DO POLITICKING AND CAMPAIGNING HAVE TO BE POLARISING?
2014 will be a momentous year for politics in South Africa. The country will hold its fifth round of national elections as it celebrates 20 years of democracy. Although still a young democracy, South Africa has already established its capacity to hold free, fair and credible elections. This is a feat that should not be taken lightly, especially when compared with our African neighbours.

Closest to home, 89-year-old President Robert Mugabe’s 33-year rule over Zimbabwe was reinstated for another five years, despite the Movement for Democratic Change’s objections. At the opposite end of Africa, Egypt’s less than two-year-old democratically elected government has been toppled after extended public protests.

South Africa may at first glance appear to be a maturing democracy, and in a lot of ways, it is. However, we must be acutely aware that no democracy can afford to be complacent. It is therefore every South African’s duty to guard our democracy jealously by interrogating political parties’ mandates, holding government accountable to the country’s needs and ensuring the capacity of chapter nine institutions to support the implementation of constitutional imperatives.

In these crucial months leading up to elections, political parties will campaign with increasing intensity including, if history is anything to go by, escalating verbal attacks on one another. While a heated political discourse trumps a quiet one anywhere, it is worth bearing in mind that noise does not necessarily equate to constructive or healthy debate. Just as it is the responsibility of the voting public to make its mark, so it is our responsibility to ensure that the political leaders who call us to the polls do so with honesty and integrity, driven by in-depth understanding of our collective needs and interests.

This edition sets out to highlight the importance of effectively engaging with our country’s political discourse. Members of the four parties who have been prominent in recent political debate and the media — the African National Congress, Agang South Africa, the Democratic Alliance and the Economic Freedom Fighters — were presented with the same question: Do politicking and campaigning have to be polarising?

As an introduction to the parties’ responses to this question, Christi van der Westhuizen, Research Associate at the Institute for Reconciliation and Social Justice at the University of the Free State, provides an interpretive framework and historical context for this discussion.

Beyond the elections, the IJR will continue to strive to ensure that key issues — including those of social cohesion, youth development and constructing an inclusive economy — remain on the national agenda, and that South Africans are mobilised to continue to work together to maintain our democracy and help build an ever more reconciled country.

As always, your feedback is encouraged. Find us on Facebook or tweet us @IJR_ or @ReconciliationBarometer.

Zyaan Davids
Guest Editor/Communications Officer
YOUTH IN VRYHEID ‘FOLLOW THE BEAT’

The IJR’s ‘Follow the Beat’ project worked with youth in Vryheid, KwaZulu-Natal, for a year, teaching them traditional dance, how to make and play various indigenous musical instruments, as well as about the narratives and historical significance of each of these instruments. This training culminated in a concert, held at the end of June, which provided participants a platform to showcase their newly gained musical skills to their community, friends and families. The ‘Follow the Beat’ project will continue its work of empowering youth through music and dance in other key regions across South Africa.

THE POLITICISATION OF INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL TRIBUNALS

The IJR’s Justice and Reconciliation in Africa Programme convened an Expert Roundtable in mid-August, entitled ‘The Politicisation of International Criminal Tribunals’. The event, which brought together international jurists, academics and practitioners in the field of international law and transitional justice, explored the issue of the politicisation of international criminal tribunals, with a focus on Yugoslavia and Rwanda, as well as the International Criminal Court (ICC). The need was highlighted for continued problematising of the reality that, in some respects, law is far too closely aligned to politics despite the often-repeated mantra by jurists and prosecutors that law is not influenced or tainted by political considerations. In particular, judicial institutions like the ICC should openly acknowledge that they are operating in a global political environment and actively develop their capacity to engage political actors with this in mind. The meeting further recommended improvement in international criminal law curricula that would help ensure that students understand how politics influences the administration of law and the efficacy of judicial institutions.

TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE IN AFRICA FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

