the HELEN SUZMAN FOUNDATION
promoting liberal constitutional democracy and human rights

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Aubrey Matshiqi

Aubrey Mongameli Matshiqi was born in November 1962, in Orlando West, Soweto.

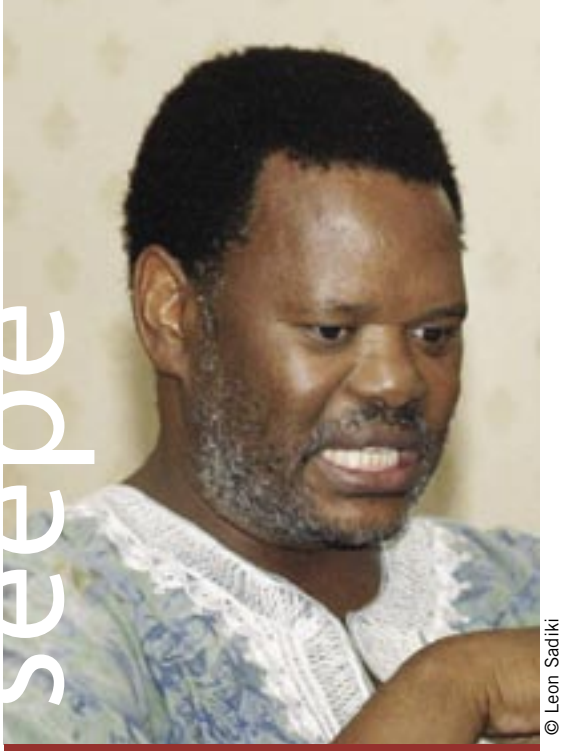
He is a former mathematics, science and English teacher. Towards the end of his teaching career he obtained a degree in English literature and history. He started his Masters in politics with the University of Port Elizabeth in 2000 but could not complete it.

He is a former government spokesperson and a member of the Strategy Unit in the Premier's Office in Gauteng.

He was, until recently, an independent political analyst and is now a Senior Associate Political Analyst at the Centre for Policy Studies.

His services as an analyst are used by local and international media, government, political parties, policy institutes, academic institutions, foreign embassies and the corporate sector. He writes regularly for various publications (including a column in the Business Day) and often addresses seminars and conferences.

He was previously involved in leadership and other capacities in the UDF, the ANC, Umkhonto weSizwe, the student movement (AZASO), the civic movement, the union movement and the South African Communist Party.



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Sipho Seepe

Professor Sipho Seepe is the Academic Director of Henley Management College, Southern Africa.

Prior to this appointment he was the Acting Vice-Chancellor of Vista University. He joined Vista University following a stint at the University of Venda where he established a Mathematics & Science Education department.

Seepe was involved in a number of research capacity-building initiatives among the historically disadvantaged education institutions. He was a member of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) research panel tasked with the evaluation of team research on historically advantaged and disadvantaged institutions, and was also involved in a project promoting African scholarship, pioneered by the South African Association for Academic Development.

He was a columnist and an associate political editor of the Mail & Guardian and a recipient of the prestigious Fulbright South African Researcher Grant and Harvard South Africa Fellowship.

He has written extensively on matters of public interest, from politics, culture, affirmative action and education, to matters relating to the transformation of society and institutions.

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Steven Friedman

Steven Friedman is a research associate, Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Idasa) and Visiting Professor of Politics and International Relations at Rhodes University.

Prior to that he was senior research fellow at the Centre for Policy Studies, an independent, non-profit, policy research centre.

He is a former consultant on urban politics to the Urbanisation Unit of the Urban Foundation and to the Development Bank of Southern Africa.

He was national head of the Information Analysis Department of the Independent Electoral Commission and a member of the Commission on Provincial Government think-tank which explored constitutional options relevant to provincial government.

He is a member of the international research council, International Forum for Democratic Studies, Washington DC, and is an editorial board member of the Journal of Democracy.

Friedman publishes widely.

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Xolela Mangcu

Dr Xolela Mangcu is a Visiting Fellow at the Public Intellectual Life Project and a Resident Equity Scholar at the University of the Witwatersrand. He is Visiting WEB Du Bois Fellow at Harvard University and writes a regular weekly column for Business Day. Dr Mangcu was most recently Distinguished Research Fellow and Executive Director for Society, Culture and Identity at the Human Sciences Research Council. Prior to that he served as the Executive Director of the Steve Biko Foundation; Associate Editor and columnist for the Sunday Independent, and a Senior Analyst at the Centre for Policy Studies in Johannesburg.

Dr Mangcu holds a Ph.D in City Planning from Cornell University, and has held fellowships at Harvard University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and the Rockefeller Foundation in New York. He also holds BA and MSc (Development Planning) degrees from the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits).

His publications include the Meaning of Mandela (a collection of public lectures by Wole Soyinka, Henry Louis Gates Jr and Cornel West), and Emerging Johannesburg (with Richard Tomlinson, Robert Beauregard and Lindsay Bremner).

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Richard Calland

Richard Calland is the Executive Director of the Open Democracy Advice Centre (ODAC) in Cape Town and a founding member of the law centre, formed in 2000. He is also head of the Right to Know programme at the democracy think-tank, Idasa.

Prior to joining Idasa in 1995, he practiced law at the London Bar for seven years, specialising in employment and administrative law.

He holds postgraduate degrees in world politics and comparative constitutional law (LLM) from the London School of Economics and the University of Cape Town respectively.

In recent years he has advised several governments on their anti-corruption law and policy and he is a member of Professor Joseph Stiglitz's International Task Team on Transparency, focusing on private sector accountability.

He is the co-editor of Whistleblowing Around the World: Law, Culture and Practice. He has published extensively and is a columnist for the Mail & Guardian newspaper.

His most recent book, Anatomy of South Africa: Who Holds the Power?, was published in October 2006.

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Raenette Taljaard

Raenette Taljaard is the director of The Helen Suzman Foundation. Taljaard, a former DA MP, served as Shadow Minister of Finance from 2002 and was a member of the Portfolio Committee on Finance. She also served on numerous other parliamentary committees, including the Standing Committee on Public Accounts during the arms deal investigation.

Taljaard lectures part-time at the University of the Witwatersrand's School of Public and Development Management and locally and abroad on the regulation of private military and security companies.

Taljaard is a Yale World Fellow, a Fellow of the Emerging Leaders Programme of the Centre for Leadership and Public Values (UCT's Graduate School of Business and Duke University) and a Young Global Leader of the World Economic Forum.

Taljaard holds a BA in Law, RAU (University of Johannesburg), a BA (Hons) in Political Science, cum laude, RAU (University of Johannesburg), an MA in Political Science, cum laude, RAU (University of Johannesburg) and an MSc in Public Administration and Public Policy, cum laude, London School of Economics and Political Science.

Taljaard publishes widely.

The impact of political culture and traditions on democratic institutions and the consolidation of democracy

Analysis

We welcome all of you at the first of what will in future be the Quarterly Roundtable Series of The Helen Suzman Foundation. We are truly honoured to have in our midst our patron-in-chief, Mrs Helen Suzman. We are delighted to have her with us as we launch this new series which we hope will contribute to debates about the ongoing project of the consolidation of our democracy — a democracy for which she, too, fought "from where she was with what she had".

We have a highly distinguished panel convening today to analyse, from various vantage points, a crucial topic. We hope this discourse will generate some profound insights and perhaps even some controversies for you.

2007 will be filled with political developments and events leading into succession debates in the African National Congress (ANC) and the largest opposition party in South Africa. Within the context of these events multiple questions that go to the heart of matters of political culture, and the impact that political culture has on democratic institutions, arise. These questions have various dimensions as the institutions in question were forged in the fire of an equally complex transition.

There can be no doubt that this is a profoundly challenging and interesting phase in the evolution of South Africa's contemporary history. The various political forces in our country were all shaped by fairly different political cultures which have diverse institutional and organisational histories.

It is crucial that South Africans realise, irrespective of party affiliations, that political culture often serves to promote difference but that it can also be used to transcend difference

These institutional and organisational histories were moulded, amongst other forces, by:

- the aberration of apartheid that led to exile, imprisonment,disenfranchisement and violations of human rights by a massively repressive state machinery co-ordinated by an undemocratic government;
- for some, solitary years of struggle in Parliament; and
- the first 13 years of democracy, with its demands on all political organisations to modernise and adapt to the new rules of the game under an agreed Constitution.

South Africa's diverse and heterogeneous set of political cultures co-exist in a strange symbiosis in the institutions that

The panelists who participated in this Roundtable were (from left to right): Richard Calland, Xolela Mangcu, Steven Friedman, Sipho Seepe and Aubrey Matshiqi

Attempts to construct a South African-style "clash of civilisations" discourse often serve to obscure the similarities between the different political cultures in our country

were created as part of our transition to democracy, and identity politics is ever-present in the maelstrom of South African politics.

It is crucial that South Africans realise, irrespective of party affiliations, that political culture often serves to promote difference but that it can also be used to transcend difference and, over time, build a sense of identification with the project of consolidating democracy.

This delicate balancing act between respecting and encouraging diversity and difference and the transcendence of diversity and difference is both a clear challenge and a unique opportunity for South Africa to create an example of productive and tolerant co-existence. There is a rare chance to build an open democratic culture. but this requires the absence of fear, as well as freedom of expression, a freedom which enhances, embraces and encourages discourse.

Expressing one's opinion in the new South Africa calls for considerable courage: whilst commentators need no longer fear the overtly repressive machinery of the apartheid state, modern discourse is hampered by self-imposed censorship and an overwhelming political correctness. There is a reluctance to engage different points of view, on all sides of the political divide. Instead, the blunt instruments of ideology block intellectual engagement with issues. This unwillingness to engage different views reduces the level and quality of democratic debate in our democracy at a time when there are burning socio-economic challenges and legacies to confront.

Attempts to construct a South African-style "clash of civilisations" discourse often serve to obscure the similarities between the different political cultures in our country.

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All were forged in an abnormal past which fostered specific patterns of racial voting, but younger generations of South Africans may well develop a different system of identity politics in which ideas will gradually start to matter.

There are various agents in South African civil society — the trade union movement and the Treatment Action Campaign come to mind — that have created political cultures that cut across racial lines and forge a commonality of purpose on specific societal challenges. This development within civil society is gradually starting to raise complex questions about the impact of political culture on democratic institutions and the role different actors play in our understanding of "political culture".

During the initial years of transition, and specifically during the process of constitutional negotiations, South Africans came together and set specific democratic precedents that were enshrined in law and stand forever protected in our founding text and in the hallowed halls of the Constitutional Court.

In this critically important year of various succession races, it cannot be disputed that new democratic — or perhaps less democratic — precedents may be set. It is critical that actors in civil society form part of this process and raise awareness about these risks and opportunities that will shape our future and the essence of our democracy.

There is a challenge confronting advocates of the values of tolerance and liberal constitutional democracy in all walks of life, in all political organisations and in all social movements. It is important to distinguish between those who wield political power for the common good and those who wield it for the sake of access to economic opportunity.

The panelists who will now address you have collectively and individually applied their minds to this topic for a long period. I humbly hand over to them.

by Raenette Taljaard

The challenge is to construct a political culture that both promotes and transcends difference

Aubrey Matshiqi

Good afternoon, everyone. I was hoping that I would not be the first, so clearly my prayers were not answered. But also I'm beginning to think that The Helen Suzman Foundation is run by a group of sadists. How anyone can expect us to think about such weighty matters at this time of year, I don't know.

When I told one of my colleagues that we were going to deliberate on political culture and tradition in this country, and how they impact on the consolidation or even possible derailment of our democracy, he felt that I knew very little about the matter and so he lent me a book. And this is a view reinforced by the fact that it was argued some time this year that certain commentators depend on newspapers for their analysis. So rest assured that I did read a book that was lent to me to reflect on these issues. So that's where I'm going to start.

According to this book by Alan Ball, when we reflect on issues of political culture we should bear in mind the following: firstly, that a political culture is composed of the attitudes, beliefs and values of society that relate to the political system and to political issues. He also reminds us that a political culture, whether diverse or homogeneous, is a product of many interrelated factors.

