

How not to run a political campaign

WHILE politicians are rarely regarded as standard-bearers of integrity, Mamphela Ramphele was a rare hope. Articulate, educated and respected, she was the hope of a new era of the African politician.

But in one disastrous week, she destroyed her reputation after reneging on her promise to merge with the DA. “Ramphele,” said DA leader Helen Zille, her friend of many years, “has proven she cannot be trusted”.

It was a damning indictment by the former Rand Daily Mail journalist who exposed the truth behind the death of Ramphele’s late partner and co-founder of the Black Consciousness movement, Steve Biko, in the late 1970s.

Ramphele’s defence for her flip-flop is that she had “fallen victim to party politics” and a forced marriage by a potential international donor.

Given her prior public statements about the DA, she should never have agreed to their proposal.

In a lukewarm round of fund-raising engagements at Chatham House and Tate Modern in London in January, she dismissed any suggestions of merging with the DA.

In her recent memoirs she said her son told her “he would rather die than vote DA”. Now she says “there are millions of South Africans who will never vote for the DA”.

Zille’s motives were always clear. Despite her anti-apartheid credentials and sterling tenure as mayor of Cape Town and the premier of the Western Cape, she knew that the majority of South Africans – more than 80 percent black – would never elect a white person to lead South Africa in this generation. Zille’s best chance was to get a (qualified and palatable) black face to challenge the ANC’s Jacob Zuma and EFF’s Julius Malema for the national office. Her (probably now former) “friend” Ramphele fitted the bill.

For a week.

Ramphele’s motives are a mystery. But her chances were much better of being a president of South Africa with the DA’s then-rising 16.6 percent electorate (from the last elections), albeit a long shot behind the ANC’s 65.9 percent. Zille alleges that naively Ramphele wanted to be a presidential candidate for both AgangSA and the DA – as if to hedge her chances.

An “electoral nonsense” as Zille put it, that showed Ramphele’s political inexperience.

Even with her credentials, it was always going to be an uphill battle for Ramphele to go against the ruling party’s 102-year history and 20-year government record, the DA’s formidable campaigning ingenuity or the EFF’s fiery rhetoric.

These parties had already been effective in dismissing as illegitimate Ramphele’s struggle credentials (as co-founder of the Black Consciousness Movement) – a struggle “mistress” as Gwede Mantashe put it; branding her a rich “clever black” who is out of touch with the poor masses.

By abandoning her civil society advocate platform for a formal political role Ramphele may have overestimated her capabilities and appeal.

The trouble with Ramphele is her inability, as Zille put it, to “see any project through to its conclusion”.

Her “political” career is littered with unfinished “projects” – not sustaining the Black Consciousness Movement she started with the late Biko, positioning herself as a cham-

Mamphela Ramphele has permanently tarnished her image by entering the election fray. She is ill-equipped for the cut and thrust of politics, writes **Thebe Ikalfeng**



MISSION UNACCOMPLISHED: Agang leader Mamphela Ramphele tries to appeal to voters in Khayelitsha, Western Cape. The writer says Ramphele’s political career is littered with unfinished projects. PICTURE: ARMAND HOUGH

pion of civil society with Freedom Under Law, forming AgangSA and now for a mere week, being the DA’s presidential candidate.

As soon as the DA/Agang alliance was announced, the SA Democratic Teachers’ Union (Sadtu) said Ramphele “is not fit for politics... unprincipled and self-centred.” The stunned reaction to her short-lived defection to the DA by members of her party leadership, staff and constituency bear testimony to this.

To build a winning campaign requires a clear and consistent value proposition, a distinctive and viable constituency, a sustained and co-ordinated campaign, and trust.

Mamphela didn’t have enough time to establish any – let alone create her own “struggle songs” to counter *Auculethe umshini wami* and the like.

Winning a political campaign is about leadership and responsibility. The great ones are not only charming but decisive, and take responsibility for their actions.

Ramphele’s actions over the years have found her wanting in all regards.

With an established political infrastructure, Zille and the DA will recover – although their momentum has been derailed.

But for Ramphele this must be the end of yet another unfulfilled political ambition.

It is the end of what could have been an improbable political partnership of perhaps the two most powerful women in South African politics and realignment of the political landscape just 20 years into the democracy.