The IJR’s annual Transitional Justice in Africa Fellowship Programme hosts a small group of carefully selected practitioners and scholars in the field of justice and reconciliation in Africa. Fellows of the 2013 programme, which commenced on 21 July 2013, were: from Kenya, Mrs Florence Jaoko (Consultant, previous Chair of the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights) and Dr Julius Jwan (Acting Director of Programmes, Kenya National Cohesion and Integration Commission); from South Sudan, Mr Biel Boutros Biel (Executive Director of the South Sudan Human Rights Society for Advocacy) and Ms Hawa Khamis Aganas (Civil Affairs Officer for the United Nations Mission in South Sudan); from Zimbabwe, Mr Clever Chikwanda (PhD candidate at the University of the Western Cape, and a consultant working closely with the Joint Monitoring and Implementation Committee in Zimbabwe as a conflict transformation and transitional justice facilitator); and, from Burundi, Ms Sonia Ndikumasabo (Commissioner and Vice Chair: Independent Human Rights Commission of Burundi). The programme set out to provide opportunities for participants to enhance their knowledge by engaging with leading practitioners, local experts and IJR staff on transitional justice issues in South Africa and the rest of Africa. In turn, the Fellows shared their insights and experiences of furthering reconciliation within their own contexts.
The heat levels in the national political discourse have subsided since the forced departure of Julius Malema from the ANC. But South Africa is arguably a more polarised society today than at any other point since 1994 – a perilous situation that should be occupying the minds of politicians in the run-up to the 2014 national election, as they have a lot to answer for in bringing the country to this point.

This state of affairs cannot be solely blamed on Malema, even though he is notorious for the open threat of deadly violence through his claim that he would ‘kill for [Jacob] Zuma’. He was a key instigator of a discourse of violence directed at perceived enemies of Zuma.

But the polarising trend in national politics can be traced further back, to the end of the Nelson Mandela presidency. The attempts of Mandela’s successor Thabo Mbeki to capture the ambiguities of the South African situation became a demonstration of how the wished-for nation of the future bumped up against intractable present-day realities. Hence Mbeki shifted between a projected inclusive nation ‘rejoicing in diversity’ in his 1996 ‘I am an African’ address, on the one hand, and an oversimplified racial reading of socio-economic inequality in his 1998 ‘two nations’ speech, on the other.

In an unfortunate confluence, Mbeki as president-elect found himself head to head with Tony Leon as leader of the official opposition after the 1999 election, which had returned the then Democratic Party (DP) with a significantly increased parliamentary presence. The attempts of Mandela’s successor Thabo Mbeki to capture the ambiguities of the South African situation became a demonstration of how the wished-for nation of the future bumped up against intractable present-day realities. Hence Mbeki shifted between a projected inclusive nation ‘rejoicing in diversity’ in his 1996 ‘I am an African’ address, on the one hand, and an oversimplified racial reading of socio-economic inequality in his 1998 ‘two nations’ speech, on the other.

In an unfortunate confluence, Mbeki as president-elect found himself head to head with Tony Leon as leader of the official opposition after the 1999 election, which had returned the then Democratic Party (DP) with a significantly increased parliamentary presence. The DP’s jump in support happened on the back of its divisive ‘fight back’ election campaign. The campaign featured Leon as an ‘angry white man’, the election’s poster boy (literally on lampposts) for a whiteness that had retreated into denial, self-righteousness and victimhood after the revelations of apartheid abuses at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Rising white recalcitrance, as typified by DP rhetoric, provoked a defensive response from the ANC leadership. The lowest, and deadliest point, was Mbeki’s conflation of HIV/AIDS science with white prejudice about black sexuality. In a fledgling democracy in which race remained a decisive factor in electoral choices, Mbeki and Leon were the worst possible combination as leaders of the two main political parties. Although Mbeki made some astute observations about race and racism that are still worth pondering, these got lost in the ensuing verbal fisticuffs.

While the racial morass was deepening, Mbeki’s intellectual pondering about all manner of topics earned him a label of being removed from the aspirations of the so-called masses. Tapping into this sentiment, his former deputy, Zuma, rose to the ANC presidency on a distinctly populist ticket. Mbeki’s musings were complex and had limited purchase when compared to the easily digestible and frequently rousing utterances of Zuma and his coterie.

Over the past decade, therefore, an intellectual quest to delegitimise apartheid hierarchies has given way to a more personality-driven approach that explicitly wields hierarchical subjugations to accrue support. A considered, if at times problematic, questioning of apartheid versions of identity has been supplanted by a rhetoric that increasingly draws on populist inflections of those very apartheid formulations. The effect is an exacerbation of existing fissures.

Zuma populism does not only reference race when convenient but targets what I have called apartheid’s ‘other others’, for example, women, gays and children, for disciplinary interventions. In contrast to the social liberalism associated with the Mbeki stance, Zuma populism invokes particular interpretations of religion, culture and ‘tradition’ to bolster reinstatements of race, gender, sexual and age hierarchies. For example,
his recent assertion that pet ownership is part of ‘white culture’ may seem facile and innocuous but it in fact advances a highly evocative populist take on black identity. The rise of the black middle class has upset previous insider/outside certainties and launched a post-apartheid battle about the terms of access to power.