It is the second point that to me is very important. Important firstly with regard to the fact that our political culture has been under construction for the past 350 years and is still under construction, and will continue to be under construction for the foreseeable future. And secondly, we must bear in mind that a political culture and traditions are socially constructed, ideologically constructed and historically constructed. And to the extent that we can talk about a South African political culture, we must bear in mind that that South African political culture, which is still under construction, is itself a social, ideological and historical construct.

But I do not think we have as yet what we can call a South African political culture because we do not have a common political culture. What we have are diverse political cultures, what we have are heterogeneous political cultures. And therefore we may have to accept that what we have as this diverse or heterogeneous political culture in the country is, firstly, a historical construct, and to that extent we need to factor in colonialism.

We do not know what the trajectory of South Africa's cultural evolution would have been in the absence of colonialism. We do not know what the trajectory

of South Africa's culture would have been if it had not been interrupted by colonialism. And here I'm talking about culture in its broadest sense, because my understanding is that political culture is a subset of a national culture, to the extent that in our country you can talk about a national culture.

We may also have to accept that because of that interruption by colonialism and apartheid, we have ended up in a situation where the numerical majority is a cultural minority and the cultural minority is a numerical majority. Which means that what is in the process of shaping our political culture and what has shaped our political culture so far, institutionally and otherwise, arises from that reality, that numerical minorities are cultural majorities.

In its broadest sense, that means what we read, what we listen to on radio or on CD,

A total absence of fear in the political discourse is a standard that we must try to attain

the nature of the political discourse, are products of that reality. So when we have constitutional debates, for instance, and analyse the values that are dominant in our democracy, that is the reality against which we analyse those constitutional debates and other forms of political discourse in this country.

If we accept those propositions, I think we must also accept that if our political culture is diverse and heterogeneous, that presupposes a struggle for cultural hegemony in our context. And therefore our political culture is in part constituted by this struggle for

Aubrey Matshiqi

cultural hegemony. And at different times certain strands of our political culture will be dominant and at other times other strands will gain ascendancy.

As matters stand now it's also very clear that our political culture is influenced by the political culture that obtains internally within the ruling party. Because this ruling party is so dominant over the political landscape, unavoidably, aspects of that culture, of its internal culture, will find reflection in the political culture of our nation as a whole. If the internal political culture of the African National Congress produces a set of variables or a set of outcomes that are either undermining or promoting our democracy, that will be felt in the political landscape as a whole.

> If we achieve the protection of rights by both cultural majorities and numerical majorities... we'll go somewhere towards achieving the goals of an open and democratic political culture

But you must also remember that as much as one has argued that our political culture is a product of history and the history of colonials and apartheid, for that matter, we must bear in mind that those who were subjected to colonialism and apartheid did not take that lying down. So we also have a political culture that is influenced by a culture of resistance and that culture of resistance, in part, informs the content of our current political culture. So if we're looking for a meta-narrative that describes what constitutes our political culture, such a meta-narrative does not exist, even an attempt at creating such a meta-narrative would yield a product that would be reductionist.

So what are the challenges? From where I'm sitting, the challenge is to construct a political culture that both promotes and transcends difference. Because one of the things we have to contend with are apartheid constructions of difference and colonial constructions of difference, which continue to inform aspects of our political culture. And therefore a major challenge that we face in building this nation is the construction of a political culture, as I say, which is transcendent, which transcends difference, but at the same time, promotes difference.

Because we have settled for a multiparty democracy it means we have accepted that challenge, that we are in the process of

constructing a political culture that not only recognises difference, promotes it, but, more importantly, will seek to transcend that difference. At the same time, in a manner that may sound contradictory, the project is also that of constructing a political culture of sameness. Which means we must be able to operate at both levels, both at the level of constructing a political culture of difference and at the level of constructing a political culture of sameness. And be able to occupy both spaces either at the same or at different times in a manner that consolidates and promotes a democratic culture, an open democratic culture, for that matter. That is a challenge, as I see it.

And if we meet that challenge head on and if we are equal to that challenge, what should follow is a political culture which

Because of colonialism and apartheid the numerical majority is a cultural minority

dictates that numerical majorities take it upon themselves to defend and protect the rights of numerical minorities. And at the same, cultural majorities take it upon themselves to protect and defend the rights of cultural minorities. And if we achieve that, this protection of rights by both cultural majorities and numerical majorities, I think we'll be somewhere, we'll go somewhere towards achieving the goals of an open and democratic political culture.

There are certain themes that come to mind when I think of our political culture

Mbhazima Shilowa

Aubrey Matshiqi

and these themes have been dominant in my thinking over the past 12 months. The first one is that of identity. There's an extent to which in the coming years how we define ourselves is going to impact on the evolution of our political culture,

An emerging theme in our political culture has been that of Orwellian manipulation, where through language and other means there's an attempt not only to rewrite history and erase aspects of history that are inconvenient, but also an attempt to reconstruct political realities

diverse or homogeneous. I think what we are going through at the moment at the level of constructing a common South African identity is at times, unfortunately, a project that seeks to redefine or reconstruct identity in a very narrow manner, a manner that seeks to advantage those who are engaged in that reconstruction exercise to give them an advantage as far as access to influence, power and resources is concerned.

And therefore some of these debates we're having about what is an African, whether affirmative action is good or bad, are actually informed by this attempt at reconstructing identity to consolidate the gains of the past and redefine access to power, influence, resources and so on.

Another theme is linked to an urge I've been feeling for quite some time this year, an urge to read George Orwell's 1984 again. Because I think an emerging theme in our political culture this year has been that of Orwellian manipulation, where through language and other means there's an attempt not only to rewrite history and erase aspects of history that are inconvenient, but an attempt to reconstruct political realities, sometimes in a manner that is not in concert with what obtains on the ground, with what is the reality of the majority on the ground.

And I have engaged with this issue in relation to the question of whether we are a dictatorship or not. And my assessment is that certainly we're not a dictatorship in the classical sense but there are things we need to be concerned about. For instance,

whereas in the past if your views did not coincide with those of the state, of the apartheid government, you could find yourself in jail, maimed or killed. In the post-apartheid setting you do not have to fear that you will be jailed or maimed or killed if your views do not coincide with those of government or the state.

But I think we need to set a higher standard — that people are not going to be jailed or detained or whatever is the minimum standard — and therefore I'm beginning to say a total absence of fear in the political discourse is a standard that we must try to attain. And to the extent that power is not only exercised by the state, but also within the media and elsewhere in South African society, the source of that fear is not only with the state, does not only reside with the state. Other elements of South African society can impose that fear, a fear that can close down democratic spaces.

Leaders in the ANC and the DA must make the choice about whether the emergent political culture is going to be a political culture that consolidates or derails democracy

And therefore, as we reflect on the recently launched Democratic Alliance succession battle and the older succession battle in the ANC, we must bear in mind that at the end of the day both succession battles will impact to some extent on an emergent common South African culture. And leaders in both parties must make the choice whether that emergent political culture is going to be a political culture that consolidates or derails democracy.

You'll find that liberation movements and even the mass democratic forces also have some things to correct in terms of inculcating a culture where we actually tolerate those we disagree with

Sipho Seepe

I'll try to be more frontal about the discussion, but I will also thank Aubrey for giving us more of a broader theoretical lens to approach the subject. I will argue that to the extent that we can talk about the absence of the culture of learning in the schools, we can actually say there's some dominant behaviour that we observe. And to my continued amazement, I find it interesting that every time you listen to John Perlman [*former* SABC AM Live host] interview any of the officials from the ANC, you could think that they're reading from the same script. What this suggests is that there is a particular culture of similarity of approach, of response, that emerges from belonging to a particular party.

I would like to capture three things that we have inherited from the liberation movement and from the struggles against apartheid that impact on our institutions today. And — I think — nothing captures one of these more brilliantly than what happened to the president this weekend, and also a few months ago, when he tried to address the fellow-travellers of the African National Congress, but was booed and howled at. I remarked to myself that this reflects the culture that we have, the culture of intolerance of ideas of the people that you disagree with.

At the same time, there is an element in me that says this is also a case of chickens coming home to roost, because one must remember that the howling at those we disagree with has become almost a constant picture or image that emerges when we think of Parliament, where people are not allowed to be heard. And even when they are called "honourable members", their [i.e. MPs] behaviour is very dishonourable. But what we have not heard is an attempt within Parliament to listen; an attempt from the ruling party to say, if some people speak and you do not agree with them, listen to them and engage them.

Those watching the conduct of parliamentarians begin to see that if you disagree with somebody all you have to do is to make sure that you don't hear them. So the howling and walking out on somebody has become a culture that we have to deal with.

This culture derives from the history of political intolerance commonly associated with the tradition of exile politics. This assumes that those who were in the trenches internally were actually democratic. But history shows that that was not the case. People like Xolela who belong to the Black Consciousness

Movement, like myself, know that many of our cadres and comrades were killed for holding a different point of view, and this was not exile politics — it was internal politics. In exile a notion was advanced that said that debates are a luxury when one is engaged in a struggle where lives will be lost. So you'll find that liberation movements and even the mass democratic forces have some things to correct — in terms of the need for inculcating a culture where there is tolerance of those we disagree with.

But what this intolerance has done is to create an intellectual incapacity to engage with the issues. Sadly, that intellectual incapacity has also become a culture. I hear from my friends that as so-called analysts we often spend time describing each other, saying this one is this, that one is that, and that this is controversial and all that. What this says is that we are also beginning to subscribe to the language of political intolerance. All you need to do to somebody, as some of these things were done to us, is to say you are a counter-revolutionary comrade, and we're not going to listen to you.

But what this does is to dismiss you from a discussion. It does not engage the issues that you raise. What we have is a culture of labelling. It has become something that shapes our political discourse. It is very sad when academics and political analysts fall into that trap. I've often challenged callers on the radio when they call angrily and say that I am this and that. I would say, look I know I've written over 300 articles but I can remember each and every article that I wrote. What is it in any of them that you disagree with? And when you begin to suggest that, you paralyse them because they are unable to engage with the issues you have raised.

Sipho Seepe

So what I'm saying is that we have a culture and that is a culture of political intolerance. We have a culture of being unwilling to engage intelligently with each other. And I think this intolerance cuts on both sides, especially through our engagement with government. Those of us who are not in government have tended to be almost dismissive of those in government and the guys in government, have also tended to be dismissive of those outside government. In the process dialogue ceases to exist in South Africa.

> When somebody criticises me I say I'm glad that you read what I wrote. For me criticism is a commitment to somebody's ideas

One of the challenges that we must reclaim is what I call the intellectual project of a democracy, the ability for people in Parliament [and in society] to be able to engage intelligently with each other, without howling.

All howling serves to do is to shut you down so that I cannot hear you because you might actually be right. In a sense, after 10 years in Parliament, people come out as intellectually incapacitated as they were when they went in. And that is the culture that exists. What the president experienced and we see happening is simply a culture that Parliament has cultivated.

Let me say something about the culture of labelling. I remember that people like Tony Leon, when they spoke, they would be called this or that. And then I suggested to people like Blade Ndzimande that, rather than to dismiss Tony Leon as this or that, why don't you engage the issues that he raises. But of course that is a challenge. I then said that later it will come to haunt you guys. The culture of labelling and character assassination within the ANC is really what I call chickens coming home to roost.

Jeremy Cronin did not believe that his history of dedication to the struggle would amount to nothing. [When Cronin warned of the Zanufication of the ANC] he was told that the ANC does not need a white Messiah. Nelson Mandela did not know that he'd be called an agent of pharmaceutical companies for raising the issues around HIV/Aids. Desmond Tutu would not have anticipated that he would be accused of being a creation of a white media [for

raising concerns about HIV/Aids and debates in the ANC]. We have this culture that we must rally against — and it starts with those of us who have an influence, those among us who write. If you're going to tell me that I'm controversial, I don't know what that means.

