejudiced hostility, but principled judgment based on conduct and results.

Her dignity is not on the ballot

There is something profoundly disturbing about reducing a woman who has assumed major public responsibility to an argument about whether strangers consider her feminine enough. Women in politics already endure scrutiny of their appearance, relationships and private lives in ways that are rarely treated as relevant to the leadership of men. A democratic society should refuse to reproduce that culture.

The principle must transcend political affiliation. Today the target may be an ANC mayor. Tomorrow it may be a woman from another party, a community activist, a journalist, a professional or a student. It It should be okay to disagree with Matshebele politically, to interrogate her record, or to challenge her decisions and vote against her if she fails the people, but her personal dignity is not on the political ballot. We don't get to vote to deny her that.

Political organisations cannot proclaim non-sexism from conference platforms while tolerating misogyny and bigotry on mobile phones. Nor can they invoke the sacrifices of women while remaining silent when a woman leader is publicly dehumanised. Political education matters precisely because freedom was never intended merely to change who stands above whom. Its larger promise was a society in which dignity belongs to all.

Let her lead, and let the work speak

The strongest answer to prejudice will not ultimately be found in a Facebook argument. It will be found in a functioning municipality: when an elderly resident opens a tap and water comes out; when a neglected road is repaired; when electricity is dependable; when a young person can see a future without having to leave their home village; and when municipal funds are treated as sacred public resources



Hlulani Matshebele with fellow comrades of the ANC Youth League

rather than the property of political or administrative elites.

That is the terrain on which Matshebele must now lead. Her steadfastness in the face of abuse is commendable, but the expectations of the people are enormous. Leadership can be lonely, and public office inevitably brings scrutiny, some justified and some not. She should hold her head high, remain grounded and resist distraction. In the end, residents will judge her not by the cruelty of her detractors nor by the applause of those defending her today, but by the material difference her administration makes in their lives.

To those directing abuse at the Mayor: stop. To political organisations: educate your members and supporters. To citizens: demand accountability, not conformity. To public representatives: defend human dignity even when the person under attack belongs to another faction, tendency or party.

South Africa has travelled too painful a road from institutionalised prejudice to permit bigotry to masquerade as political debate. Let us return politics to where it belongs: the people, their dignity, their livelihoods, clean government, development and service. Let her be scrutinised. Let her be held accountable. Let her be expected to deliver, but above all, let her lead. ***Malibongwe!***

Mike Ramagoma *is an activist and former ANC Gauteng and National Parliamentary Caucus Spokesperson. He is also a former senior public servant and ministerial special adviser. He is currently a businessman and writes in his personal capacity.*



ZILLE, PUBLIC HOUSING AND THE ART OF ARTICULATING NONSENSE

By **RAVIN SINGH**

HELEN Zille has a remarkable ability to spew nonsense very articulately and get away with it.

In a recent interview, she argued that nowhere in the world does the state build a house for every person. Even Scandinavian countries, she suggested, could no longer afford to do so. It was, she said, mathematically impossible. Informal settlements were here to stay.

I have not watched the entire interview, and I do not intend to take her remarks out of context or comment on her broader housing proposals. But I heard this particular argument, and it raises questions worth examining.

There is an important distinction between saying that no government can provide a house for every person and suggesting that public housing is therefore an impossible undertaking. The first is a question about the limits of universal provision. The second risks becoming an argument for reducing the state's responsibility for housing.

UN-Habitat's World Cities Report 2026 examines public and state-supported housing in several countries, South Africa among them, alongside Singapore, Brazil and Austria. A glance at what governments are actually doing tells its own story.

Start with Africa.

Egypt reports around two million state housing units completed or under implementation in recent years, including substantial investment in social housing.

Algeria distributed more than 179,000 housing units and housing assistance allocations in July this year and has made provision for 850,000 units under its AADL 3 rent-to-buy programme.

Ethiopia has produced more than 340,000 units through Addis Ababa's condominium programme since 2004.

Kenya reported more than 280,000 affordable housing units under construction in August 2026.

Nigeria reports more than 10,000 housing units under construction across 14 federal government project sites.

Mozambique, where I am at the moment, provides another example. Its government Housing Development Fund reported constructing 1,502 houses between 2019 and early 2025. The government is also developing housing through public-private partnerships and providing serviced residential land.

Beyond Africa, Singapore's Housing & Development Board completed approximately 19,600 public flats in 2025 and had 127 projects under construction in January 2026.

Vietnam completed 102,633 social housing units in 2025 as part of its programme to develop at least one million affordable homes.

Brazil continues delivering homes through Lula's revived Minha Casa, Minha Vida programme, which had contracted around two million homes by January 2026.

Ireland delivered 9,089 newly built social homes in 2025, its highest annual figure since the foundation of the state.

Austria continues building municipal and non-profit housing. Vienna alone has more than 1,000 new municipal flats under construction.

And South Africa.

Since 1994, our government has delivered millions of subsidised houses and serviced sites. More than 3.2 million subsidised houses were delivered by 2019, alongside over a million serviced sites. In 2025/26, government delivered 23,027 housing units, and its target for 2026/27 is 39,058.

None of these examples proves that a government can build a house for every person. That is not the point. They demonstrate that governments continue to invest in housing, and that public provision remains an important instrument for addressing housing needs.

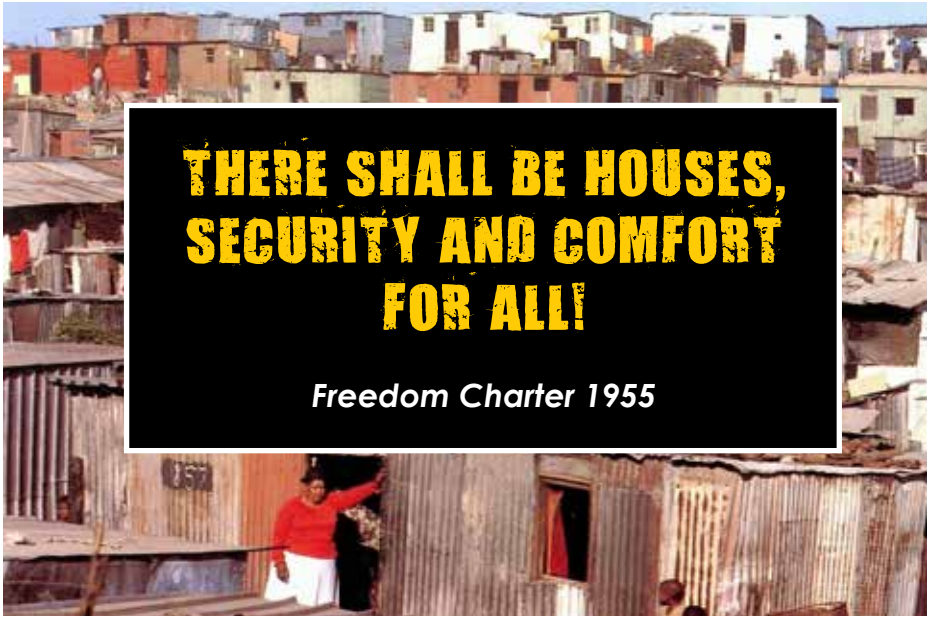
Even the Scandinavian experience is more complicated than a simple claim that governments can no longer afford housing provision. Denmark announced measures in 2026 to support another 20,000 to 25,000 non-profit homes over the next decade. Norway announced additional state housing finance in October. Sweden has experienced a serious construction slowdown, but proposals for renewed state investment support remain part of its political debate.