Against this backdrop, the pets comment serves as an injunction about ‘authentic’ blackness. The power effects of such pronouncements become clearer when one examines the Zuma faction’s revival of traditional leadership on the basis of apartheid-era laws. This revival hinges on the construction of a rural black subject whose ‘innate’ beholdenness to ‘culture’ exempts her from the equal citizenship guaranteed in the Constitution. This construction is gendered, in that the majority of chiefs are male and the majority of rural people living in the former Bantu lands are female, and the proposed ‘true African culture’ rests on the subjagation of women.

These exclusionary manoeuvres from the ANC have elicited an opposite shift in Democratic Alliance (DA) rhetoric. From ‘fight back’ (or ‘fight blacks’, given the racial overtones of the 1999 campaign), the DA shifted to a message of inclusivity during its campaigns for the 2009 national and 2011 local government elections: the DA ‘delivers for all’. The sullen, passive-aggressive white man on the election poster was replaced with smiling women leaders representing different races. Black spokespeople were appointed, and a young black woman finally occupied the position of leader of the opposition in Parliament. While critics question the authenticity of the DA’s change of tack, the focus here is less on whether the motives of parties are ‘pure’ and more on the political conditions that occasion these changes in messaging. Whether expedient or not, the DA shift is conducive to the production of post-apartheid South African identities which are not predicated on apartheid divisions.

In contrast, the ANC has not only reverted to reactivated racial rhetoric but to a gendered attack on its political opponents, specifically on DA leader Helen Zille (called a madam with concubines) and DA parliamentary leader Lindiwe Mazibuko (called a ‘tea girl’ and slated by Zuma acolytes for not conforming to the ‘correct’ bodily presentation of young black femininity). This is a continuance of the deeply gendered, sexualised and racialised rhetoric inaugurated during Zuma’s rise. It carves a stark line determining the kinds of individuals that qualify for inclusion in Zuma’s nation, a carving that started with Zuma’s rape trial (Zuma’s assertions inside the court but also the chants of ‘burn the bitch’ outside; Malema’s proclamation on the habits of ‘real’ rape survivors; Zuma’s pronouncements about ‘knocking down’ gay men and about a good woman being a married woman; the moral panic about young black women’s sexuality (the criminalisation of teen sexuality in the Sexual Offences Act; the allegations that teenage girls get pregnant to access grants; Malema’s proposal that pregnant teens be banished), and so forth.

It should be remembered that Zuma’s polarising rhetoric is in response to at least the following two factors: the same intrac- table whiteness that Mbeki had run up against, and worsening socio-economic conditions for the majority of South Africans that the ANC’s mix of neoliberal and social democratic policies are not adequately addressing.

Dr Mamphela Ramphele of Agang SA has thus far adopted a rhetoric combining a forthright grappling with the psychological scars of apartheid racialisation with a discourse of reconciliation last heard when Mandela was in power. Ramphele achieves a measured exposure of racism that Mbeki could not totally muster, and sets out explicitly to bridge the apartheid divides of age and geography that the ANC has been capitalising on under Zuma. How this rhetoric synchronises with the party’s neoliberal economic policy which, similar to the DA’s, is sure to exacerbate inequality and thereby undermine social cohesion, is unclear, however.

Malema’s Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) fills a lacuna in the political spectrum with its leftist populist rhetoric. Noticeably, though, apart from a comment here and there, Malema’s rhetoric is tempered compared to his period as ANC Youth League president and foremost Zuma cheerleader. This might be because it makes little electoral sense to merely duplicate the Zuma faction’s deployment of apartheid-esque mobilisations. Instead, the EFF homes in on the perennial South African problem of a gaping wealth gap that most of the other parties’ economic policies are sure to aggravate. Malema’s own materialism and alleged corruption, and his association with the likes of nightclub owner Kenny Kunene, makes his much-vaunted ‘socialist’ agenda untenable.

The extent to which political parties waylay or aid the juggernaut of identity-based polarisation is a question that South Africans should urgently ask themselves. Next year’s election should provide their answer.