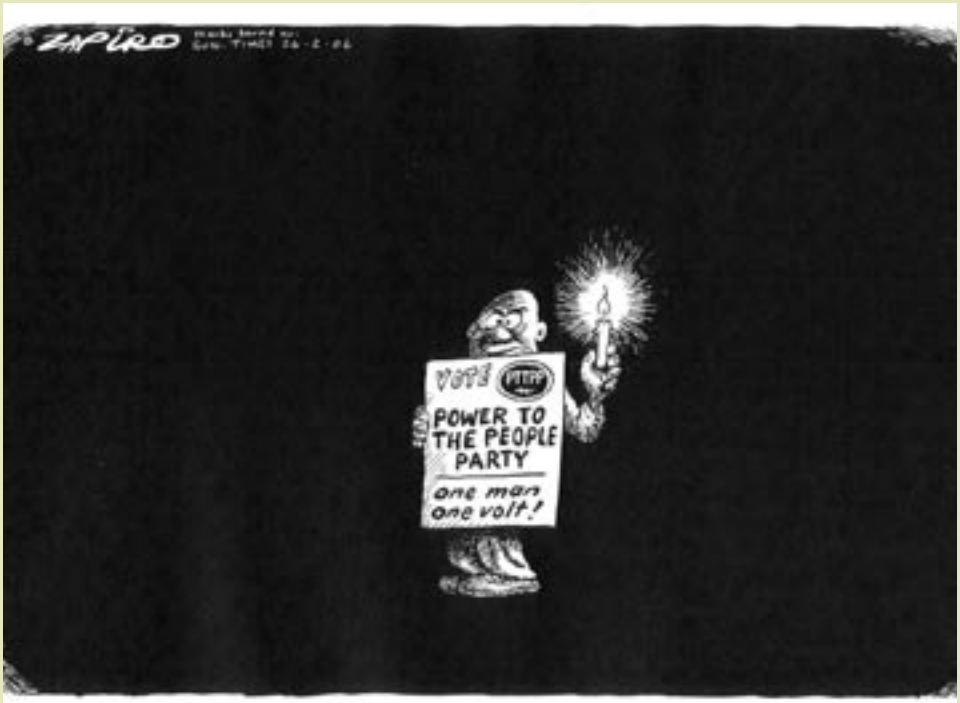
There is this hatred for criticism, when in fact criticism is simply a sign of commitment. When somebody criticises me, I take it — I say I'm glad that you read what I wrote. For me criticism is a commitment to somebody's ideas. But I would like a person to engage those issues that I've actually raised, but we don't have that.

That brings me to an issue that involves those of us who have been blacklisted, whatever that is supposed to mean. We don't see it as dishonourable; we see it as a badge of honour because we know that the things that we raise are right. We also derive encouragement when we read some of the best intellectuals in the world,

The culture of political intolerance de-legitimises institutions of democracy

people like Edward Said, who have said there is something unsettling about true intellectuals. I would like to quote what he says: "And there is something fundamentally unsettling about intellectuals who have neither offices to protect nor territory to consolidate and guard. But there is no dodging the inescapable reality that such representation by intellectuals will neither make them friends in high places nor win them official honours. It is a lonely condition, yes, but it is always a better one than a gregarious tolerance for the way things are."

I do not want to get official honours; so that is very important to say. I know that people like Xolela do not engage to be loved either. They engage issues to express their intellectual independence. To say and to write what they like.
The second issue that has become



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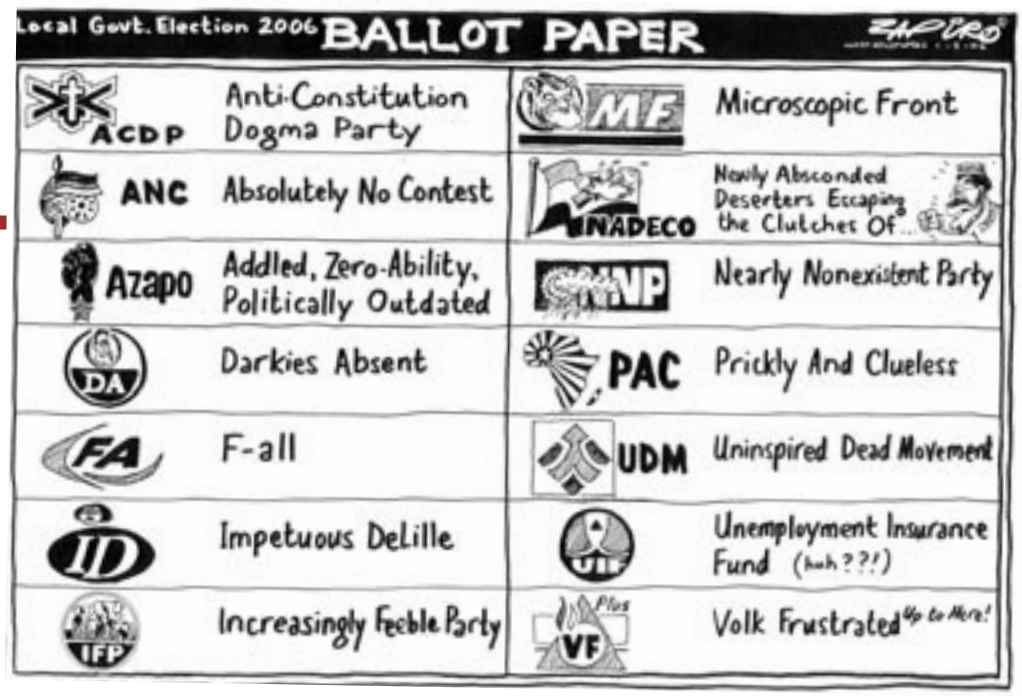


suddenly a new tradition and a culture is that of so-called internal debates. It's all about the intellectual inability to engage. This notion has become fashionable in the last few years, but is simply intellectual cowardice. I recall that there was a time,

Insightful contributions can emerge from whatever quarter

in 1993/1994, when members of the ruling party were engaging publicly with each other. I remember people like Joe Slovo disagreeing with people like Tokyo Sexwale. I remember Pallo Jordan and Joe Slovo being at each other's throats on the notion of the sunset clause. That was the intellectual vibrancy that had become associated with us. But now we have a culture that says, "don't speak unless the centre had spoken".

This brings me to another element that has become a new culture, the notion of democratic centralism. If you read Joe Slovo, he says one of the things that he has learnt about socialism, about the South African Communist Party, is that democratic centralism denuded and took away any semblance of democracy that existed within that organisation. And today you find almost all parties behaving the same way, so there is a culture where the centre thinks that it has a monopoly of wisdom. And that is a culture that we must rebel against. We should appreciate that insightful contributions can emerge from whatever quarter.

The last point I would like to raise is the effects of this on our institutions. The culture of intolerance, the culture of labelling, the culture of dismissing begins to de-legitimise opposition parties or other voices that we do not agree with. It has the effect of de-legitimising different perspectives. If we de-legitimise different perspectives we're actually poorer. It is only those who are afraid of good ideas who will advance notions such as internal debates and democratic centralism. But those of us who are sure of ourselves will put our ideas up there to be challenged publicly.
The culture of political intolerance de-

legitimises institutions of democracy. It allows a situation where we can suggest that we need to do something about the collective mindset of the media. It creates an environment where it is possible to suggest that we need to do something about the collective mindset of the judiciary. Intolerance and labelling are traditions of the cultures that we've adopted.

And the last tradition that weakens our system is one associated with the logic of the so-called deployment strategy. What we now know, and it is acknowledged in the ruling party, is that the deployment strategy has led to the promotion of mediocrity, incompetence and, to a large extent, corruption. When you appoint people who know that they do not have the requisite qualifications and expertise, they spend more time disbelieving that they're in those positions, and they always worry that they can be removed the day after they've been appointed.

So what they try to do is to amass as much as they can before they leave office. Deployment has become part of our problem. Competence, expertise and experience have taken a backseat to a notion that we'll have comrades who are in charge of the state organs.

But last and most important is that we need to reclaim a culture of dialogue. I find it very interesting that when the centre decides that something is okay [the rest of us follow like sheep]. President Mbeki had spent most of his time attacking Tony Leon, but some time this year a miracle happened. Mbeki remarked that he used to think that Tony Leon was a racist to the core, but he has come to realise that he is a democrat to the bone. Within a week, the Black Management Forum invited Tony Leon to speak.

In our strange notion of democracy, we are becoming a one-opinion country, where that opinion is the opinion of one person. And, fortunately or unfortunately, the Zuma saga happened, and now we are seeing a flourishing of interesting ideas. Even if we don't agree with them we must welcome those ideas.

I think that our political cultures across the divide have far more in common than we let on

Steven Friedman

I knew that somebody on this panel who was on the blacklist would rub the noses of those of us who didn't make it. I just want to say that those of us who didn't make it did our best, we're still trying. We envy you, but we haven't given up.

I also start at a slight disadvantage because I'm supposed to talk about the role of political culture in democratic consolidation and I don't believe there's any such thing as democratic consolidation, and I'm supposed to be writing a book on why there's no such thing as democratic consolidation. But I'll do my best in the circumstances, and I may even share a line or two from the book as I go on.

Let me say first of all that I think that our problem is not that we have a sort of Samuel Huntington type clash of political cultures in this country. In fact, as Sipho hinted a moment ago, I think that our political cultures across the divide have far more in common than we let on. However, I think our reality, as I've written several times before — which is not necessarily a problem, it has diverse consequences — is the fact that we have diverse identities and that those identities are extremely politically important. In fact, if we want to get a look at how important those identities are in determining the way in which political parties function, and the kind of support that political parties attract, it seems to me that we need look no further than the experience of two small opposition parties, the United Democratic Movement and the Independent Democrats.

And the reason I find these examples so interesting is that both of them were heralded at their formation, in different ways, as examples of a new South African politics, which would transcend our traditional identity divides, and both of them have become very focused identity parties. A colleague of mine conducted research a while ago which indicated, certainly to my satisfaction, that you can trace United Democratic Movement support nationally to particular groups of people in the Greater Umtata Region as they travel across the country. And certainly the Independent Democrats has become the sole and authentic voice of a subset of the Coloured population in the Western Cape who used to vote for the New National Party.

So I think that this indicates part of this reality with which we sit. I think that it indicates something which I've been very concerned to warn against, which is what we might call the myth of the human calculator — the idea that normal, rational

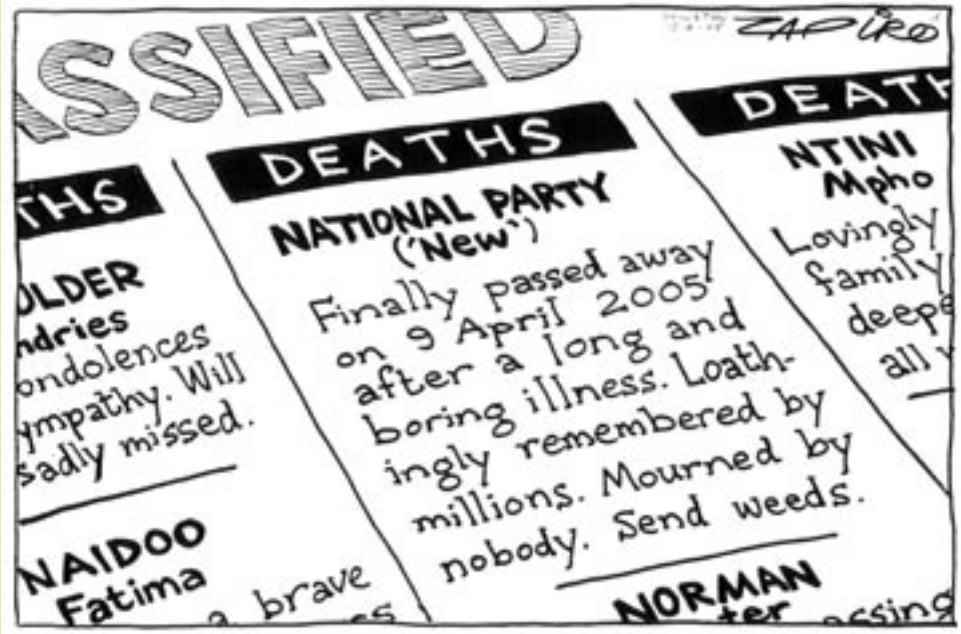
human beings in their political conduct operate much as electronic calculators do; they work out plusses and minuses and they come to a sum at the end of that and vote accordingly. And if they behave in any other way, in any way which does not imply that they're working out what a particular politician can do for their bank balance at any particular time, then they are somehow behaving in an abnormal and an irrational way.