None of this excuses our own record.

Last year's 23,027 units fell well short of the target of 37,779. The estimated housing backlog is around 2.6 million. Millions of South Africans continue to live in conditions no one should accept. We must be critical of the pace, quality and location of what gets built.

There is room for genuine disagreement about how housing should be delivered.

The state can build houses outright. It can service sites and support families to build incrementally. It can upgrade informal settlements where they stand, fund social rental housing, offer



rent-to-own schemes, subsidise first-time buyers or partner with private developers. Most of the countries above use several of these approaches simultaneously.

Which combination works best for South Africa is a legitimate debate.

But what exactly is mathematically impossible?

Is it the proposition that the state must build a completed house for every person, regardless of income or circumstances? Or is it the broader ambition of progressively ensuring that everyone has access to adequate housing?

These are fundamentally different questions.

Mathematically impossible according to whose calculations? Based on what assumptions about public expenditure, economic growth, taxation, land, construction costs and the role of the state?

Or is it mathematically impossible only within a particular ideological paradigm, one that sees the state primarily as an enabler of private markets rather than a direct provider of public goods?

There are real financial and institutional constraints. Nobody should pretend otherwise. But the fact that something is expensive, difficult or beyond the capacity of a particular government at a particular time does not make the broader objective of adequate housing mathematically impossible.

Housing delivery depends on political will, how public resources are allocated, the capacity of the state and what governments choose to prioritise. Those choices shape what becomes possible. It also depends on how we understand housing.



Treated purely as expenditure, its value is missed. A house gives a family security, dignity and stability. It can become an asset passed on to the next generation. It creates opportunities for household wealth and economic participation. Building it creates jobs, stimulates demand for materials and keeps local economies moving.

Public rental housing also creates an asset, one that remains available to serve successive generations.

We know something about what happens when the state retreats from public housing.

Britain sold approximately 2.8 million council and other social homes through Right to Buy. The proportion of households in social housing declined substantially, and research suggests that a significant proportion of homes sold under the scheme subsequently entered the private rental market. Government continues to spend substantial amounts supporting low-income tenants, including those renting from private landlords.

Vienna offers another experience. Its large municipal and non-profit housing sector has helped moderate rents, including in the private rental market. Research by the Austrian Institute of Economic Research supports this relationship.

These are questions of political economy, not simply accounting.

But there is something else about Zille's argument that troubles me even more than the figures.

It is the suggestion that informal settlements are here to stay.

This is how the unacceptable gradually becomes acceptable. We begin by acknowledging that informal settlements are a reality. Then we are told that nothing meaningful can be done about them, or that doing so is simply unaffordable. Before long, what should be an unacceptable condition becomes part of our normal political discourse. We accommodate it, plan around it and eventually begin treating it as permanent.

History is full of things that were once dismissed as impossible.

Majority rule in South Africa was resisted for decades by those who claimed it would bring chaos and economic collapse. Universal public education was opposed as too expensive and beyond the responsibility of the state. The eight-hour working day was resisted as economically impractical and a threat to production.

Smallpox killed and disfigured millions for thousands of years. Yet through sustained international cooperation, public investment and scientific effort, it was eradicated.

None of these changes happened simply because people wished them into existence. They required organisation, resources, political struggle and a refusal to accept the existing order as permanent.

And that is precisely the point.

Informal settlements exist. We know that. But their existence must never become an argument for their permanence. Once we begin treating the unacceptable as inevitable, we have already surrendered an important part of the struggle to change it.

This brings us to our Constitution.

Section 26 gives everyone the right to have access to adequate housing and requires the state to take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation of that right.

Section 27 establishes the right of access to sufficient water, subject to the same principle of progressive realisation.

The Constitutional Court, in Grootboom, recognised that housing rights cannot be realised all at once. But it also held that government programmes must be reasonable and must make provision for people in desperate need.

The Constitution does not promise everyone a free house tomorrow. It does, however, place an obligation on the state to work progressively towards the realisation of housing rights.

That obligation cannot simply be dismissed through an assertion of mathematical impossibility.

And if we accept that argument in relation to housing, where does it end? Water? Electricity? Health care? Education?

All involve enormous public expenditure. All require difficult decisions about resources, capacity and priorities. Their constitutional status requires governments to take their obligations seriously.

These rights were included in our Constitution because millions of South Africans had been systematically denied them.

There is a legitimate debate about the costs of housing, financing models, the performance of government programmes and the role of the private sector.

There is also a legitimate debate about how much government should build directly and how much it should enable others to build.

But those debates must begin with the facts and with a clear understanding of what we are trying to achieve.

The question is not whether the state can build a house for every person. It is whether we are prepared to use the full range of public resources and policy instruments to ensure that everyone can progressively gain access to adequate housing.

And whether we are prepared to challenge the idea that millions of people must simply accept informal settlements as their permanent place in society.

Perhaps what is mathematically impossible depends partly on the ideological assumptions we bring to the calculation.

Sweeping claims should not be accepted as fact merely because they are delivered with confidence and considerable eloquence.



A PERSONAL POLITICAL REFLECTION: THE DIALECTICS OF POLITICAL POWER

"The paradox of electoral decline, the fragmentation of progressive forces and the unfinished National Democratic Revolution"



By **GERSHUAN J. BASTER**

IN July 2024, after the African National Congress lost its outright parliamentary majority for the first time since 1994, Dr Zamani Saul warned that the movement was *"teethering on the precipice of an abyss"*. The formation of the Government of National Unity changed how power was exercised nationally. His call for the professionalization of local government provides a starting point for my reflection on how the pressures facing the ANC have played out in the Northern Cape, particularly in the ZF Mgcawu region.

The reported results of the 2026 Local Government Elections show how differently neighbouring municipalities can respond to the same political moment. In !Kheis, the ANC retained the council majority it had regained in the 2024 Ward 6 by-election. In Tsantsabane, Rise Tsantsabane Communities won every ward and secured an outright council majority. These outcomes invite us to examine the influence of Candidate Selection, Voter Participation, Community Mobilisation and the quality of municipal governance. They also raise a broader question about whether the ANC's electoral decline reflects a deeper fragmentation of the forces historically associated with the National Democratic Revolution.