**OVER THE PAST DECADE, A CONSIDERED QUESTIONING OF APARTHEID VERSIONS OF IDENTITY HAS BEEN SUPPLANTED BY A RHETORIC THAT INCREASINGLY DRAWS ON POPULIST INFLECTIONS OF THOSE VERY APARTHEID FORMULATIONS.**

*Christi van der Westhuizen is Research Associate at the Institute for Reconciliation and Social Justice, University of the Free State, and author of White Power & the Rise and Fall of the National Party.*

Institute for Justice and Reconciliation
THEORETICALLY, ELECTIONS ARE THE SYSTEMS PUT IN PLACE TO DEMOCRATICALLY GIVE MANDATE TO THOSE ELECTED TO GOVERN. HOWEVER, IN REALITY, ELECTIONS ARE MORE THAN THAT. THEY ARE PERIODS OF HEATED POLITICAL CONTESTATION. Thus, politics as an art gives further meaning to elections as popularly observed and understood by political parties, politicians and the electorate. Politicians infuse into electoral processes heated debates which at times have the potential to polarise society. The more desperate politicians are for votes, the more likely they are to end up making statements that polarise society.

Is it possible to conduct electoral processes without polarising society? By definition, democracy seeks to give effect to avoiding polarisation. The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) and its Code of Conduct for all political parties is, for instance, structured in ways that ensure impartiality and therefore the credibility of the electoral process. Similarly, other state institutions such as the police, the judiciary and other organs of the state must be imbued with the same principle of impartiality when dealing with differences brought before them.

South Africa has created a well-oiled state machine, premised on the doctrine of the separation of powers between the three arms of the state – the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. Many other state organs such as chapter nine institutions have been established to ensure justice and equality before the law. Political parties in South Africa can mobilise political support with the full knowledge that the rules of electoral process will be fair and that any differences arising will similarly be adjudicated fairly by the IEC or our courts.

However, as in every other democracy, these institutional frameworks do not necessarily guarantee non-polarisation. Part of the reason that polarisation occasionally rears its ugly head is because of the fault lines of the pre-1994 conflicts. Apartheid-inspired conflicts were not just driven by exclusive political rights to partake in the affairs of the country, but also by how that led to the serious economic marginalisation of the majority while enriching the minority. That the majority–minority divide was shaped not just along class but, very importantly, along racial lines has made race a highly polarising issue.

This is why the ‘national question’ remains high on the agenda of the ANC – not just the class struggle, as is relevant around the world, but importantly the racial inequalities that threaten even the very constitutional democracy we pride ourselves on. The law means nothing when society is polarised and conflict is emotionally driven by racial antagonism.

Another polarising aspect is that of gender relations. Because gender and race are physical identities that explain the contours of exploitation, these in turn inspire deep emotions that can spill over in the electoral process and polarise society. Racial and gender inequalities have been engineered over centuries of colonialism and decades of apartheid rule. The ANC government has made efforts to reverse the racial and gender disparities in society, but the backlogs are still evidently huge. The representation of these backlogs as though they have been created by the ruling party is simply a lie! Society becomes polarised when lies and innuendos become part of political rhetoric.

Elections have polarised many countries to the point of descending into civil conflicts. The African continent has many such examples. At times, some leaders have questioned the legitimacy of the electoral process. Allegations of biases by the electoral bodies, vote rigging and much more abound when society has been polarised.

To avoid polarisation, it is important that political parties and public commentators are made aware that, for the electoral process to enjoy legitimacy, no one should say or do things that may undermine the dignity of any individual or any group of people.
Key in this is to observe the letter and spirit of the Constitution in all political conduct. By virtue of their socio-political disposition, leaders have the ability to pull the trigger that polarises society by sensationalising perspectives in ways that go against the spirit of free and fair elections. Similarly, public commentators as well as so-called ‘influencers’ have the potential to incite polarisation in many ways.

In spite of the good constitutional systems in place, politicians, commentators, analysts and celebrities all have the power to polarise society because people look to them for guidance on how to approach various social, economic and political questions and challenges. That is why a higher level of responsibility is required from such public figures, in order to ensure that the electoral process is without polarisation.

Conclusively, various factors come to bear on whether elections will be polarising or not. Collaborating factors which help to ensure successful elections include a sound constitutional state, with various institutions such as the IEC, judiciary and police working together for the same objectives of peace and stability. This success is also dependent on the roles of political parties and the media working in disciplined ways by observing the electoral Code of Conduct as if it were the rule of law. When these factors work against each other, polarisation follows.

It is also important that the fault lines of political differences are not structured along racial, gender-based or ethnic divides, because these are issues that tend to provoke emotional reactions or posturing, and which in essence indicate a polarised society.

The Hutu and Tutsi conflict in the Great Lakes region, the breakup of the Soviet Union into its default republics, fascism, apartheid and many other conflicts have been waged on fault lines upon which it is dangerous to advance a political course. This is why the African National Congress regards the resolution of the ‘national question’ as urgent, so that, going into the future, we have no basis to fear racial, gender-based or ethnic polarisation.