If one is looking for the politics of the human calculator, one is clearly not going to find it in South Africa. The interesting point is you're not going to find it anywhere else, either. What some of us have been very concerned to stress is that people voting their identities is not some kind of specially South African phenomenon. If you look at Europe, it is absolutely littered with Catholic people's parties, Christian Democratic parties, Scottish National parties, you name it. If you look at the United States one of the myths of American democracy is that you have these masses of floating voters. Actually most people in

The idea that people vote their identities is perfectly normal, it is not a source of shame and it is something which we need to accept as part of our South African reality

the US who vote, vote the same way every time over their entire lifetimes. Elections are sorted out by a relatively small group of independent voters in the middle. Now there's a theory that the independent group might be growing, but that's not particularly relevant to our concerns.

The point I'm trying to make is that the idea that people vote their identities is perfectly normal, it is not a source of shame and it is something which we need to accept as part of our South African reality. I do want to stress, however, that those of us who talk about identity voting are in danger of being misunderstood in a great many ways. The first issue on which we



Steven Friedman

Steven Friedman

are in danger of being misunderstood is the notion that when we talk about identity, we're simply talking about race. Race is very important in South Africa. But it's not the only thing that's important, and when we say that South African politics is about identities, we are not saying that people are inevitably dragooned into racial blocs in which all members think the same and act the same. If you look at our political reality,

I think our reality has diverse consequences... the fact that we have diverse political identities is extremely politically important

everything we see around us contradicts that. Which is why it is particularly silly to reduce the prospects of political parties to the race of their leaders. It's a lot more complicated than that.

Secondly, the important point to stress is that when we talk about identities we are not talking about those folks over there who vote their identities and us folks over here who don't. There is a common misconception that we have people who are steeped in parliamentary democracy over very many years and understand how it works, and a large bunch of neophytes who don't understand the game because they were oppressed and need to learn the ropes. This misunderstands the situation throughout the period in which a particular type of parliamentary democracy was open to a section of our population. The section of the population which was excluded was perfectly well aware of what was going on. It took a very lively interest in it, and for very obvious reasons saw parliamentary democracy as something to which to aspire — if you're denied something on the basis of your race, you may well aspire to that because you see its denial as part of your subordinate status.

This means that there are democratic strains in this society which go across the identity groups, but there is bad news too. In the parliamentary tradition to which our

chair referred, among the white community there was not, shall we say, a particularly vigorous parliamentary tradition, despite the best efforts of your patron sitting over there. And I can certainly assure you, on the basis of my personal experiences over the last year trying to bat for pluralist democracy in a particular faith community in this country, which almost exclusively consists of white folks in the suburbs, that conceptions of democratic pluralism in that particular part of our society are pretty dim and hazy, and that those people who know what it is don't like it.

So the sense that we have some kind of universal suburban democratic ethos in this country is open to serious question. To get closer to the bone at this particular gathering, so persuasive is the extent to which some of these identities affect us, and the extent to which our political understandings in this country are coloured by our identities, no pun intended, that South African liberalism, which is quite rightly celebrated in this organisation, and ought to be celebrated for all sorts of reasons, has arguably itself become an expression of the identity politics which we're talking about.

This isn't a discussion on South African liberalism, although I hope that if you haven't had discussions on South African liberalism, you will have discussions on South African liberalism. But it seems to me that the case could be made that very often what is described as South African liberalism is not the liberalism of Locke and Mill, but a particular expression of the suburban experience, which is for that reason entirely inaccessible to the vast majority of the population. The extent to which a philosophy like liberalism, which of course rests on universalist assumptions about the worth of the individual and the importance of liberal democratic values, has itself become influenced by the identity environment around us is a very important element in this equation.

As far as the question of democratic consolidation is concerned, I think that this is relevant to our discussion. I don't want to bore you with the sort of sectarian tribal discussions political scientists have. But if you look at the mania around the Western European and North American world today with trying to establish whether new democracies are consolidated or not, and you go through the literature carefully, you will see that what this boils down to is nothing more than a vague sense of trying to work out when new democracies are going to look like some sort of idealised version of North American and Western

Steven Friedman

European democracies, a version which is so idealised that I can't find a North American or European democracy that actually fits the description.

I think that the misconception that there is some sort of idealised democracy out there to which we do not yet conform is part of the problem of not understanding that the fact that we have identity politics is not necessarily a problem. What does this mean for the more important

What some of us have been very concerned to stress is that people voting their identities is not some kind of specially South African phenomenon

exercise of trying to establish where the forces in our society are which might strengthen democratic trends, and how one identifies them and works with them? Not recognising the role which identities play in our society means that we risk not understanding where the opportunities are, and may misdiagnose the threats.

As I said earlier, I'm convinced that one of the problems we don't have to worry about is how, as a result of identity politics, we mesh the different political cultures of our various identity-based political groups. Because both in negative and positive ways our political cultures are pretty good at replicating and cloning themselves down the scale from the largest political organisation to the smallest. Thus all the centralising tendencies which Sipho has just told us that one could find in the ruling parties, were neatly replicating themselves right down the spectrum in the opposition parties. I wonder whether we are now seeing the reverse of this? Are we now seeing a situation where, because events in the ruling party have broken the logjam there to a certain extent, it's now happening in the official opposition, and maybe that will clone itself right down to the one-person parties? It would be good if that did happen.

The point I'm trying to stress is that if we're going to try to work out democratic prospects in this country by assuming that some groups practice a democratic culture and others do not, we're going to get it horribly wrong because we will misunderstand that both the negative and the positives emerge within all the groups.

It seems to me that one of the dangers of not realising the crucial role which identities play is that, if one is in the group which is used to regarding itself, in my view, inappropriately, as

the standard bearer of the democratic tradition, then you land up missing the evidence around you of who the really effective and interesting standard bearers of the democratic tradition are. I've written previously how figures like Archbishop Desmond Tutu, for example, were at a particular stage in our history were very often regarded as problems for the democratic project because of positions they took on sanctions and the like. I think the evidence is overwhelming at the moment that Archbishop Tutu is a distinct asset to the democratic project, and the fact that he doesn't choose to express his democratic values in the same way as suburban democrats do, I think is a plus rather than a minus.

But perhaps more interestingly, which organisation in South Africa has in the last six months called for decentralisation of political power, reform of the electoral system to introduce a strong constituency element, a ban on floor crossing and effective regulation to prevent money corrupting politics? The answer of course is the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu), in a document called Possibilities for Fundamental Social Change. Whatever the complexities of Mr Vavi's political relationship with Mr Zuma may be, the

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Steven Friedman

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suggestion that this document is anything other than a very important expression of democratic aspirations in this country is untenable, and if our lack of sensitivity to the identity dimension blinds us to the very important democratic potential in organisations like Cosatu, then we're missing the boat.

Similarly, if you were to ask me to look beyond Cosatu at some kind of role model — with all the sort of problems that attach to role models and the qualifications that one attaches to them — of a group of South Africans who are working daily, in very inspiring ways in many cases, to advance the democratic projects, I would have to cite my particular focus of research at the moment, the Treatment Action Campaign, which of course is run by a semi-retired Trotskyite in Cape Town. In many ways it is not a particularly likely source of democratic activism and enthusiasm, but a very real source nonetheless.

Finally, because my time is up, I think that if we understand the role which identities play, we will recognise that what we are looking at in South Africa is a situation where, for the next decade or so, we are going to be, if you like, in a sort of holding pattern as the identities continue to express themselves and the current governing party continues to govern. At some point

we are going to have, because of the nature of identity politics, a substantial electoral challenge to the governing party which I firmly believe will come from within the governing party, from within the ANC Alliance, because that is really where the identity politics which resonate with the majority of South Africans reside.

At some point we are going to have a substantial electoral challenge to the governing party which will come from within the governing party

It is at that stage when, if you like, our democratic crunch moment will come. Because if you want to look at this in terms of Southern African exemplars, we're either going to go the Zimbabwean route or the Zambian route, the Zambian route being that in which President Kaunda loses an election and says, "I respect the will of the electorate" and leaves it to the next group of people to govern.

Whether we go the Zambian or the Zimbabwean route will depend fundamentally on the kind of democratic precedents we set between now and then. If we get to that moment having set all sorts of democratic precedents and established democratic habits, I think we will be in good shape to go some version of the Zambian route. But what I am asking you to consider is that those precedents are going to be set by groups of people using methods and coming from backgrounds and operating within cultural contexts, which are probably very foreign to many South African supporters of liberal democracy.

I think it is the challenge facing supporters of liberal democracy in South Africa today: to do a great deal more to understand these processes, to connect with them and to try to support them, because I think that they are in effect our democratic hope.

The power variable violates not only our political history in a grand sense, but some of our personal histories, and that's why I write

Xolela Mangcu

I can always rely on Steven Friedman to give me a segue into what I want to say. I think Sipho was actually referring to Richard Calland when he was talking about some of us being described as "controversy seeking" intellectuals. There are two descriptions of me in Richard's book. The one I'm happy to be identified with is that of a black liberal democrat. I am happy with that identity.

The second description is that of a "controversy seeking" intellectual. I think the description was "controversy courting", which I think is even worse and I think it ties up with what Sipho was saying. But I'm going to capitalise on that second description for what I want to say now, and pay homage to Mrs Helen Suzman. Imagine the headlines, "Xolela Mangcu pays homage to Helen Suzman". That's the "controversy courting" intellectual.

I'm really delighted that we are at a point at which we talk about the concept of political culture. I regard myself primarily as a student of political culture. I've been writing about political culture for a very long time so I'm delighted that we're talking about this concept. I think we would go back to Rousseau's concept of the civil religion as being the intellectual origins of political culture, at least in terms of modern democratic theory.

The idea of a civil religion is basically the idea that there's a civil profession of faith, the articles of which are up to the sovereign to fix, and I think that is relevant to what we're talking about here today.

The sovereign in this case is somebody like President Thabo Mbeki. According to Rousseau, it is for that sovereign to decide what the articles of faith are.

Rousseau says that if anybody, for whatever reason, decides to violate these articles of faith — that is the dogmas of the civil religion — then that person, and I quote, "ought to be punished by death". I agree with Aubrey that we are not at a point where we are to be punished by death for violating the articles of the civil religion.

The history of modern liberalism and the history of western political thought were for a very long time dominated in many ways by that sort of Rousseauean republicanism, until much later when people like De Tocqueville called for a more clamorous approach to the idea of the civil religion, and the creation of public institutions and spaces where

individuals could, in a sense, develop what we could call the "habits of the heart" of democratic deliberation and debate. That has been the signal achievement of all those who stood against tyranny, or at least all those who stood against the Rousseauean streak.

For the past 150 to 200 years, what we have seen around the world is the rise of new values. I think we should never underestimate the progress that humanity has made and what the contribution of liberation movements to that has been. That contribution is, in a sense, what our heritage is. We shouldn't beat ourselves up too much because I think that the modern world and its values are a fundamental product of those struggles: the women's struggles, the civil rights struggles and environmental movements.

What we have at the beginning of the 21st century is really what Eric Hobsbawm called a "usable past", and it is that useable past that we use as a valuative mechanism for criticising the tyrannical Rousseauean streak whenever it shows up.

The modern world and its values are a fundamental product of the women's struggles, the civil rights struggles and environmental movements

One of the most interesting things about us, particularly South Africans who live in this day and age, is the assumption that we shall always be around and we shall always be the historical actors, and the things that we say now will not be the things of the past. We forget that in 2050 or 2070 people will be reading about us as history. There's a sense in which we kind of essentialise history around our presence in the world today.

Xolela Mangcu

We are inheritors of a long democratic tradition which is a combination of women's movements, political movements, civil rights movements and what have you, and that becomes what we use to value those who govern over us. That's just the one point I'd like to raise about our political cultural heritage — a rich history of criticism.