Electoral trends in the Northern Cape and ZF Mgcawu

The ANC's reported 41.55% share in the Northern Cape in 2026 provides the provincial backdrop. In ZF Mgcawu, its share of the district ballot fell from approximately 50.9% in 2021 to 39.4% in 2026, a decline of 11.5 percentage points. The party fell short of outright council majorities in Dawid Kruiper, Kai !Garib and Kgatelopele, while !Kheis (ANC) and Tsantsabane (RTC) returned outright majorities for different formations.

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My earlier comparison of the 2021 local elections and the 2024 national and provincial elections had already revealed diverging municipal trends. The regional comparison showed a decline from 48.28% in 2021 to an average of 47.12% in 2024. ANC support fell from 53.24% to 47.00% in Dawid Kruiper and from 48.83% to 46.24% in Tsantsabane. It increased from 43.70% to 48.62% in !Kheis, from 42.89% to 48.29% in Kai !Garib and from 41.96% to 43.71% in Kgatelopele. These comparisons involve different election types and should be read as indications of political trends.

The 2026 district ballot is a separate measure.

Turnout deserves particular attention. In !Kheis it fell from approximately 76% in 2016 to 70.87% in 2021 and 66.60% in 2024. In Kai !Garib it declined from 62.21% in 2021 to approximately 56.59% in 2024. A fall in electoral support can reflect voters changing parties, previous supporters staying home, or both. Municipal totals alone cannot tell us which voters abstained or why. Analysis at voting district level could help establish whether declining participation was concentrated in areas of historically strong ANC support and whether dissatisfaction

with candidate selection, political leadership or municipal performance influenced the decision to vote.



The experience of !Kheis from 2013 to 2026

The political developments surrounding the 2013 by-elections in !Kheis offer a historical reference for understanding the rise of community-based formations. Internal disagreements and organisational divisions led some individuals from the broader ANC tradition to mobilise outside its structures. In my recollection, several continued to identify with aspects of the liberation movement's political history and presented themselves as progressive, community-based alternatives. Their emergence widened the local contest and showed how divisions within a movement can find expression at the ballot box.

The consequences extended into municipal administration. In my assessment, competing political interests and a weakening of collective discipline contributed to instability. I recall an employment dispute in which approximately 32 municipal employees returned to work after the 2016 LGE following a lengthy legal battle, after others had already been appointed to positions associated with the dispute. The overlapping personnel obligations placed additional pressure on a constrained municipal budget. This experience shaped my view that political transitions must be managed with respect for labour law, sound financial management and the continuity of essential services.

In 2016, the ANC regained an outright majority in !Kheis. It won all four wards, received 57.30% of the ward vote and secured four of the seven council seats. Former ANC comrades and individuals associated with alternative formations contested some wards, but the ANC recovered sufficient support to govern. The result showed that local political fragmentation can be reversed. It also left open the question of whether the organisation had addressed the disputes and governance weaknesses that had preceded the recovery.

That question became more pressing in 2021, when disputes over candidate nominations, the emergence of independent candidates and issues arising from the ward delimitation process complicated the electoral contest in !Kheis.. The ANC won five of eleven seats, one short of a majority. The Democratic Alliance and independent candidates won two seats each, while the Economic Freedom Fighters and Congress of the People each won one. A DA-led coalition involving the independents, EFF and COPE took office. The experience demonstrated how the allocation of council seats in particular PR Seats and the ability to form governing agreements can determine who governs after an election. Following the resignation of a DA ward councillor, the ANC won the Ward 6 by-election on 9 October 2024. Its sixth seat restored an outright majority after approximately three years of DA-led coalition governance. A single ward changed control of the municipality, illustrating the importance of sustained organisation between general elections.

In 2026, the ANC in !Kheis won all wards and retained six council seats. Its share of valid ward-ballot votes rose from approximately 44.4% in 2021 to 50.3% in 2026, an increase of 5.9 percentage points. I believe residents' experiences of changing governing arrangements have made them more attentive to the performance of municipal leadership and the consequences of electoral choices. Their support remains theirs to reconsider. The majority gives the ANC a responsibility to govern well and rebuild confidence through its conduct.

Tsantsabane and the responsibilities of political transition

Rise Tsantsabane Communities won all seven wards and seven of the thirteen council seats in 2026. It received approximately 43.8% of the combined municipal ward and proportional representation vote. The ANC received approximately 29.1% and secured three proportional representation seats. The result illustrates how ward victories can give a community-based formation a council majority with less than half the combined municipal vote. The comparison with !Kheis concerns the capacity of locally organised political forces to reshape municipal power. Tsantsabane's mining economy, employment challenges and community expectations give its experience a distinct character. Understanding its outcome requires attention to those conditions, the work of community mobilisation and the sources of dissatisfaction with established political organisations.

The lessons I draw from !Kheis applies to every party entrusted with municipal authority. Changes in political leadership must be managed through established employment procedures, responsible budgeting and continuity in the delivery of basic services. Councillors may hold office for a limited period, while employment disputes, financial commitments and disruptions to administration can affect a municipality for years. The credibility of any incoming administration will depend in part on how it manages those responsibilities.

Coalition politics and progressive fragmentation

The history of the liberation struggle was shaped by the convergence of progressive forces around a common programme. Today, formations connected to that history increasingly compete for electoral power. At the same time, the ANC participates nationally in a Government of National Unity alongside the DA, the Patriotic Alliance and other parties with different ideological orientations. In municipalities, the DA and other formations may prefer to work with independents or parties they regard as politically closer to them. These choices invite scrutiny of the commitments that underpin cooperation at different levels of government.

Coalitions are legitimate responses to the electoral choices of voters. The question is whether governing agreements can sustain a coherent programme of socioeconomic transformation when the immediate pressure is to assemble a majority. The ANC must examine its own conduct, internal divisions and relationships with other formations if it seeks their cooperation. Meaningful reconciliation requires mutual accountability and a willingness to engage with grievances that have accumulated over time.

The experience of !Kheis also helps distinguish control of a council from the longer work of organisational renewal. A majority can be regained through one by-election. Rebuilding confidence requires sustained engagement with communities, credible candidate selection and accountable government. The same distinction matters at regional and national level, where historical legitimacy must be renewed through how the ANC responds to present conditions. As the ANC selects its candidates for municipal office after the 2026 elections, we must safeguard unity through a fair and transparent process. Candidates should be assessed on their competence, integrity and ability to serve communities, with the numerical balance between internal groupings carrying less weight than those qualities.