Economic deprivation remains the daily reality of our people, who were on the receiving end of colonial and apartheid rule. To effectively eradicate polarisation, we must deal with the fundamental issue of economic marginalisation. In each election South Africans vote with the hope that this fundamental problem will be dealt with conclusively. Regardless of which party wins the election, the campaigning and outcomes of that election will not resolve the national grievance if it does not deal with the basis of polarisation of our society, namely, debilitating inequality.

Jackson Mthembu is the National Spokesperson of the African National Congress.
South Africa is a unique and diverse country. This applies to most aspects of our society, from culture to language, to race and politics. We are a people of varying views and strong opinions. However, differing views do not have to equate to polarisation.

Polarisation by its definition implies a division or separation. I don’t believe that politics or varying political views should bring South Africans to this point. We need to move into a new political space in our country where our differing views are respected and engaged with in a constructive manner. This has the potential to bring people together and

National Spokesperson for the Democratic Alliance MMUSI MAIMANE reflects on what has become of the 1994-born national dream
should not lead to irreconcilable divisions.

At this stage in our political history we are nearly two decades into democracy, following a terrible history centred largely on racial segregation and economic exclusion. This was polarisation at its absolute worst.

We also face numerous challenges which directly derive from this history. The majority of South Africans are yet to experience true freedom. Far too many of our people remain in poverty and without jobs. As a result, South African society remains very much polarised, both economically and socially. There are those few people who have access to jobs and the economy, but the majority remain locked out of these opportunities. Socially, we are yet to reach a place of true reconciliation in South Africa. Many South Africans remain fearful and uncertain of the future.

Government does have a role to play in bringing people together and overcoming this polarisation. Unfortunately, the current ANC-led administration has failed dismally in this regard. In fact, they far too often use the race card to further polarise our people and our country. They have left the hope and dreams we felt in 1994 far behind and replaced them with fear, economic uncertainty and further division.

In the same way that South Africans have a constitutional right to choose their religious or sexual affiliation, they have the same right to choose their political association. None of these choices should cause polarisation. People may hold differing views on these choices, but they should never lead to division or separation.

While each and every South African is responsible for taking a stand against racism and other forms of polarisation, government should play a role in creating an environment of tolerance and reconciliation. When the ANC states that the only reason why Bongani Baloyi was elected as the new DA Mayor of Midvaal is because he is black window-dressing, they undermine all black South Africans who hold differing views to the ruling party.

It is this type of polarisation which South Africa can do without. It does nothing but sow divisions among people and is a slap in the face for many young, ambitious people. Polarisation falls outside of our constitutional framework. It goes against everything that was fought so hard for during the liberation struggle. It undermines Nelson Mandela’s dream and the dreams of so many others who fought for a vision of a united country.

In all its campaigns, the Democratic Alliance aims to bring South Africans together. The DA’s values and policies are enshrined in South Africa’s most important legal document, the Constitution. Our campaigns may cause debate and discussion, but they never aim to polarise. It is the hope that South Africans will reach a place of political tolerance, where differing views on ideas and ideology are debated in a context of earnest discussion.

Mmusi Maimane is the National Spokesperson for the Democratic Alliance.

WE NEED TO MOVE INTO A NEW POLITICAL SPACE IN OUR COUNTRY WHERE OUR DIFFERING VIEWS ARE RESPECTED AND ENGAGED WITH IN A CONSTRUCTIVE MANNER.
My initial response is yes, it is possible to engage in political campaigns without polarising anybody, including political opponents. All political parties should be able to compete for membership and public support by simply selling their policies and showing how they intend to deliver on them. The voting public should then choose which of the parties best represents their interests, vote accordingly, and let the best party win and form a government.

That is the ideal and a measure of a society’s political maturity. Unfortunately, we as South Africans are far from being that ideal society. This makes nonsense of our often claimed political sophistication. We still live in a country where the dominant political norm is that of intolerance.

Lest we forget, the ruling party embarked on a concerted campaign of purging the country of political views other than its own – especially the competing views espoused by the Black Consciousness Movement and the Pan Africanist Movement from the 1980s up to the 1994 elections. This campaign entailed a lot of bloodshed, including even burning the coffins of political activists whose views it sought to suppress.

The UDF-SACP-Cosatu axis largely got away with mass murder – literally – and has yet to atone for its sins. The tentative steps towards reconciliation taken by former President Thabo Mbeki, as in his appointment of members of other former liberation movements to key government positions, earned him a lot of criticism from the ruling party and have since been abandoned. See where that landed him.