I want to move on and talk a little bit about Hannah Arendt. The interesting thing about Hannah Arendt is that she talks about the importance of appearing in public as a political virtue. Arendt has got a description of politics which I just love, or a metaphor that she uses for politics. She makes a distinction between the creative arts and the performing arts, and she says politics is like the performing arts. In other words, politics is not a finished product. We're all part of the performative act: the people on the stage and the people who are watching are all part of the space of public deliberation. Public deliberation is not important so much for the things that people say within that space, but for the enactment itself.

Hannah Arendt makes a distinction between the creative arts and the performing arts, and she says politics is like the performing arts

There is another part of our heritage that I want to draw in and bring to South Africa. One of the things that Arendt talks about, and this brings me to Helen Suzman and Steve Biko, is what she calls "courage", and when she says "courage" she doesn't mean courage in the grand conception of courage, in the sense of having martyrs and people who will stand in front of tanks. She says: "Courage is the willingness to leave the protective walls of your home and appear in public."

But the condition of courage exists of course with the condition of loneliness. But not loneliness in a sort of morose, desperate, sad sense but the idea that for me to get out of that door is a decision that nobody else can take for me, and really that is part of our political heritage. It is a long history of courage, and fearlessness. One of Steve Biko's best pieces of writing was called Fear: The most important determinant in South African politics. If you haven't read that, go back and read it.

I think that even though Helen Suzman and Steve Biko would have stood on different sides of the ideological divide at a particular

Although Helen Suzman and Steve Biko would have stood on different sides of the ideological divide, one in Parliament, one in the extra-parliamentary movement, they shared the notion of courage

point in time, we should now acknowledge their respective contributions. Even though they may have stood on different sides of society, one in Parliament, one in the extra-parliamentary movement, we cannot deny the fact that in an Arendtian sense, they shared the notion of courage, and that's homage to you, Mrs Suzman.

So courage and fearlessness is an integral part of our political culture. In black society, obviously, we have numerous stories of people, everyday people, who stood up and did what they needed to do because they had no choice. But it is this element of courage that I think is important. We should retain it as much as we can, not because we're looking for heroes or heroines, not because we want to be celebrated intellectuals or controversial intellectuals, but because the things that are happening in this country continue to demand courage and fearlessness.

I want to deal with this question of identity that Steven was talking about. When you talk about identity, I want to talk about identity not in a group sense. Whenever we talk about social change, we tend to talk about social change only in a group collective sense. Zygmunt Bauman says something interesting about those of us who do write and speak in public. He says that organic intellectuals are also organic intellectuals of their own narratives. So when I write a newspaper column it may have something to do with the fact that I was part of the black consciousness movement. It may have something to do with the fact that I'm part of a collective, which is a new South Africa, but primarily it has to do with the individual, and we never talk about the individual.

Kwame Anthony Appiah, by the way, talks, very interestingly, about the individual, and that we have personal histories that sometimes we find violated. Now my personal history goes back to the 19th century Eastern Cape intellectuals. I always boast that my great-grandfather was a columnist in the 1860s. But the thing about those folks — the Jabavus, the Rubusanas, the Tiyo Sogas — is that they understood the meaning of appearing in public. They understood the meaning of debate, and they understood that whatever it was that they were doing, they always had a sense of the future, that there were people for whom they were working.

In a sense, the political culture that we have now is cynical. It's about power in the here and now. The important variable, of course, is that we are now in power and we are in government, but the fact that we are in power has introduced a variable which we never had. The power variable violates not only our political history in a grand sense, but some of our personal histories, and that's why I write.

Are we willing to accept a situation where people in government have private interests that may not only overlap but eclipse their public responsibilities?

Richard Calland

Xolela previewed what he was going to say about the entry relating to him in my book before we came in, and so I hurriedly checked the reference during the start of this seminar and discovered to my horror, in the section entitled "Commentators or Public Intellectuals", that I'd identified as the four most prominent such people in South Africa, the four gentlemen sitting to my left. And given that Xolela had intimated that he was going to pick a bone with me in public about his entry, I sat with some trepidation as the other four spoke, but three were more generous in drawing attention to what I said about them.

But in all seriousness, it is an honour to share a platform with all four of them and I'm grateful for the invitation from the Foundation to do so.

The topic you've asked us to address, however, is an extremely naughty one, an extremely difficult one, mischievous and awkward, and I was tempted to do what my New Labour Party training in the 1980s would have persuaded me to do, which was simply ignore it and answer a different question. In fact, all five of us appear to have answered a different question, in the sense that we come at the problem from very different angles. And given that probably 80 per cent of the commentary in the English-speaking language press comes from one or other of the five of us, I don't know whether it's a source of encouragement or otherwise that we've taken such different approaches to the topic. I hope the former. I think it shows the difficulty of the problem but also the diversity of intellectual responses to difficult challenges.

Let me throw in my own analysis. I will, in headline terms, identify what I would see as some of the key questions or challenges of political culture as we go ahead. And I want to particularly take up three political concepts that I believe are political cultural concepts, that are often seen as liberal democratic concepts and I want to quarrel with why they are seen as such and argue that, in fact, they should be seen in a much broader ideological construct.

First is the question of the separation of powers. Secondly, the related subject of the rule of law, and thirdly, and this is perhaps less obviously a liberal democratic concept, the question of conflicts of interest and how they're managed. And let me say that how we position our democratic culture, our political culture, in respect of each of these three topics, I suspect will determine the strength, resilience and durability of our democratic institutions for the next generation.

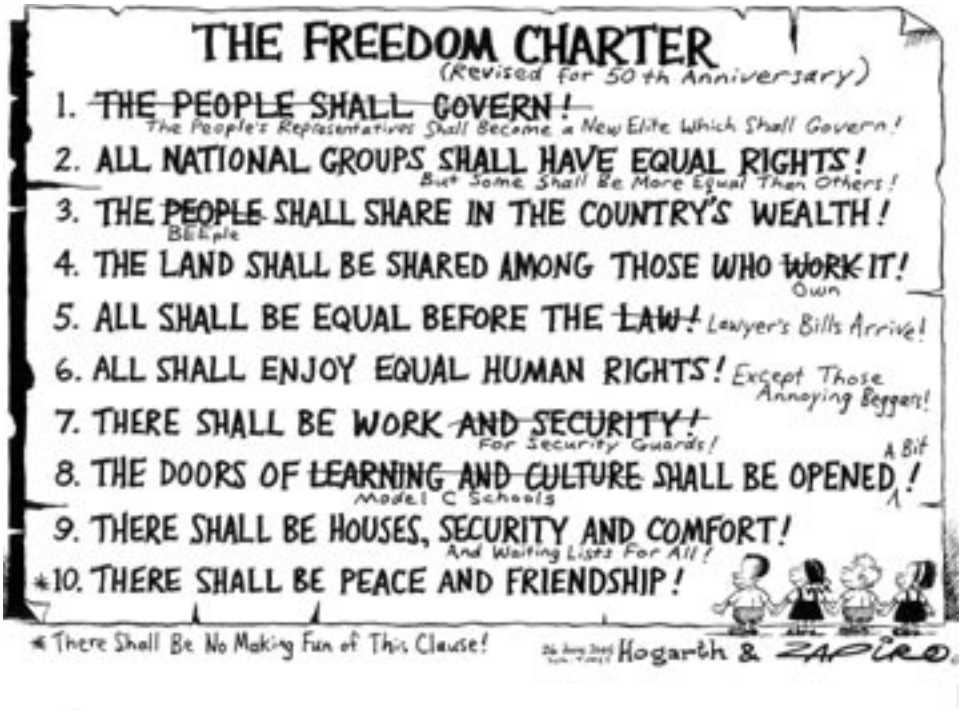
There is an emerging and quite fierce public debate about the separation of powers and it is, in my view, very unfortunately organised in the sense that what one is hearing is one part of the system of government blaming another part for its own failures. So, for example, you find the executive branch of government complaining about "judicial interference", when in fact the root cause of the problem may well be incompetence, lack of capacity or sheer corruption within the executive branch that is causing the problem.

There's an attempt to, in a sense, distract from core analysis by blaming another part of the system and that in turn is then affecting our attitudes to the rule of law, and to the court system in particular. So there's quite a growing, and I would say, unhealthy, debate about the role of the judiciary.

Now why is it important to say, as I believe it is, that these are concepts that should not be owned by liberal democrats but shared by liberal democrats with the rest of us? One could argue that the separation of powers is — as some people are — "anti-liberal"; it is not a concept designed to protect vested interests, in other words, a conservative concept. In fact it is there to protect the social transformation project, and it is only by separating power, diffusing it, it is only by instituting a proper system of checks and balances that one can ensure that the social transformation project that lies at the heart of our Constitution remains intact.

And certainly that's the view of many within the African National Congress, although they often are not the people whose voice is heard the loudest — though I shared a platform last week with Kader

Richard Calland



To argue that the separation of powers is about protecting vested interests, that it's about constraining the executive, is a seriously misguided way of looking at life

Asmal, talking about some of the things in my book, and we agreed that there is a massive overlap between liberal democratic theory and ideology, on the one hand, and social democracy on the other, and that it is a mistake to separate the two.

Let me digress very briefly to say that this debate, although it's the end of the year, is very well timed. I don't know if you knew that Tony Leon was going to intimate his resignation last weekend. But of course that indicates for all of us, I suspect, that there is an opportunity to recast at least the opposition/government party relationship. That there is an opportunity to create a different set of parameters for that debate, and therefore, I would argue, an opportunity to recover the liberal values that the Democratic Alliance has rather lost sight of, and to regain them. But that's a digression, and in a sense it's none of my business.

To return to the question of rights, the judiciary are there, as we all know, to state the obvious, to protect and allow us to exercise the rights within the Constitution, which were hard won. Many of those rights are there to promote the social transformation project, to ensure that human dignity is restored to the majority and all South Africans, and so therefore the role of the courts in protecting and promoting those rights is fundamental, I would argue, to the transformation project.

To argue that the separation of powers is in some way about protecting vested interests, that it's about constraining the executive in what it's doing, is a seriously misguided way of looking at life and I think that if that becomes the predominant political culture, then we're in grave danger. As we enter into this very important debate about the separation of powers, we must ensure that it is not cornered by any one party or group

or tradition or theory or practice, but rather that there is a full public debate about it in which we understand why the separation of powers is important to the maintenance and protection of human rights.

Lastly, the conflict of interest question. We know that there is a growing debate about the overlap between politics and businesses, a theme of my book. I talk about the congealing embrace that now links

Liberal democracy does not run counter to the social democratictransformation project

business and politics, and there is a new establishment that is being formed around these very interesting, intriguing overlaps. In a social transformatory environment it's inevitable that there will be some degree of overlap. It's inevitable that in changing government, in changing politics, one is also going to accept and embrace the fact that economic power will change hands.

The question is, how do you ensure that the one does not contaminate the other? That those who are there to serve the public interest are in fact serving the public interest, and not serving a private interest? How do we ensure that that is the case? How do we ensure that as a society we have full trust that those in government are serving the public interest? That, for me, is the core question.

We can have transparency. We can have declarations. We can have mechanisms of disclosure, but if they're not complied with then there is a problem. The Auditor General found two things in his report early this year. First, that one in ten public servants have some sort of financial outside private interest. Secondly, he found that many had not disclosed, so the rules are not being obeyed. He's in the process, as I understand it, of compiling a second report which will look at the impact of those conflicts of interest. Have they in fact affected any tendering process? Have they in fact contaminated democratic governance in any way, shape or form?

The rules and regulations, on the one hand, are important, but I would argue in the end it's about our values as a society. How much corruption are we willing to accept? Are we prepared to live in a society in which people regularly wear more than one hat? Are we willing to accept a situation where people in government have private interests that may not only overlap, but eclipse their public responsibilities? Those are core questions, I would argue, and I think that in framing our political culture in terms of values, as well as in terms of law and policy, we will move further along the road towards understanding the way ahead.