A Congress of Progressive Forces

I believe the current moment warrants consideration of a Congress of Progressive Forces, inspired by the Congress of the



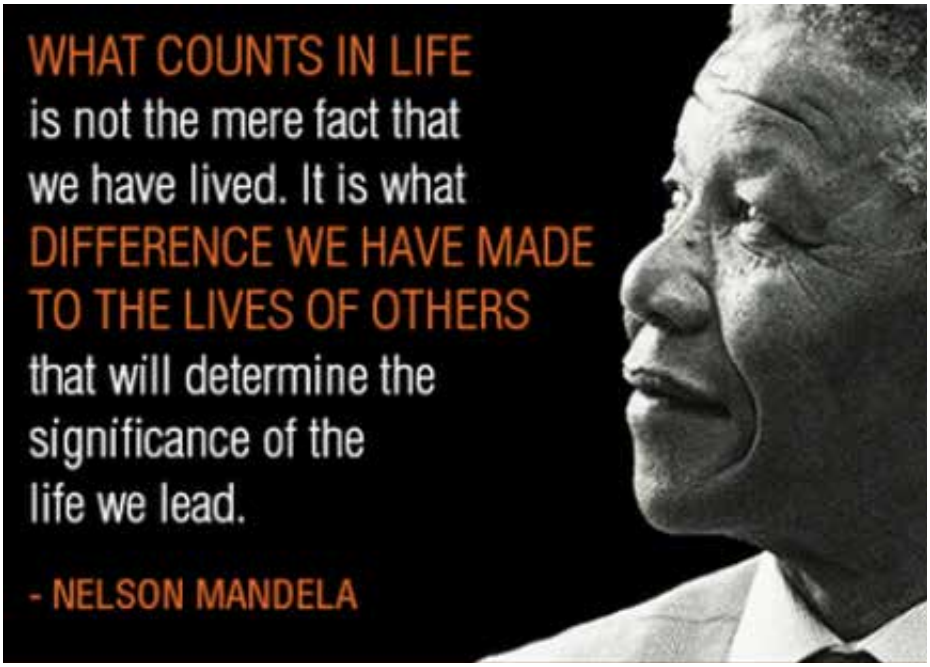
People, which adopted the Freedom Charter in Kliptown in 1955. Such a gathering could provide a forum for serious dialogue about the future of the National Democratic Revolution, the causes of progressive fragmentation and the unfinished programme of socioeconomic transformation. Its purpose would be to identify where principled cooperation is possible and what commitments could give that cooperation substance.

A dialogue of this kind would have to confront genuine ideological differences, historical grievances and failures of governance, while respecting the democratic independence of participating organisations. From the perspective of dialectical materialism, contradictions are part of historical development. The practical task is to distinguish fundamental differences from disagreements that can be addressed through principled engagement. Any durable cooperation must be grounded in the material conditions of contemporary South Africa and in the experiences of the working class, the rural poor, unemployed young people and historically marginalised communities.

A renewed discussion of the Freedom Charter would bring questions of economic emancipation, equality, land reform and social justice back to the centre of progressive politics. It would also invite the ANC and other formations to consider which divisions arise from differences over policy and which have deepened through organisational conflict or competition for office. How we answer those questions will shape the possibilities for common action.

Electoral renewal and the unfinished Freedom Charter

The experience of !Kheis since 2013 and the recent electoral outcome of neighbouring municipalities shows how quickly governing power can change. It also shows why each electoral outcome must be understood in its local context. In 2026, !Kheis retained an ANC majority, Tsantsabane entrusted power to a community-based formation and other municipalities in ZF Mgcawu returned councils without outright ANC majorities. The region's experience calls for close attention to how people organise, why they participate or abstain, and what they experience when they depend on municipal services. For the ANC, renewal means earning political and moral credibility through accountable leadership and tangible improvements in people's lives. For the broader progressive movement, it means taking seriously the consequences of fragmentation and examining where shared commitments can support common work. The future of the National Democratic Revolution depends on sustained democratic participation and the capacity to transform socioeconomic structures inherited from colonialism and apartheid.



Seventy-one years after the adoption of the Freedom Charter, its commitments remain relevant to the daily lives of the communities in whose name we exercise public power. The ultimate measure of the NDR is the extent to which the material conditions of the working class, the rural poor and historically marginalised communities improve.

The Freedom Charter must remain a living programme for a united, non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and socially just South Africa.

Gershuan Baster *writes in his personal capacity, drawing on his ANC Branch Membership and Activism, his service as Former Deputy Regional Secretary in the 7th and 8th ANC ZF Mgcawu Regional Executive Committees and political experience in the Northern Cape.*

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

21–27 November 2026

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

21 November 1947
Poet Jared Angira born



The poet Jared Angira was born in Siaya, Kenya, on this day. Angira published his first collection of poems, Juices in 1970, edited literary magazine Busara and was a founder of the Kenya Writer's Association. He has been called *"the country's first truly significant poet"*. Emerging in the post-independence literary wave of the 1970s, his poetry captures the political tensions, economic struggles, and social realities of a nation finding its identity. Some of his notable works include, ***Juices***, written in 1970 and ***Silent Voices***, written in 1972.

21 November 1984
Operation Moses starts

The operation to airlift 8,000 Ethiopian Jews from refugee camps in Sudan where they fled famine in their country to Israel starts. Today there are some 160,000 Israelis of Ethiopian origin.

21 November 1985
Mamelodi Massacre

Thirteen residents were gunned down in Mamelodi by South African police during a peaceful protest. This followed the declaration of a State of emergency on 25 July 1985 by President PW Botha in 36 of South Africa's 260 magisterial districts. Within the first six months of the Emergency, 575 people were killed in political violence. Under the provisions of the Emergency, organisations could be banned and meetings prohibited; the Commissioner of Police could impose restrictions on media coverage of the Emergency; and the names of detained people could not be disclosed.

21 November 1989
Last SADF troops withdrawn from Namibia

The Citizen reported that the remaining 1 500 South African troops in South West Africa (Namibia) had been withdrawn during November. South Africa ruled Namibia as a protectorate taken over from the Germans after World War 2. The SADF fought against those fighting for the liberation of Namibia, led by SWAPO and also used the country as a basis to destabilise its neigbours. The battle of Cuito Cuanavale in 1988, was a turning point in the history of southern Africa, and soon after negotiations started. n 21 March 1990 the country gained independence from South Africa as the Republic of Namibia, with Swapo leader Sam Nujoma elected as president.

21 November 2000
Baphumelele origins

Retired teacher Rosie Mashale found a toddler abandoned on her Kayelitsha doorstep and expands into an orphanage and daycare cetnre, which eventually provides refuge and service to some of the 14,000 homeless street children in Cape Town. She established the Baphumelele Foundation (meaning 'you have progressed') to teach job skills to homeless teens.

21 November 2004
NCOP Chairperson Joyce Kgoali passed on



The Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces (NCOP), Joyce Kgoali, passed away following complications after a minor operation. Kgoali was also a National Executive Committee (NEC) member of the African National Congress Women's League (ANCWL) and a Provincial Executive Committee member of the ANC in Gauteng. She

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was MEC for Public Works and Transport in Gauteng before appointed as substitute to Naledi Pandor as the chairperson of NCOP. Mam Joyce was born in Lesotho on 13 January 1950, and worked in the textile sector where she joined the trade union movement and became a leader in SACTWU. She was also active in the ANC underground structures, in the UDF and the Federation of Transvaal Women (FEDTRAW).