Ours is a highly intolerant nation that has yet to appreciate the importance of living in a diverse society, wherein people have different outlooks on life and are actually encouraged to think differently from one another.

This is not limited to politics. Lesbians have been the targets of brutal murder and so-called corrective rape, for example. This, despite the constitution outlawing discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Sadly, this shows that the ideal of democracy and a respect for fundamental human rights have yet to take root in our country despite almost 20 years of democracy. This represents a failure of massive proportions by successive post-apartheid governments to carry out their historic duty of promoting the ideals of constitutional democracy, especially its attendant guarantees of freedom of expression and association.

Instead, the ruling ANC has unleashed a systemic attack on the ideals on which our new nation was founded. Their shameful assault on free speech and their undermining of the independence of the public broadcaster, especially under the dubious leadership of President Jacob Zuma, attests to their intolerance of views other than their own. They, after all, claim a God-given right to govern until the return of Jesus Christ, as Zuma has said.

In fact, a closer inspection of the almost 20 years since we defeated apartheid paints a depressing picture of how we, as a nation, seem to have failed to undo the evils of successive apartheid regimes, whose greatest motivation was to uphold a system denounced by the international community as a crime against humanity.

Our celebrated Constitution guarantees everyone in South Africa
Africa – even foreigners – freedom of religion, beliefs and opinion. And the Constitution decrees that everyone has the right to freedom of expression as well as freedom of association.

The Constitution says that every citizen is free to make their own political choices, which include the right to form political parties of their own, to participate in the activities of such parties, to recruit members for political parties of their choice and to campaign for such parties.

In fact, the past 19 years have been characterised by a concerted drive on the part of the ruling tripartite alliance to establish a political hegemony in South Africa. To entrench itself in power, the ruling tripartite alliance has used political patronage to exclude non-party members from government jobs or government business.

Its vindictiveness against those who refuse to toe its line extends even into the private sector. The way the government leaned on accounting firm SizweNtsalubaGobodo, which feared losing government work, to dismiss Vusi Pikoli as its head of Forensic Investigations, after they had hounded him out of a job as head of the National Prosecuting Authority is a case in point. There are many Vusi Pikolis out there.

Their policy of job reservation for mostly incompetent deployed cadres, whose only qualification is loyalty to the ANC, has had a devastating effect on the ability of the public sector to carry out its responsibilities to the public and the economy. It has also been a fertile breeding ground for corruption, which has robbed people of access to such basic goods and services as clean water and safe, decent healthcare.

The entry of Agang South Africa (Agang SA) into the political landscape has rattled the ruling party. This is especially so because of its strong focus on a clean and competent government, zero-tolerance for corruption and an emphasis on professional public services, based on a meritocracy.

This message has hit the right chord with a public that is fed up with corruption, making Agang SA a credible threat to the ruling party’s almost two decades of corrupt rule.

The young fledgling Agang SA has already been on the receiving end of the ruling party’s legendary intolerance for opposition. Our members in Phalaborwa and other parts of Limpopo have received threatening text messages ahead of two of our party events.

We’re witnessing an increase in attempts to disrupt events addressed by our party leader, Dr Mamphela Ramphele. So far, such vile incidents have occurred at the Durban and Pietermaritzburg campuses of the University of KZN – ‘because they are ANC campuses’.

In July, an ANC councillor disrupted an AgangSA community meeting in Mzombane, in Mokopane, trying to lure those present with offers of candles, food parcels and jobs. In Bela-Bela, Limpopo, police had to be called when the local ANC-appointed mayor demanded to speak at a rally organised by AgangSA. This disruptive strategy of having ANC councillors and party officials speak at Agang SA events has also occurred in the Western Cape and Bloemfontein.

The ANC is not the only party displaying political intolerance. So far, an Agang SA T-shirt was burnt publicly by members of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) at the Marikana march to the Union Buildings in September. No surprises there. The EFF is proving itself incapable of abandoning the intolerance that it learnt from the ANC which spawned it.

Fortunately, the country’s citizens are increasingly demonstrating a huge appetite for change. They are tired of the betrayal of the ideals of the struggle by those who have consistently abused political office to line their pockets and those of their cronies. They are tired of seeing the lives of those who refuse to be corrupted destroyed and they want a fresh start. So, there’s hope that fresh ideas may yet be allowed to blossom.

Thabo Leshilo is Communications Director at Agang South Africa.