I hope that the end of the Leon era, if I can put it in that way, represents a good point of departure for a new debate about liberal values in this country, and that through debates such as this we'll begin to understand the synergy that exists, to understand that it's not a zero-sum game, that liberal democracy does not run counter to the social democratic transformation project. Rather that the overlap is there to enhance and protect, and to ensure that our democracy consolidates and that our democratic institutions are in fact strong.

It is only through debate and a culture of debate that we will be able to see those links, and to ensure that they are there in practice as well as theory. So I congratulate, once again, the Foundation for starting this process, and I hope that this is the first of many successful debates that you have in the future, and we wish you well in that process.

Questions & Answers

Question one:

I'm Msimelelo Njwabane, from City Press. My question is for Richard Calland. You raised an issue about a new debate about liberal democracy which does not necessarily run counter to social transformation. Maybe if you guys can touch on what are some of the issues that you would highlight as important in entrenching that? If we may take the DA, for instance, it's always seen as anti-transformation, anti-black. How do you see them in a sense that they claim to represent what we call liberal democracy, maybe countering that kind of

Answers:

MR CALLAND: Just one very quick short point in response to our friend's question from City Press on liberalism. It seems to me that whilst liberalism in its truest traditional sense focuses on and emphasises individual rights rather than collective rights, if you do that in this country, at this point in history, then you send out certain messages. So if, as the leader of the DA, as Mr Leon did in March this year, you give a flagship speech to commemorate the ten-year anniversary of the Constitution, and in a long speech you fail to mention not only any of the collective rights, but specifically the socio-economic rights, in the Constitution, then what you do is you send out a message that you don't care about the rights to clean water, the right to decent education, the right to adequate health care, the right to access to health treatment and so on.

If you want to convey that, fine, but then you fall into the trap of connecting liberalism with privilege, and I think that's a betrayal of true liberal values. And that's where, if I can offer advice to the DA, which is certainly not my position, that's probably the realignment that needs to take place and that would be, I think, healthy for our political culture, and it would at least remove the labelling thing that someone mentioned earlier that goes on with this badge of liberalism. It shouldn't be a badge of dishonour but a badge of honour.

MR SEEPE: The question about constitutionalism is interesting — as I've said, we need to liberate the notion of liberalism from the whiteness, the white image that it has, that many of us consider ourselves to be liberals and we don't see anything wrong with that. And part of the biggest problem is that, because of the convenience with which we would use "liberals" to refer to "white", it became a strategy, a political strategy to shut up the DA and shut up others, so that we don't allow ourselves to hear what liberalism stands for.

There is a collection of essays called Ironic Victory. One of the things that Patrick Laurence says in his chapter is that when you look at the negotiations that resulted in the drafting of the Constitution, none of the parties had a liberal connotation to their names. But liberal values are the ones

that won the day, and hence they call it an ironic victory. Many issues that Helen Suzman has been championing won the day. It was the values that were espoused by Helen Suzman that both the National Party and the ANC could agree with. We need to disempower [the pejorative connotation liberalism invokes in South Africa] by really indicating that people like Penuell Maduna, Kader Asmal, Matthews Phosa and Nelson Mandela would have no problem in saying that there is something of a liberal streak in them. I think the ANC could not be a broad church where there are so many different perspectives that are juxtaposed without having certain elements of tolerance.

One would think that we should go back and ask what liberalism means? People have not been educated about what it means. We have distorted what it means for political gain and political interests.

MR FRIEDMAN: As far as your question about liberal democracy is concerned, Sipho said most of it. I think that it is very important to separate liberal democracy as a set of ideas from the particular groups of people who have been associated with those ideas in South Africa, which doesn't for a moment mean that those people are dishonourable. I think some are, but none of those are in this room so it doesn't matter.

But my point is that I think that on occasion South African liberals have filtered their liberalism through the lens of where they find themselves in this society. Suburban white folk very often historically, although that's changing to a certain

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extent, and certainly in the last twelve years, some people in South Africa have used liberalism as a flag of convenience for some very illiberal politics. So I think in that context one has to separate the two.

I think it's also very important for people who feel that we need quite a fundamental shift in economic power relations in this society, which liberals might not be comfortable with, to remember that the radical criticism of liberalism which I think we still take seriously today, didn't have any problems with the kind of ideas liberals were espousing about the need for pluralism, about the need for tolerance, mutual respect and individual rights. The criticism was that it didn't go far enough and hopefully that is a debate we need to hold. But I think even those of us who would want to hold that debate would insist that you can't seriously think of a democratic future in South Africa which isn't influenced by liberal ideas in very important ways. So I think that the process of separating the ideas from the proponents is very important.

MR MANGCU: With respect to liberal democracy, I think that parties like the DA should strategically decide what it is that they're going to represent. I think that they're too much obsessed with gaining more and more seats in Parliament and winning power, and I think that's a dead end, if you like. I'm of the opinion that the DA in many ways is not going to expand much beyond where it is. So it seems to me that what a party like that should do is say, okay, this is what we are going to trumpet for the rest of our lives and that becomes a historical mandate. Because you get corrupted as a party by the pursuit of power, and I think that what has happened to the DA.

What the DA should do, in my view, is to concentrate on political pluralism, political tolerance, and make that their core feature. They could pick on any other value, but I think that there is no more important value in this country right now than political tolerance. You know, for me, that is where we are. I mean, I hear you, Aubrey, when you say we are not scared of whether we're going to get shot or whatever. Maybe so, but we don't know what will happen down the line unless you have this value of tolerance and pluralism continually drummed up in our society, in our communities, in our newspapers, everywhere. For me that's the most important political value right now.

Question two:

The name is Aaron Ngema. I'd like to prefix my question or comment by saying, and I think people like Sipho and Xolela will identify with this, "Noise does not contribute to the debate," and this was the kind of teaching we had in the 1970s.

What I want to say is, the weekend events, there's a campaign to name and shame which to me means taking these people up there, hanging them out to dry and letting people take pot shots at them. What do you expect to happen? Do you expect those people to accept that, particularly in an area like KwaZulu-Natal, which to me, develops a new political culture?

Answers:

MR MATSHIQI: Let me start with the name and shame campaign. I'm slightly constrained because I'm writing an article tonight for Sunday about this and I would have liked you to pay for those views.

I think the words "political thuggery" have dominated the debate about what happened on Saturday, and my view is that to the extent that what you saw was an act of political thuggery, it may also have been

a clash between two forms of political thuggery; blue-collar political thuggery and white-collar political thuggery, and what we saw on Saturday may have been a response to what I call white-collar political thuggery, in the sense that those who protested may have been protesting against what they perceive to be how white-collar political thugs manipulate institutions, manipulate processes and systems in order to produce outcomes that are advantageous to them, at the expense of those who form part of the blue-collar political class.

But I think to the extent that those who protested on Saturday have the right to protest, the democratic right to protest, and you will remember that last year when President Mbeki was asked about the burning of t-shirts bearing his image his response was: "We are a democracy and people have the right to protest", so to the extent that they have the right to protest, I think we must also add to that a sense of occasion. We have the right to protest. I doubt that they displayed a sense of occasion by protesting in that manner at a funeral, and to the extent that they may have been motivated by antipathies towards Mbeki and may have been expressing some support for Zuma, I think Mbeki had the best weekend he has had for a long time, in the sense that what happened at that funeral will benefit Mbeki more that it benefits Zuma, in addition, of course, to what happened in the other Nguni province, the Eastern Cape.

I don't know how they are going to identify them. I did not know the ANC possessed the technology to identify them but if they do, and they do so successfully, they

When Mbeki was asked about the burning of t-shirts bearing his image his response was: "We are a democracy and people have the right to protest"

must bear two things in mind. Firstly, that not all those who had protested, not only on Saturday but before, in opposition to Mbeki or in support for Zuma, are members of the ANC. Support for Zuma in the province cuts across party-political lines, so they may well find that some of them are actually not ANC members.

But more importantly, it may be difficult for the ANC in that province to act against those who are ANC members, because it might entrench antipathies towards Mbeki. But they have a choice. If they do not act they may be feeding into the emerging perception that that group represents an irrational stream in South African politics, and it's quite possible that what we saw on Saturday was a turning point for the Zuma campaign, to the extent that I think it was terribly damaging for him and his image.

MR SEEPE: Just to amplify one point which ties in with what Richard raised, when Aubrey asks whether the ANC has the capacity and the technology. So if it goes that way [that is, if the ANC tries to identify those who protested against President Mbeki] you might have a serious situation where state resources might then be used. This will then lead to the conflation of party interests and state power and it becomes very important. As Aubrey says,

think about what it takes to actually check on all those people — we know that the ANC does not have that capacity.

The only conclusion is if they are going to do it, they will have to find resources somewhere. We have had the Oilgate scandal, so maybe there might be another source of resources, but at the moment the party has claimed to be cash-strapped.

But we need to find a way in which we can manage our differences without resorting to what may be considered to be embarrassing situations

Most importantly, this points to my earlier submission that we have not learnt the art of disagreeing without being disagreeable. We have not learnt the art of engagement. This is the culture that we have been taught, that you howl at those you don't agree with, you deprive them of the opportunity of speaking and, in so doing you deprive others of the right to hear the message.

At the same time it is very important that we should not demonise what you may call [legitimate] protest, because people are unhappy. It is improper for us to pretend that there's happiness even within the Alliance. But the question is how the Alliance is going to deal with those issues. We know that those who are in the Alliance have argued that the notion of internal debates does not exist. You should actually read what Blade Nzimande says about that and what many other people say about it. But we need to find a way in which we can manage our differences without resorting to what may be considered to be embarrassing situations.

MR FRIEDMAN: First of all, just on the naming and shaming thing, I think this raises a very important issue. From the sidelines as an analyst, it's not all that relevant to our conversation, but I think that some of us have been suggesting for a while that a lot of the newspaper coverage we've been reading which suggests that Mr Mbeki has collapsed as a political force and it's just a question of when the last rites will be administered, has been consistently inaccurate throughout, and I think we're now seeing the evidence of that.

And the first evidence of that was the Eastern Cape ANC Congress and the second evidence was the threat to name and shame, and I think there's going to be a lot more of that sort of thing. Which gives me a context to make the point I want to make, which is that it seems to me that part of what our topic today challenges us to think about is that in a society, in most societies, but certainly in a society with our political culture, it is extremely easy to respond to people who hold opposing points of view or to people you find disagreeable in a way which, in theory, is perfectly consistent with democratic debate. You don't shut them up, you don't threaten to act against them in any way, etc, but respond in a way which entirely demonises them and vilifies them.

And this happens on all sides of the fence. On the one side of the fence there

was a great deal of exception taken to the notorious or famous “fight back” campaign, and I think that that issue was at the back of that. The way in which Mr Mbeki very often talks about his Alliance partners is very much part of that. And so we could go on. I think if we are concerned about political culture and democracy in this country, one of the things we need to think about a great deal is what are the limits. To what extent does one say, well, okay, a democracy entitles you to say that. But by saying that, you so denigrated the other person, you so vilified them that really, this is no longer a contribution to democratic exchange. It's certainly an issue which worries me a lot because it's a big issue in this community — particularly in the sub-community I'm in the process of getting thrown out of — but I think that it's a major issue for the society as a whole.

MR MANGCU: Given that Aubrey did a commercial for his writing on Sunday, I'm going to do a commercial for my column tomorrow and the title is — well, they'll change the title anyway — but my title is: "Ten reasons why Thabo Mbeki should reject the call for a third term." One of the reasons is that I think that the people who are calling for a third term are playing with fire in a most incredible, incredible way. I disagree with Steven about what happened in the Eastern Cape actually means.

There was a very small margin of victory for Mr Mbeki in a province that should be basically his home base. The margin was something like 200. So you have a deeply divided province there, and even as those people go to congress, the Eastern Cape doesn't come as a solid block with 650 votes. It goes there divided; number one.

Number two, I can see a backlash. I can see an ethnic backlash that is traditionally known as an ethnic fight between the ANC and the IFP. But what you actually see is an ethnic backlash right in the bosom of the ANC, and the violence of it actually scares me. I am one of those people who were literally traumatised by the violence of the 1980s and there is nothing that scares me as much as people who make decisions without any consideration of the implications of what they are saying or doing.