21 November 2013

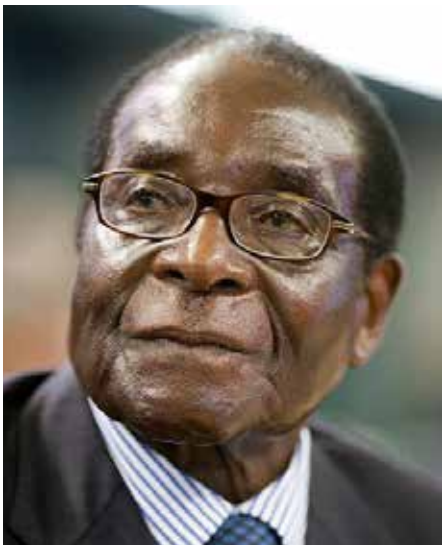
First CubSAT satellite

Students from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology launched South Africa's first CubeSat, type of nano-satellite, into space. It provides valuable space weather details, orbitting Earth up to 15 times a day at an altitude of 600km.

21 November 2017

President Mugabe resigns

After 37 years in power, Zimbabwe President Robert Gabriel Mugabe (93) resigned after internal ructions in his party ZANU-PF following the sacking of former vice-president Emmerson Mnangagwa. His letter of resignation was read out in Parliament, and he was replaced by President Mnangagwa.



22 November 1497

Vasco Da Gama passes the Cape of Good Hope

The Portuguese expedition, to find routes from Europe to India set of on the Atlantic ocean, southwards in July 1497, led by Vasco Da Gama. The three ships set foot on the island of St Helena on 4 November 1497, where he made first contact with the Khoi Khoi. Da Gama passed the Cape of Good Hope on 22 November 1497, landing in Mosselbay after being battered by storms, with the second encounter with the Khoi Khoi, where the exchange ended in a stand-off and Da Gama and his ships left with some haste, after firing canons at the Khoi. The next landing point was Durban, and then Mozambique.

22 November 1909

Educationist Moses Josiah Madiba born



The author, educationist, linguist and first African chancellor of the University of the North, was born at Uitvlucht, Polokwane district. He was the first secretary of the Maune branch of the Transvaal African Teachers' Association in 1930. He played an important role in the development of the Northern Sotho language, and his books ***Thuto ya Polelo*** (1941), ***Tsiri*** (1942), ***Mahlontebe series*** (1952) and ***Nkotsana*** (1955) are still widely read. In 1960 he was appointed first chairperson of the advisory council of the newly established University College of the North, a position he held until 1973 and on 13 May 1978 was installed as the first African chancellor of the University of the North. A lay preacher, he was also served as first president of the Transvaal synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church from 1963. He died on 2 January 1985 in Seshego, Pietersburg district.

22 November 1943

Film maker Safi Faye born

Senegalese film maker Safi Faye is born in Dakar on this day. After directing documentary and short films, she made a movie ***Kaddu Beykat*** (Letter from my Village) in 1975, the first movie by a Sub-Saharan African woman to be commercially distributed as a feature film. Faye has directed many feature films, and today is recognized as one of Sub-Saharan Africa's most prominent directors. Although ***Mossane*** is Faye's only film in which the entire narrative is fictional, it follows the themes in her previous works: the everyday traditions of rural Senegalese communities, oral history, and privileging the female voice as a foundation for storytelling. Faye passed away at the age of 79 in 2023.

22 November 1962

Paarl Insurrection by Poqo

Poqo members from Mbekweni, Paarl, met and resolved to attack security installation in the town. Over 200 men armed with axes, pangas, sticks, sabres and possibly a few revolvers gathered at about 02h00 and split into two groups, one to attack the prison and the other the police station. The latter group approached the police station and began attacking police patrol vans. Three were shot dead in front of the

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police station and others were wounded. Several were arrested. As the rest of the group fled, they met those who had been planning the prison attack and formed a new group which began attacking houses in Loop Street. Two residents, Ms Rencia Vermeulen and Mr Frans Richards, were killed. The final death toll was seven, including five Poqo members: Godfrey Yekiso, Madodana Camagu, John Magigo and Ngenisile Siqwebo. Matthews Mayezana Mali was shot by the South African Police (SAP) on the following day. Mali was shot in the head and chest while marching in front of a group of Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) demonstrators on their way to the Paarl police station to hand over a list of grievances on the day after the uprising. Historian Tom Lodge wrote about the insurrection in the edition of African Studies Review journal (1982).

22 November 1973

Boesman and Lena movie released

The motion film by playwright Athol Fugard and directed by Ross Devenish, is released, with its theme on apartheid forced removals. The play also is performed off Broadway, starring James Earl Jones and Ruby Dee in 1970, running for 205 performances. In 2000, another Boesman and Lena film, starring Danny Glover and Angela Basset was released.



23 November 1971

Bridge of Death

Just 11 days after its opening, the Van Stadens bridge between Gqeberha and Humansdorp, Eastern Cape became known as the Bridge of Death. This is when the first of dozens of suicidal persons leaped to his death. In 2013, a wire mesh barrier and warning signs were erected to hinder jumpers. To date nearly 100 people have jumped to their death from the bridge, the latest reported in September 2021.

23 November 1973

Arab states agreed on Oil Embargo against apartheid South Africa

A summit of Arab countries adopted an oil embargo against apartheid South Africa. Other Arab countries, like Kuwait, already since 1962 refused to sell oil to South Africa

23 November 2005

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf elected as first female president in Africa



After a closely contested elections in Liberia, Ellen Sirleaf Johnson, a former assistant minister of finance (1972-73) and finance minister (1980-1985) was announced as the winner of the Presidential elections. She was sworn in as President in January 2006, and served as President until 2017, when she stepped down at the end of her second term. President Johnson Sirleaf, along with Leymah Gbowee and Tawakkul Karman won the Nobel Peace prize in 2011.

23 November 2019

National Museum of the DRC opened

President Felix Tshisekedi opened the National Museum, dedicated to Congolese artifacts stolen by European colonialist and now scattered around the world.

24 November 1948

Sculptor Vuminkosi Zulu born



Vuminkosi Zulu was born in Mapumulo, KZN on 24 November 1948.He studied art at Rocke's drift art school and completed his course in 1972, staying on as resident artist until 1974. Zulu is famous for his etchings and wood carvings and his famous woodcarving titled the Battle of Isandlwana (1982) won him praise and a sculpture award. Zulu had the ability to capture emotions such

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as loneliness or fear in his etchings. His work can be found in many collections locally and abroad. Zulu died in 1996.

24 November 1986
Barclays Bank announces its disinvestment from South Africa

Barclays Bank, announced that it was selling its remaining 40 per cent holding in its South African associate, Barclays National Bank Limited of South Africa. Sir Timothy Bevan, chairman of Barclays, admitted that while the decision to pull out of the South African market was a commercial one, the pressure exerted against the bank by anti-apartheid protesters had a detrimental effect on the bank's business in other areas. Student campaigns against Barclays Bank, initiated in the 1960s, were carried on year after year, especially at the beginning of every academic year, to persuade students not to open accounts with that bank.