OURS IS A HIGHLY INTOLERANT NATION THAT HAS YET TO APPRECIATE THE IMPORTANCE OF LIVING IN A DIVERSE SOCIETY, WHEREIN PEOPLE ARE ACTUALLY ENCOURAGED TO THINK DIFFERENTLY FROM ONE ANOTHER.
The discourse of peace and reconciliation in South Africa, the very conceptual life force that holds the 1994 social pact together has, if anything, been anti-black. The pact itself compromised on the most important humanising transformation of the colonial situation, that is, the colonial economisation of blackness, which houses the colonial contradiction that brews in the life force and practice of the social pact.

The point of colonisation and its advancement in the form of apartheid policies was to guarantee to white monopoly capital, as much as possible, the availability of cheap and easily disposable black labour. White hatred, that is, the situation of ‘feelings’ of rejection of the black pigmentation, the culture, religion and life of the native population finds its most fundamental expression not in the segregation laws such as separate toilets, benches, houses, schools and the prohibition of sexual relations according to race. Rather, it is in how these produce the economisation of blacks as those who must, as much as possible, in their major-

ity, be of cheap and disposable labour.

The 1994 social pact intentionally avoided crushing the colonial contradiction of economising blackness. It protected it and by implication exposed blacks to continuous ‘capture’ by white capital by mainly not subjecting private property to a radical critique. You will remember the words of De Klerk when announcing the release of Mandela. He said the pact would work on ‘a sound economy based on proven economic principles and private enterprise’. The new government of the ANC would then institutionalise macroeconomic policies that advanced this ‘black capture’ through privatisation, outsourcing and marketisation as the policy practices of the new ‘inclusive’ state.

A nation, that is, ‘an imagined oneness of a people’, fell apart before it was even born. The conditions for the birth of genuine social consensus or ‘nationhood’, and thus genuine human reconciliation, depend on collapsing what made the colonial situation possible and sustainable – the economisation of blackness, that is, the colonial contradiction.

This economisation of blackness lies in the landlessness of black people, their dispossession of an ability to be at home in their own country – not agricultural and residential land only – but all land, including dams, rivers, mineral deposits, fishing areas and forests. It is the central condition that throws them into perpetual servitude as a group, in service of a minority white bourgeoisie. This accounts for why blacks remain in the majority as cheap and disposable labour in all major sectors of the economy.

Now, colonisation, like any system of oppression, always needed a few blacks to survive and maintain its economisation of blackness. Each time it improved the lives of blacks, it did so only to the extent made possible by the drive to exploit them in the cheapest and most disposable ways. To do this, it needed a few blacks whose role was to filter the ‘master/slave’ relations and monitor the rebellion. The monitoring of the black rebellion is the trickiest part of the story of economisation of blackness and confronts us today in even deeper and more complex ways than it did before.

The first need of the colonial empire was slaves, particularly in the newly discovered lands by Europeans like the Americas. To ‘capture’ slaves, colonialists needed other blacks to hunt them, train them and hand them over to work in the plantations of foreign lands. In the plantations, the black slaves would also be mobilised through the house slave, who was closest to the master, filtering the language and culture on both sides with the sole purpose of advancing the life of the master, his family and the economy of his people.

Then secondly, the colonial empire needed natives to work in the industrialising economies, digging diamonds, gold and other minerals. These jobs were first done by other whites, but increasingly it was agreed that they should be the reserve of blacks, only because of how bastardising and dehumanising they were. Here, once more, the colonisers needed other blacks to monitor and guide other natives to submit, as much as possible, to the social position of risk-reserves and risk-objects. These ‘monitors of black rebellion’ always did it under white supervision, and the best examples of them are the homeland leaders.

The advanced versions of these monitors were actually the urban, educated elite and trade union bureaucrats, who over and over again were so socialised into desiring inclusion into the colonial society and culture that they diluted the black revolutionary demand. Their betrayal is the most dangerous because it used the programme of revolution, its language and symbols, but with no preparedness to storm the Bastille whatsoever.

The way in which the ANC started voicing black rebellion in particular was always in the non-violent, non-racial language of inclusion and reconciliation – not justice. It increasingly learned the art of mass work, not unleashing the total destruction of colonisation, but demonstrating that it can successfully ‘control’ blacks. This, to buy their inclusion into the advancement of the colonial contradiction.

The third means of ‘managing rebellion’ is found in the 1994 social pact. In simple terms, the pact is about how, and if, ‘monitors of black rebellion’ can now do so under conditions of democracy. Democratisation – the idea of one person one vote – was meant to work only if it guaranteed the protection of white property, as De Klerk indicated, and the managers of black rebellion accepted this proposition. By so doing, the colonial contradiction was kept alive and flourishing.