And I actually think that it will create a sense of a power grab. In other provinces there'll be a sense in the ANC of some suspicion of why a third term [is being sought]. I was on radio this morning and there were people, delegates who were at that conference, who say they don't know anything about this resolution and they were at that conference. So the authenticity of the resolution itself is under question.

Coming back to the naming and shaming thing, I don't know what that achieves. I think that any high-handed approach to those folks is not going to work, period, and it's going to create more and more conflict and violence as we go along. I was with Stone Sizani on radio and he says the reason they want Mbeki to go for a third term is because he's going to introduce stability in the ANC. I'm saying 'daah', as my daughter would say. I mean, it's the opposite. So that's the problem.

Mbeki third term 'raises spectre of power grab'

BUSINESS DAY, Thursday, December 7 2006

Backlash 'right in the bosom of the ANC'

Xolela Mangcu, Steven Friedman, Sipho Seepe and Aubrey Matshiqi at the Helen Suzman Foundation roundtable debate Picture: LEON SADIKI

Amy Musgrave
Political Correspondent

THE decision to ask President Thabo Mbeki to stand for a third term as president of the African National Congress (ANC) by the Eastern Cape branch of the party might be interpreted as a power grab by other members, a political analyst warned yesterday.

Xolela Mangcu, of Wits University, said the perception of a power grab could create a backlash "right in the bosom of the ANC" and result in some kind of violence. "(The third term) will create in the country a sense of a power grab (because) some people in the ANC are going to be questioning the reason for the third term," he said.

Mangcu was participating in a Helen Suzman Foundation roundtable debate on the country's unfolding political situation with other political analysts in Johannesburg yesterday.

On Sunday, the ANC in Eastern Cape passed a resolution encouraging Mbeki to stand for a third term as party leader ahead of the elective conference in December next year. Although the ANC's constitution does not stipulate how long Mbeki can remain as president, many in the party, including the ANC Youth League, want his deputy, Jacob Zuma, to succeed him.

Although Mbeki has said he will not serve another term as president of SA, he has not ruled out remaining president of the ruling party, possibly in a bid to prevent Zuma taking over the party.

Mangcu said some ANC members at the Eastern Cape conference told him that they had not known about the resolution.

Those asking Mbeki to stand for a third term were playing a "dangerous" game, he said. The resolution was passed after former Eastern Cape education MEC Stone Sizani, a staunch ally of Mbeki, narrowly beat off a rival's challenge to head the ANC in the province, which is supposed to be Mbeki's stronghold.

The ANC's presidential succession battle is believed to have resulted in people heckling Mbeki and walking out on him at the reburial of ANC stalwart Moses Mabhida in Pietermaritzburg on Saturday. Although the group has not been identified, it is believed they were Zuma supporters.

The analysts also criticised ANC secretary-general Kgalema Motlanthe's decision to identify and shame those responsible for the heckling and the blowing of vuvuzelas when Mbeki spoke.

Aubrey Matshiqi, senior associate political analyst with the Centre for Political Studies, said the group had the right to protest. He said the name-and-shame campaign would be difficult as some of them might not be ANC members. They were there because Zuma, who spoke at the event, had support in KwaZulu-Natal across political party lines.

Matshiqi and Prof Sipho Seepe, director of the Henley Management College, questioned what resources the ANC had to carry out such a punitive campaign.

Comment: Page 10

Pundits scold ruling party MPs for being overly critical and dismissive of ideas that do not match their own

Cancer of political intolerance 'taking root in public life'

Amy Musgrave

Political Correspondent

Prof Sipho Seepe warns that intolerance, labelling of people will make the country poorer

BUSINESS DAY, Friday, December 8 2006

Relevant articles

BUSINESSDAY

Thursday, December 7 2006

Party leadership

ON THE face of it, the hullabaloo over the Eastern Cape African National Congress (ANC) adopting a resolution at its recent provincial conference "encouraging" President Thabo Mbeki to stand for a third term as party president is a storm in a teacup.

Unlike the presidency of SA, which has a constitutionally mandated two-term limit, there is nothing in the ANC's founding documents that prevents him from doing so. Nor is it cast in stone that the president of the party that wins the most votes in a general election must necessarily become president of the country. That may have been the case so far, but our democracy is too young for it to be considered a tradition.

It would also be a mistake to give Eastern Cape's resolution more weight than it deserves. This was not a considered proposal that had been widely circulated before being placed on the agenda. The motion came from the floor and appears to have caught many branch representatives by surprise. They may have voted for it in a show of solidarity, but it is not clear that the motion would even have made the agenda had it followed the official channels. Anyway, even though the province is the biggest voting bloc in the ANC, the resolution has no standing nationally and a lot could change before the party's leadership elections take place in 2008.

Still, it is not a bad thing that the debate is taking place early, and with Mbeki's final term as president of the country coming to an end in 2009, it would be naive to believe that the Eastern Cape resolution has no significance at all. Few need reminding that there is a succession battle raging beneath the surface of the ANC, and the various factions can be expected to use every opportunity to influence the race. Re-electing Mbeki to a third term as party leader would not prevent deputy president Jacob Zuma from becoming president of the country, but it would certainly place a significant obstacle in his path.

Intraparty politics aside, there are arguments both for and against separating the positions of leader of the dominant political party and president of the country. It is often difficult for people to distinguish between the two positions when they are occupied by the same person, and this can be problematic when it comes to issues such as fundraising. The president of SA must be seen to act in the best interests of the country and all of its citizens, not just those who voted for the party he or she represents.

That said, having two centres of power can be a destabilising factor, especially if they are antagonistic towards one another. This situation has emerged in Western Cape, where premier Ebrahim Rasool, an Mbeki appointee, was ousted as provincial chairman of the ANC. Much of the political turbulence in the province over the past year can be attributed to the ongoing power struggle. This has not been good for the ANC, which lost control of the city of Cape Town partly because of infighting, and the disruption it has caused has been detrimental to service delivery and consequently the public's faith in democracy. SA cannot afford to have its president distracted and constantly second-guessed by his or her own party.

There is also a strong argument that South African politics would benefit from some fresh blood. Mbeki has been an influential, if not dominant, presence in government since the first democratic election and by now his big ideas have either been implemented or are not going to fly. Just as Democratic Alliance leader Tony Leon's decision to step down provides the opportunity for the party to take stock and change tack under new leadership, so the ANC could be rejuvenated with a different hand on the tiller. There is no shortage of talented people in the ANC, but if Mbeki does decide to stay in the race there is a danger they will continue to lie low to avoid being caught in the crossfire.

BUSINESSDAY

Thursday, December 7 2006

Ten reasons Mbeki should reject calls for third term at ANC helm

XOLELA MANGCU

HERE are 10 reasons why President Thabo Mbeki should reject calls from certain sections of the African National Congress (ANC) in Eastern Cape that he serve a third term as party president.

First, such a development would take the ANC closer to the edge of the slippery slope of one-man rule. The ANC would be veering dangerously close to changing the constitution to extend Mbeki's stay as leader of the country as a whole. I may have been brought up differently but there is something quite unseemly about a whole group of adults being so obsessed on one individual that they would mortgage their futures this way.

Second, we know the horrors of one-man rule from the experience of other African countries, with Zimbabwe being the latest example.

I once had the privilege of hosting the late Mwalimu Julius Nyerere at a workshop. He used himself as an example of the dangers of the big man syndrome in Africa. "You either supported me or you shut up," he said. "No one could come out and oppose me, because he would be a traitor. If you were working for government, you did not want to lose your job and so you shut up. Occasionally you might even secretly come to me and give me some facts."

There are indeed plenty of examples of government mendacities who go around issuing political explanations just to please the "Great Leader".

Third, the call for a third term for Mbeki could lead us to a tribal conflagration such as we have not seen in our democracy. The call could be interpreted by all sorts of ethnic entrepreneurs as yet another attempt by the Xhosas to hold on to power. Mbeki and Jacob Zuma should free-still such tribal Armageddon by gracefully exiting from the political stage. It is outrageous for people to suggest that the ANC lacks leaders. What about Cyril Ramaphosa, Tokyo Sexwale, Mosiuoa Lekota, Kgalema Motlanthe and many others?

Fourth, a third term for Mbeki at the helm of the ruling party would mean more of the same in terms of public policy. For years Mbeki has refused calls to become a champion in the battle against HIV/AIDS — the most devastating public policy problem of our times. We would likely see more of the same also in terms of government's economic policy, leading to endless battles with the other members of the tripartite alliance.

Fifth, such battles would bring forward the prospects of a split in the ANC. An emboldened Mbeki might be tempted to ostracise the ANC's alliance partners even further. At the moment the other alliance partners do not have a political champion. Such a champion could emerge from within the ANC were Mbeki to be elected for another term.

The development of such a left-wing opposition could augur well for our democracy but I doubt Mbeki would want to go down in history as the person under whose leadership the ANC split.

Sixth, the call for a third term is a political gambit that could backfire with increasing vocal opposition from within the ANC in other provinces, and could ultimately leave the president with egg on his face. Already, delegates at the Eastern Cape conference give different accounts of what really transpired, putting into doubt the authenticity of the call.

It is important to bear in mind that the Mbeki faction won by the smallest of margins, meaning that Eastern Cape will be going to the December 2007 leadership conference with a divided delegation.

Seventh, even if Mbeki were to adopt a conciliatory approach to his opponents within the movement, he would be hobbled to act against powerful individuals by the desire to hold the party together, and to get backing for his preferred successor.

It could well be that Mbeki's inaction against police commissioner Jackie Selebi has more to do with issues relating to the ANC's internal balance of power than with absence of wrongdoing by the commissioner. After all, Jacob Zuma was dismissed for something far less sinister than what is being alleged against Selebi.

Eighth, as political analyst Thabo Rapoo put it, as the former head of state, Mbeki might be tempted to intervene in the processes of government from behind the scenes, leading to confusion about where the buck really stops.

Ninth, growing perceptions of tribal, political and criminal instability would put SA's prospects of hosting the World Cup in further jeopardy.

Tenth, this country needs a changing of the guard — a fresh face, a fresh soul, a fresh voice and a new image. That would send a powerfully evocative message to the world — a leadership change without a gunshot being fired.

Nelson Mandela left us such a wonderful legacy when he stepped down from both the leadership of the ANC and government after one term in office. Two terms as ANC leader must be enough for Mbeki, surely?

■ *Dr Mangcu is visiting scholar, Public Intellectual Life Project, at the University of the Witwatersrand. He is also a non-resident W.E.B. DuBois Fellow at Harvard University.*

Relevant articles

BUSINESSDAY

BUSINESS DAY, Tuesday, December 12 2006

ANC LEADERSHIP/Aubrey Matshiqi

In the provinces of power and dreams

WRITING about the leadership race of the African National Congress (ANC) is fraught with many difficulties, including what I sometimes suspect are attempts to use political commentators as "primary definers". The use of political commentators as primary definers entails presenting their views in a way that seeks to legitimise a partisan political stance based on the perceived influence of such commentators.

There are times when this exercise is about editing what they write in a way intended to promote or undermine particular strands of political opinion. What follows is my interpretation of the shameful events that took place at the rebuttal in KwaZulu-Natal of African National Congress (ANC) and South African Communist Party stalwart Moses Mabhida, and events in Eastern Cape — in an attempt to correct the slant given to my views on these matters by the injudicious editing of an article I wrote for another newspaper.

The disruption of the president's speech at the Mabhida rebuttal ceremony has been roundly and correctly condemned. The walkout by those who sought to register their protest against the legal and political difficulties they believe Mbeki has imposed on Jacob Zuma was undoubtedly intended to advance Zuma's political interests. However, the protesters, while exercising their democratic right to protest, also betrayed a lack of understanding of what it means to have a sense of occasion. Their actions underestimated Zuma more than they hurt Mbeki politically. They reinforced the perception that Zuma heads a coalition of the irrational.

> **'The protesters' actions undermined Zuma more than they hurt Mbeki'**

While any single shift in the balance of support for Mbeki and Zuma will not always be definitive with regard to the evolution and outcome of the succession battle, the Zuma camp must re-assess its support base and tactical orientation. They must abandon those within their support base whose statements and actions have the potential to prejudice Mbhokhi.