24 November 1995
Pretoria gets first black mayor

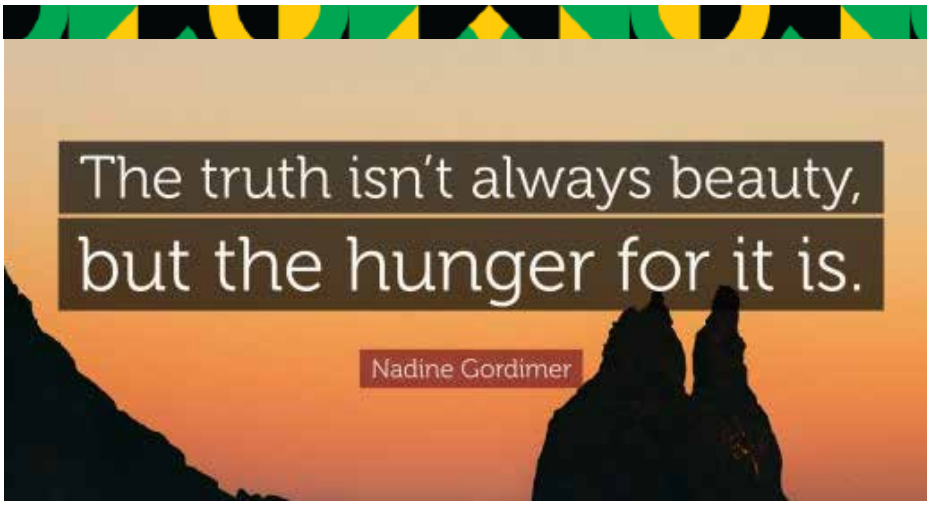
Johannes Lebone Ramokhoase became the first black Mayor of Pretoria. He was born in 1951 in Eesterus before the residents were moved to Mamelodi. He was the headmaster of Mamelodi High School and chairman of the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU). As the first black mayor of Pretoria, he was instrumental in integrating the old city council of Pretoria with the local municipalities of Mamelodi and other townships. A street in the Pretoria CBD has been named in his honour.

25 November 1841
Amistad survivors returned home

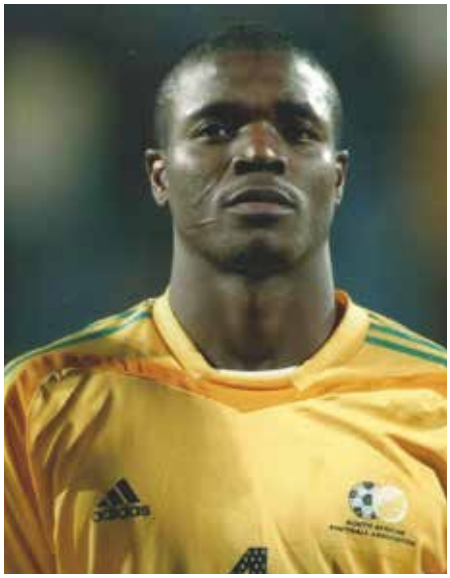
The 35 surviving Africans enslaved on La Amistad, who revolted, took over the slave ship and were arrested on arrival in the USA, set sail on a return voyage to Africa. They were freed by the US Supreme court, and arrived in Sierra Leone in January 1842.

25 November 1867
Banker Talaat Harb born

The Egyptian economist and financial pioneer, Talaat Harb was born in Cairo. A successful entrepreneur, he contributed to the building of an indigenous national economy, when he founded Banque Misr in 1920, with business conducted exclusively in Arabic, entirely owned and staffed by Egyptians. Today, Banque Misr is owned by the state, with 18,000 employees, 10 million clients and around 700 branches.



25 November 1980
Footballer Aaron Mokoena born



Footballer, Tebogo Aaron Mokoena was born on 25 November 1980 in Boipatong Johannesburg. In his early career, he played for local teams such as Jomo Cosmos. He later moved on to teams like Ajax Amsterdam, KRC Gent, Portsmouth and Bidvest Wits. Mokoena is the youngest player ever to represent South Africa. He was only 19 when he played in 1999 at the 2000 Olympic qualifiers. He also led Bafana Bafana in the 2008 Africa Cup of Nations in Ghana. Mokoena's tough tackling skills earned him the nickname *"Mbazo"*, meaning "*The Axe*".

25 November 1981
South African mercenaries involved in Seychelles coup

South African mercenaries, collaborating with Seychelles citizens who wanted to overthrow the Marxist government led by Prime Minister France-Albert René, were involved in a failed coup attempt in the African island state of Seychelles on this day. Twenty-seven (27) of the 54 mercenaries participating in the coup were members of the South Africa Defense Force.

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

25 November 1993
Eritrian Cyclist Mossana Debesai born



Eritrean cyclist, Mossana Debesai was born in Asmara. Before competing in the Women's Road Race at the 2020 Olympics, she won the 2019 African Road Championships, establishing herself as one of Eritrea's and Africa's top cyclists.

25 November 2004
Poet Sheila Cussons passed on



Acclaimed South African poet Sheila Cussons died in Cape Town at the age of 82. Cussons was known for her poetry works in Afrikaans, produced in ten volumes. Cussons was born on 9 August 1922 in Moravia, near Piketberg in the Cape Province. She published her poetry over a period of 33 years with her first volume, Plektrum, appearing in 1970. She won awards such as the Hertzog prize, the WA Hofmeyr prize which she won twice and the Ingrid Jonker, Eugene Marais and CNA prizes.

25 November 2016
Fidel Castro passed on



90-year old former First Secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba and President of the Council of State, Fidel Castro died of natural causes on the evening of 25 November 2016. Castro, a founder of the Cuban revolution, staunch supporter to the anti-colonial movements in Africa, was one of the defining leaders of the 20th century.

25 November 2011
Solar eclipse over Antarctica

The partial solar eclipse, with the moon covering about 80% of the sun is visible only in the most Southern Hemisphere areas, including South Africa. The eclipse was used to create awareness amongst thousands of school children.

25 November 2017
Animation film "Minga and the Broken Spoon" released

Cameroon's first animated film, ***Minga and the Broken Spoon*** was released by Cledley Productions, based on a national folk tale. An orphaned girl accidentally breaks a spoon washing dishes in the river, and her furious stepmother tells her to find the only identical spoon that was hidden by her late mother.

26 November 1919
Corner stone of the Union Buildings laid

The Union Buildings is the seat of the South African government and is situated in the capital city, Pretoria, now known as Tshwane. It was designed by Sir Herbert Baker in 1908 and the building started in 1909. On 26 November, 1910, the cornerstone was laid, with completion intended for 1913. The construction of the Union Buildings took approximately 1,265 artisans and labourers. Almost fourteen million bricks were used for the interior office walls. South African stone was used throughout the building, with most of the mountain stone quarried on the site.