South Africa, simply because it has not crushed the conditions that make it possible to make the majority of black lives of cheap and disposable character, failed to produce a ‘nation’. To continue to force ‘nationhood’ or consensus without economic justice is simply malevolent – it is to ask activists who seek genuine decolonisation to repeat the self-mutilation that the ‘monitors of black rebellion’ do to be accepted by white supremacist hegemony; the protection of the contradiction through the protection of white property in the mining, banking, agriculture and fishing sectors, for instance.

Now, for us in the Economic Freedom Fighters, the elections and electioneering in 2014 will offer an opportunity for a radical collective examination of the 1994 social pact, with a view to demanding a government of economic justice. A brave government is one that will refuse to monitor black rebellion, but unleash it and consolidate economic justice, where the only reconciliation that matters for blacks is one with the land and mineral resources!

Polarisation, or put differently, the colonial contradiction, must therefore not be monitored or even postponed. It must be driven to its logical conclusion, which is the defeat of the colonial economisation of blackness. The contradiction must be exposed and allowed to erupt in order for economic justice to be attained. Thus, in the 2014 elections we seek the usage of the franchise to close this chapter once and for all – the chapter where we reconcile our people to their land, iAzania.

Mbuyiseni Ndlozi is the National Spokesperson of the Economic Freedom Fighters and a Politics PhD fellow at SWOP, the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). He teaches political studies at Wits Plus.
NEW POLICY BRIEFS FROM THE INSTITUTE FOR JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GENDER JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION IN SOUTH SUDAN

As Africa’s youngest nation embarks on the journey of becoming a democratic state within the global political arena, one of the most pressing questions is what South Sudan’s government as well as the international community can and should do in order to ensure that men and women enjoy the same quality of life and rights before the law and in their everyday existence. This Policy Brief explores the nexus of gender justice and reconciliation in South Sudan. It addresses women’s historical engagement in reconciliation processes in South Sudan at the grassroots and national levels and highlights their achievements to date. It then discusses the challenges to inclusion South Sudanese women face, as well as current opportunities to achieve true reconciliation by actualising gender justice and equality – particularly through effective integration of women into the peace and reconciliation process. The Policy Brief concludes with a set of recommendations to civil society, community leaders, and the government.

‘HOME AT LAST?’ LAND CONFLICTS IN BURUNDI AND THE RIGHT OF VICTIMS TO REPARATIONS

The historical trajectory of conflicts over land in Burundi and how to resolve the issue of tenure is a significant challenge facing the country. This Policy Brief will assess whether reparations as a form of redress for historical injustice can be utilised to address the grievances of Burundian victims of land expropriation. The Policy Brief begins by describing the legacy of conflict and the challenges of repatriations and land claims. It then outlines some of the difficulties of the present land dispute resolution mechanisms. In this context, it then proposes potential policy prescriptions for reparations to victims of land dispossession, drawing on the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 60/147 Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law. It concludes with a number of policy recommendations on how to address the contesting land claims within the broader framework of Burundi’s commitment to transitional justice, reconciliation and sustainable peace.

THE AFRICAN UNION AND THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT: AN EMBATTLED RELATIONSHIP?

The International Criminal Court (ICC) was established as a permanent, independent institution to prosecute individuals who have orchestrated and executed the most serious crimes of international concern, including war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. This Policy Brief discusses the trajectory of Africa’s relationship with the ICC and offers insights into how this embattled relationship might be repaired. Without bridging these differences the ability of the Court to work actively to address impunity, which is also the stated aim of the AU, will be undermined across the African continent.

CONTRIBUTE TO THE RECONCILIATION BAROMETER NEWSLETTER

Established authors interested in contributing to forthcoming editions of the SA Reconciliation Barometer newsletter should contact Zyaan Davids, guest editor and communications officer, on +27 21 763 7135 or at zdavids@ijr.org.za.

THE INSTITUTE FOR JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION

Contact Details: House Vincent, Ground Floor, Wynberg Mews Cnr Brodie and Ebenezer Rd Wynberg, 7800 Cape Town South Africa

Tel: +27 21 763 7128 Fax: +27 21 763 7138 E-mail: info@ijr.org.za

EDITOR: Zyaan Davids

DESIGN & CONCEPT: Compress DSL

IMAGES: Cover and pages 7, 8, 11 and 12 © Africa Media Online; page 3 © the IJR