They must also realise that Mbeki, knowing that he — unlike Zuma — cannot rely on mass popular appeal, has been working the provincial structures of the ANC to gain a tactical advantage over the Zuma camp. The failure to adopt a different tactical approach may lead to more setbacks of the kind Zuma suffered with the resolution of the Eastern Cape ANC to encourage Mbeki to run for a third term as party leader.

It is possible that events in KwaZulu-Natal played a role in bridging some of the divisions that existed in Eastern Cape prior to the ANC's provincial conference, in a way that may lend a Zuko-Xhosa dynamic to the Zuma-Mbeki broedertwis. The dreams of Mbeki supporters in Eastern Cape will come true if Zuma does not come out openly to indicate what things said or done to his name he will not tolerate.

The Eastern Cape ANC dreams — as we saw with the resolution they adopted — of a third term for Mbeki as president of the ruling party. This probably resonates with the sentiments of those who are in panic about the possibility of a Zuma presidency and those who have genuine concerns about his suitability. It is, however, not insignificant that the resolution was not tabled for discussion in conference commissions and for further debate during the plenary sessions. This may suggest lower levels of consensus within Eastern Cape structures on the question of Mbeki's third term than we are led to believe.

The Eastern Cape structures of the ANC are much more divided than the resolution seems to suggest. We must bear in mind that the original draft of the third-term resolution was not adopted by conference. What was adopted was an amended and toned-down version. The battle for Eastern Cape is, therefore, far from over. When the nomination process starts in 2007, there will be a fierce contest in the province around the idea of a third term for Mbeki.

Those who love democracy more than the ANC and its president may discourage Mbeki from seeking a third term as either president of party or country. That the constitution of the ANC allows Mbeki to be president for life, if he and the party are so inclined, is not good enough reason to compromise our democracy by considering an option that may lead to calls for a constitutional amendment, with Mbeki saying: "The people made me do it." The ANC does not have a shortage of leaders. What we are experiencing is a shortage of candidates, which results from the climate of fear within the party over the question of succession. We must remember that leaders are at times produced by a series of political accidents and do not always represent the best the party has to offer.

It is not true that the ANC is incapable of producing leaders who are either better than, or of the same calibre as, Mbeki and Zuma.

■ *Matshiqi is senior associate political analyst Centre for Policy Studies.*

BUSINESSDAY

Friday, December 15 2006

Little hope for SA unless we all fly the flag of real reconciliation

AUBREY MATSHIQI

ON MARCH 17 1992, white South Africans voted in a referendum to answer the question, "Do you support continuation of the reform process which the state president began on February 2 1990, and which is aimed at a new constitution through negotiations?" Almost 69% of the voters said "yes", what was then the Northern Transvaal returned a "no" vote, the far right boycotted the referendum completely, and support among Afrikaners was, albeit marginally, higher than among English speakers.

Because the black majority did not participate in this process, it was left to white people to decide whether there should be a negotiated settlement to end white minority rule.

The exclusive participation of whites in this plebiscite and their majority support for a political settlement as formulated in terms of the referendum question is partly responsible for the lie that democracy was bequeathed on the black majority by white voters. This is a lie that is invoked annually as we debate the extent to which the reconciliation project is succeeding in creating conditions for the emergence of a "rainbow nation". Perhaps the fact that Reconciliation Day is celebrated during the "silly season" assists this absurd assertion.

The fact is, many whites — including FW de Klerk — had a different political dispensation in mind when they voted "yes". They thought the reform process they were supporting would result in a form of "power sharing" that would still retain substantial political power in white hands. They understood very well that the challenge was not to destroy minority rule but to perpetuate it in an acceptable form. Some of the tensions between former president Nelson Mandela and De Klerk were informed by this conception of a post-apartheid order.

To their credit, many white people have accepted — grudgingly or genuinely — that this was but a silly dream. There are, however, still too many white people who, in various ways, seem not to have come to terms with our post-apartheid reality. This is exemplified by those who continue to vote against our democracy by flying the apartheid flag during rugby matches. They do this also to make the point that rugby should be a white sport in the same way that SA should have remained a white country.

Those who fly the apartheid flag fall into two groups: those who fly it openly in stadiums and at the OR Tambo International Airport — maybe in protest against the name change — and those who fly it secretly in their hearts and minds.

The second group poses much more of a danger to the reconciliation process because their dishonesty feeds the illusion of a "rainbow nation" that is not reconciling as vehemently as we would like to believe. The flags in their hearts and minds give a new meaning to the psychological concept of "consensual bonding". They have learnt to "bond" with other races in contexts where lack of compliance can undermine their interests. They have mastered the art of being racist in contexts where such racism will not have adverse consequences.

Those whose stupidity comics disguised as racism deserve our pity and we should not invest too much time and attention on them.

I am not oblivious to the fact that the views I am expressing here may pose a danger of a different kind. There is always the possibility that they will fall victim to the insidious commodification of blackness.

Blackness is commodified when those with more melanin in their skins try to advantage themselves or seek to divert attention from their weaknesses and failures by misappropriating the race discourse.

Given all of this, is there hope for the reconciliation project?

If the idea of a rainbow nation is an unrealisable dream, then the liberation struggle was a monumental waste of time, effort and lives. When we say "The struggle continues" we must also mean that the struggle for racial harmony and the creation of a racial paradise must continue despite the difficulties encountered.

In this struggle we must be guided by the wisdom of Albert Einstein when he said, "A human being is part of the whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space. We experience ourselves, our thoughts and feelings as something separate from the rest. A kind of optical delusion of consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us.

"Our task must be to free ourselves from the prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty ... we shall require a substantially new manner of thinking if mankind is to survive."

We must all participate in the reconciliation project, in the knowledge that the survival of our nation — and indeed humanity — depends on what we do.

■ *Matshiqi is senior associate political analyst, Centre for Policy Studies.*

Relevant articles

BUSINESSDAY
Wednesday, December 20 2006

OPINION & ANALYSIS

POLITICAL CULTURE/Sipho Seepe

The year South Africans chose to boo, not discuss

PRESIDENT Thabo Mbeki would probably consider this year as the one in which some members of the African National Congress (ANC) displayed disloyalty and lack of honour.

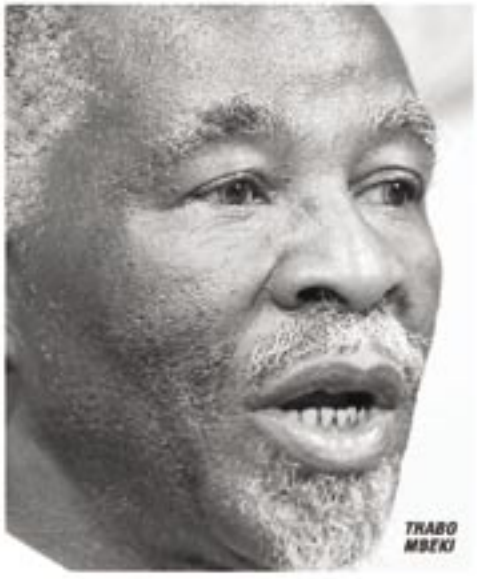
On two occasions he found himself the object of public ridicule and derision. There have been disagreements in the past, but until now they have not taken the form of public humiliation.

As could be expected, the booing, heckling and walking out that greeted Mbeki at the reburial in KwaZulu-Natal of ANC and South African Communist Party (SACP) stalwart Moses Mabhida has invited all sorts of commentary. To some the behaviour is a reflection of the lack of respect for the office of the president. Others have found the behaviour distasteful because of a lack of sense of occasion. During funerals, decency dictates restraint and respect, the argument goes. Accordingly, the behaviour of the crowd on this occasion was nothing short of shameful.

Yet for others, heckling, booing and walking out is part and parcel of a democratic process — there is nothing wrong with people expressing their displeasure for anyone, including the president. While acknowledging that the funeral was an unfortunate occasion for this type of protest, Geoff Hughes (The Star, December 14) is unwavering on people's right to boo politicians. "There is no law against booing. Like heckling, it may be embarrassing, especially to those who have not experienced the hurly-burly of elections, but both are essential parts of freedom of speech. The ANC, with its limited notion of democracy as a system stage-managed by party bosses, is naturally hostile to spontaneous or embarrassing signs of division, especially at this time when the leadership struggle is so visible."

The above incident was the second in three months in which the president was publicly embarrassed. Alleged supporters of Jacob Zuma staged a dramatic walkout at a rally marking the centenary of Mahatma Gandhi's nonviolent resistance movement. The rally was attended by the Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Mbeki found himself addressing an almost empty stadium.

This conduct is becoming commonplace. Last year Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka was similarly harangued when she tried to address an ANC



THABO MBEKI

rally in Durban. The KwaZulu-Natal premier was allegedly pelted with stones and bottles by so-called "Zuma supporters".

These developments reflect a worrying culture of political intolerance. On the surface, they can be read as simply an assertion of dissatisfaction and an expression of freedom of speech. But at a deeper level, they reflect an absence of a culture where people can disagree with each other without becoming engaged in disagreeable and disgraceful behaviour.

Our body politic is so infected by this intolerance that conferences are cancelled because delegates have decided to trade physical blows instead of addressing differences in a mature manner. The South African National Civics Organisation had to adjourn prematurely its conference because of bickering that turned ugly when some members exchanged blows.

These developments are manifestations of our failure to learn to engage with each other intelligently. Some have argued that these manifestations are the residue of a culture that evolved during the struggle. They are a reflection of circumstances where debates and disagreement were considered a luxury. If this was true of exile, internal politics was also characterised by high levels of political intolerance and politically instigated violence. Political opponents were killed and "necklaced".

Subsumed within this culture is the tradition of delegitimising political opponents. We have seen this enacted with gusto in Parliament. Opposition MPs are routinely howled at. This sends a wrong message and sets a bad example to the rest of society. This is a case of the chickens coming home to roost.

It relieves the noise makers and howlers of the intellectual challenge of having to engage their political opponents or the views that they disagree with. Nothing exemplifies this form of intellectual abdication more than the recent altercation between President Mbeki and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu).

Cosatu had raised a concern that certain ministers were allegedly beneficiaries of black economic empowerment deals tied to state projects. Cosatu argued that it was immoral for public representatives to be involved in such business activities. Mbeki defended the involvement of cabinet ministers in the Gautrain shareholding, arguing that Cosatu, the Democratic Alliance and the SACP were motivated by the stereotype that black people were corrupt.

In this case, both the issues and the intellectual challenge are sidelined. Cosatu's sharp rebuttal was apt: "The president's style of engagement leaves much to be desired. He never debates on the strength of his arguments or correctness of the points he is raising. He always seeks to misrepresent people's genuine concerns in order to ridicule those he disagrees with and question their integrity. He throws the race card even against organisations whose membership is constituted mainly by the very ANC members he is leading, in the process of doing so, he has antagonised countless organisations and left the ANC and the tripartite alliance fractious and deeply divided."

It is easy to dismiss those you do not like by saying they are counter-revolutionary, peace-time revolutionaries, controversial, lacking in patriotism — or by playing the race card. It creates an environment where individuals are blacklisted.

This culture is not limited to politicians. Some of us have invited all kinds of insults from fellow writers. Interestingly, the said individuals have not had the courage to engage with issues we have raised. To do so would be an intellectual challenge they are ill-equipped to handle. This challenge demands that issues raised are proven either valid or invalid, true or false, logical or illogical. Anything else is anti-intellectual and an expression of intellectual bankruptcy. Let us refuse to be a nation of mere hecklers and their henchmen.

As we enter a new year, through consciously adding our voices to matters of national and international import, let us ensure that the country and nation begin to engage in a real dialogue on its challenges.

This should be a conversation characterised by sincere and genuine attempts to solve our problems and find a way ahead. This requires an intellectual humility that appreciates there are other ways of seeing. These multiple perspectives would sophisticate and enrich our understanding and approach to the sociopolitical and economic challenges we face.

■ *Professor Seepe is academic director, Henley Management College. This article was written for Tribute magazine.*