26 November 1953
First woman to win Formula 1 racing born

Desiré Randall Wilson was born on 26 November 1953 in Brakpan. Wilson is a former racing driver who is one of only five women to have competed in Formula One. In 1980 she won the Formula One race at Brands Hatch in the British Aurora F1 series. The win made her the only woman to ever hold the Formula One title. Wilson also competed

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

in CARTS and sports car racing. A book documenting her life as a racing driver titled '***Driven by Desire***' has been published.

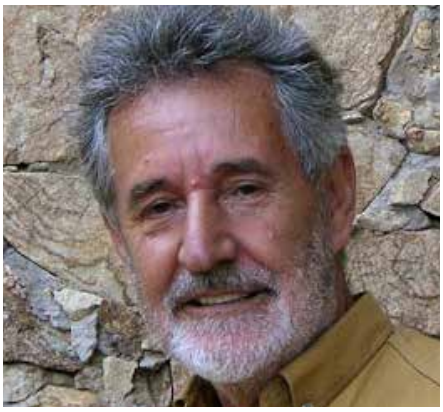
26 November 1957

Simon Nkoli born

South African gay rights and anti-apartheid activist was born in Soweto. He was the founder of the Gay and Lesbian Organisation of the Witwatersrand (GLOW), a leader of the United Democratic Front and was charged with Treason in the famous Delmas trial. Nkoli founded and organised the first Pride March in Johannesburg. The Market Theatre in 2023 features an opera about his live, ***The Vogue Opera***.

26 November 1975

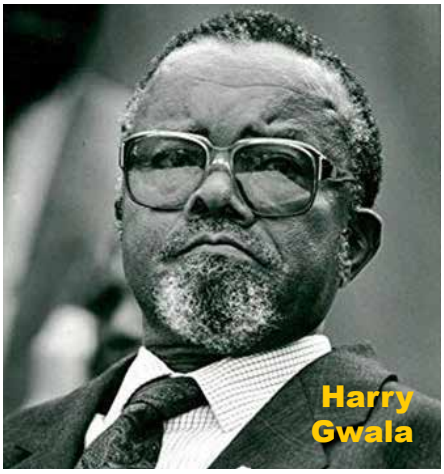
Afrikaans Author Breyten Breytenbach sentenced as a "Terrorist"



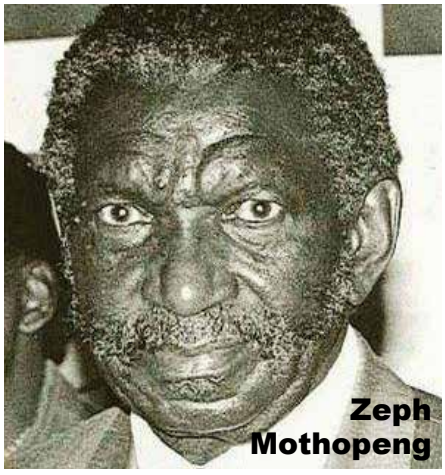
On an illegal trip to South Africa with a false passport, writer Breyten Breytenbach was betrayed, arrested and sentenced to nine years imprisonment for high treason under the Terrorism Act by the Pretoria Supreme Court. He had pleaded guilty for entering South Africa to start an organisation Atlas or Okhela, a resistance group fighting apartheid in exile and was intended to be the White wing of the banned African National Congress (ANC). He served seven years as a political prisoner until his release in December 1982 amid international intervention.

26 November 1988

Struggle Icons Harry Gwala and Zeph Mothopeng released



Two members of the banned liberation movements, Harry Gwala (ANC) and Zephania Mothopeng (PAC) were released from Robben Island. Both Gwala (1920-1995) and Mothopeng (1913-1990) served two terms on Robben Island for their political activities. After the banning of the ANC in 1960, Gwala became active in ANC underground structures until his arrest in 1964. He was charged and convicted for sabotage and recruiting members for uMkhonto weSizwe (MK). In 1972 he was released from prison and restricted to Pietermaritzburg. After the workers strike in August 1976, Gwala was arrested again with scores of ANC members, charged under the Terrorism Act and sentenced to life



imprisonment on Robben Island. In the 1980s, Gwala developed a motor neuron disease which left him disabled. Mothopeng was arrested in 1963 and sentenced in May 1964 to 3 years in prison for furthering the aims of the banned PAC. He was released in 1967 and restricted to QwaQwa for two years. Mothopeng continued with his political activities and was arrested in 1976 under the Terrorism Act and was sentenced to 15 years in prison on 26 June 1979. Even after their release, both men remained politically active within their respective organizations. Mothopeng died on 23 October 1990 and Gwala died of a heart failure on 21 June 1995.

27 November 1929

ANCWL and ANC Stalwart Winkie Direko born on this day



Isabella Winkie Direko, former teacher, winner of the Bloemfonteiner of the Year Award in 1993, Premier of the Free State from 1999-2004 and a member of the National Council of Provinces (NCOP), was born in Botshabelo. Direko served in numerous positions in the educational and development fields, including as President of the National Council of African Women, a member of the Council of Vista University and Chancellor of the Free State

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

University. Direko also played a leading role in the Girl Guides Association of South Africa and was a council member of NICRO and the Child Welfare Organisation. In 2001 she obtained an M Ed degree at the University of the Free State. Mam Direko passed away on 17 February 2012 at the age of 83 years.

27 November 1987
Namibian artist John Ndevasia Muafangejo



John Muafangejo was born at Etunda lo Nghadi, Angola in 1943. He grew up in a traditional homestead herding cattle during the day, playing communal and literary games, with their strong moral and philosophical content. This influenced his artistic work, with its strong autobiographical subject matter. He attended St Mary's Anglican mission school at Odibo in Namibia where his artistic skills were recognized, and trained at Rorke's Drift from 1968 to 1969 before returning to teach and establish an art school at St Mary's in 1971. He held his first of several solo exhibitions in Windhoek and represented South Africa at the Sao Paulo Biennale. He applied to attend the Michaelis School of Art in Cape Town but his application was rejected. In 1974 he took up the position of artist-in-residence at Rorke's Drift, producing his unique colour woodcuts. He held an exhibition at the African Art Centre in Durban and in 1976, participated in the Brooklyn Museum's exhibition ***'Black South Africa: Graphic Art'***. Muafangejo returned to Namibia in 1977, continuing to participate in various global exhibitions. He died in 1987 at Katutura Township, Windhoek. In 1988, the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown hosted a retrospective exhibition of his work. A second retrospective was held at the Museum of Modern Art at Oxford in England between 1990 and 1992. Muafangejo is best known for his linocuts of figures, religious and historical scenes. His work can be seen in public galleries throughout South Africa. *[Source: https://www.lifewithart.com/artists/john-muafangejo.html]*

27 November 1995
Rwanda Genocide Tribunal gets on the way

The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), set up by the UN Security Council, got underway in Arusha, Tanzania, prosecuting those responsible for the 1994 Rwanda Genocide who saw close to a million people massacred, whilst Africa and the world watched. The genocide prompted the African Union in its Constitutive Act to shift from the OAU principle of 'non-interference', to the principle of non-indifference. The ICTR was the first international tribunal to deliver verdicts for persons responsible for genocide, and also the first to recognize rape as a means of perpetuating genocide.

27 November 1996
SA severed diplomatic ties with Taiwan

South Africa announces its decision to severe diplomatic ties with Taiwan, in recognition of the one-China policy.



"Ignorance is the root of many ills. Knowledge must be the fundamental ally of nations that aspire, despite all their tragedies and problems, to become truly emancipated, to build a better world."

FIDEL CASTRO
My Life: A Spoken Autobiography

INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL DAYS

21–27 November 2026

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

21 November
World Television Day

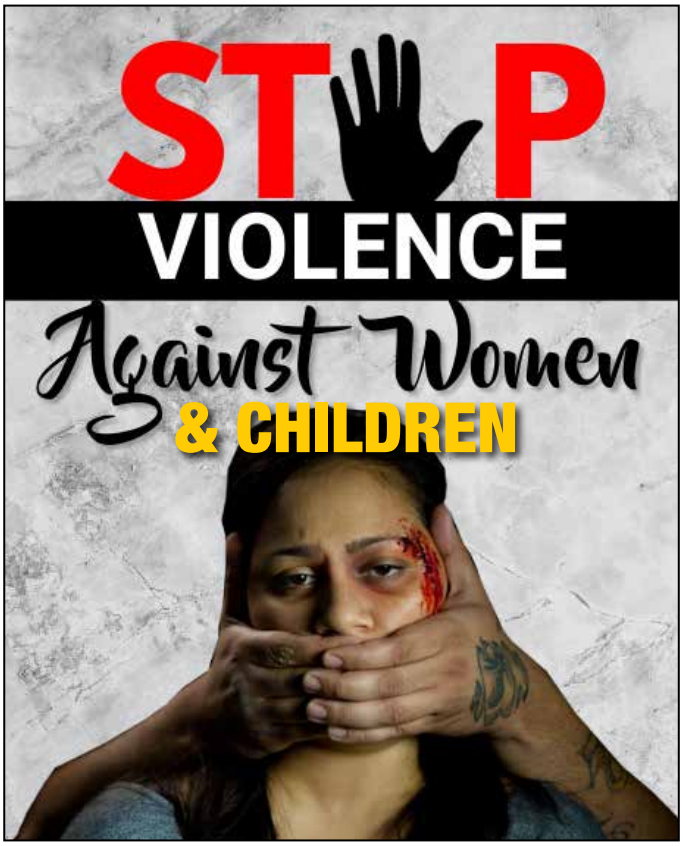
Television continues to be the single largest source of video consumption. Though screen sizes have changed, and people create, post, stream and consume content on different platforms, the number of households with television sets around the world continues to rise.

21 November
World Fisheries Day

More than two-thirds of the world's fisheries have been overfished or are fully harvested and more than one third are in a state of decline because of factors such as the loss of essential fish habitats, pollution, and global warming. The World Fisheries Day highlights the critical importance to human lives, of water and the lives it sustains, both in and out of water. Water forms a continuum, whether contained in rivers, lakes, and ocean. Fish forms an important part of the diets of people around the world, particularly those that live near rivers, coasts and other water bodies.

25 November
International day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

Violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread, persistent and devastating human rights violations in our world. It remains under-reported, due to the impunity, silence, stigma and shame surrounding it. In general terms, it manifests itself in physical, sexual and psychological forms, which include: intimate partner violence (battering, psychological abuse, marital rape, femicide); sexual violence and harassment (rape, forced sexual acts, unwanted sexual advances, child sexual abuse, forced marriage, street harassment, stalking, cyber-harassment); human trafficking (slavery, sexual exploitation); as well as female genital mutilation and child marriage. 25 November also marks the beginning of the **16 Days of Activism for No Violence against Women and Children Campaign**, that runs annually from **25 November to 10 December**. During the 16 Days of Activism, communities around the world join the call to prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls. The campaign has over the years raised awareness of the devastating impact that Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) has on women and children, and the social fabric of our society. It has also been used to highlight the societal and systemic causes of GBVF, and to mobilise action at local, national, and international levels to eliminate all forms of gendered violence. Other key commemorative days during this period include World Aids Day on the 1st December and the International Day for Persons with Disabilities, on 3 December of every year. Given the scourge of Gender-Based violence in the country, which is



THIS WEEK IN HISTORY



declared a national address, government is implementing the Emergency Response Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide, which was announced by President Cyril Ramaphosa in September 2019. The 16 Days Campaign forms the centre point of government's comprehensive 365 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children. During the 16 Days period, Government together with civil society and the private sector will host a series of community and sector dialogues and activities to foster a collaborative effort in dealing with GBVF.

Here are ways that you should get involved in the campaign:

i) Communities – ***Be an activist against GBV in your homes, communities, work and positions:*** Challenge cultures and practices that perpetuate gender inequalities and consequent abuse of women and children at personal and societal level.

ii) Individuals – ***Play your part:***

- Reject and report abusers – Act and don't look away!
- Do not protect abusers, report them!
- Sign the Pledge Against Gender-Based Violence. Do not engage in abusive activities and become an abuser – Stop abuse.
- Challenge and denounce cultural practices that perpetuate gender inequalities.
- Be sensitive and supportive to GBV victims – share helpful information and support causes near you.
- Seek personal help to change harmful behaviors such as alcohol and substance abuse.
- Teach children values of gender equality.
- Protect children from exposure to violence and harmful content on internet and social media, including pornography, sexual solicitation.
- Develop policies that prevent and deal with gender based violence in your sector, workplace and communities.
- Organise targeted community outreach and dialogues on solution towards a gender equal society.
- Together, let us take actions to support the 16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children campaign.

25 November

International Systems Engineer Day

The system that is sending and receiving your email, your company website, social media platforms, the file sharing system you use at work. These are just some examples of systems you may be using that someone somewhere designed, built and tested before empowering you with it to use. We may call them many things, such as Engineers, Systems Engineers, Infrastructure Engineers, Systems Integrators, Architects, Systems Analysts and so forth; they are at the heart of innovation and technology developments.
(https://www.systemsengineerday.com)

26 November

World Olive Tree Day

The olive tree, with its roots in the Mediterranean, is a universal symbol of peace and harmony. Growing across five continents, olives provide jobs, security and natural resources to rural communities around the world. As an agent against global warming, olive trees have a positive carbon balance – they take more CO2 out of the atmosphere than is emitted during the olive oil production process. Olive oil and table olives are a proven source of nutrition, and key ingredients in the many diet. They offer a wide variety of aromas and flavours and enhance a unique cuisine that is gaining interest from renowned chefs around the world. The ability of their multiple medicinal and nutritional properties to prevent certain diseases is now widely recognised. Although the olive producing market in South Africa is still small, it is big business, with just 11 producers owning most of the country's olive groves, mainly in the Karoo region of the Western Cape. Olive growers also tend to process and package their own olive oils and olive packaging.



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