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HER REPUTATION

As Allister Sparks told Reuters, “it puts a fatal end to Mamphela Ramphele’s image and reputation (as a political figure)”. It must be the

end of a “flicker of hope” as she described Agang in *A Passion for Freedom* and her “vision to restore the promise of our great nation and offer the hope of a better future for every South African”. It is also a setback for ambitious young girls who looked up to her and dreamed of one day running for president.

Ramphele should never have tarnished her reputation by entering the political fray.

With an impressive academic and corporate record, Ramphele may have been motivated by Plato’s assertion that “one of the penalties for refusing to participate in politics is that you end up being governed by your inferiors”.

By joining politics, she descended to their ranks and affirmed a Machiavellian observation: “Poli-

tics has no relation to morals.”

Sadtu general secretary Mugwena Maluleke says Ramphele is a “political hypocrite” and urged her to “go back to her world of academia and business, which perhaps has room for people to deceive and exploit others”. It may be the soundest advice she has received yet.

Ramphele says “the people’s trust in me will not waiver”. The elections will be a rude awakening. Ramphele’s political campaign is a case study on how not to do it.

To avoid the embarrassment of the election outcome, she must step aside now.

While this was always a three-horse race between the ANC, DA and EFF – the fallout of the DA/Agang alliance may have created an unlikely opening for EFF to

become the official opposition party. Unlike the DA and Agang, the EFF has been clear and consistent. It’s a stunning lesson for the well-educated DA and Agang leadership, but the less-educated Malema.

While it’s said that in politics a week is a lifetime, it will take a long time for Ramphele to repair her reputation, not just in politics but everywhere.

She cannot be trusted “to restore the promise of our great nation and offer the hope of a better future for every South African”.

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Forum

Civil war conflicts create critical imbalance in world

WAR, THE grim reaper, continues to decimate and harvest millions of lives across the failed continent of Africa. The world is going into a New World Order of disorder.

On one side you have the tyrannical power elite with money and weapons and on the other side you have the oppressed. Egypt is in turmoil, Iraq faces civil war, Syria is a devastated wasteland. Central Africa is witnessing genocide.

As a bolt of lightning that flashes across the darkening sky is witness both to the approaching storm and to the unbearable tension which is giving birth to it, so the fires of civil war conflicts have thrown a lurid light on the menacing return of a critical imbalance in world politics. The conflict across Africa is about a war of resources, it is about oil and strategic minerals. China, Japan and

South Korea are preparing for territorial domination in a dangerous game of political chess.

Africa is being disassembled with a ferocity unequalled since World War II. From the Atlantic to the Aegean, and from Jordan to the Indus, especially at the junction of the borders of Pakistan, Kashmir, India and China, the world must brace itself for ever-escalating mass conflict. Nor has the Muslim world, from Mauritania to Indonesia to Washington DC, spoken its final word.

Why does the world seem to be crumbling into chaos? Can we restrain the forces of anarchy? Is it possible to right the course of our straying civilisation and solve our problem? The tragedies affecting this war-torn world multiply with each passing year. At the 14th year of the 21st century,

humankind finds itself on a non-sustainable course, a course that unless it is changed will lead to catastrophes of awesome consequences.

The choices and options of humanity are narrowing sharply. Intelligent observers of the world scene recognise that we must alter our ways soon or face eking out a bare existence in a shattered and disoriented world. Either we are fast running out of time or we have already passed the dreaded point of no return.

War will one day destroy this planet. War is the intentional use of mass force to resolve disputes over governance. War is indeed governance by bludgeon.

The dogs of war have been unleashed in Africa.

Farouk Araia
Joburg

To muzzle the press is to deny democracy

THE ILLEGAL, tyrannical, unjustly imposed military government in Egypt, which has overthrown the democratically elected president, Mohamed Mursi, has shot itself in the foot by imprisoning journalists.

Some 20 journalists are facing charges in Egypt. Sixteen are Egyptians accused of “belonging to a terrorist organisation” and four are foreigners accused of assisting it, for spreading false news. Among those arrested are two Britons, a Dutch and an Australian.

Media fraternities throughout the world are up in arms at Egypt’s audacity and impunity with which it is trying to silence journalists. Is this “democracy?”

Could this be a blessing in disguise for Mursi and the Muslim Brotherhood? Has the unjust imprisonment of journalists and activists opened a window for the world to see the true nature of the incoming de facto pharaoh, Sisi?

We often hear the phrase “the truth

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shall prevail!” In light of this, no matter how many hundreds of thousands, even millions of people, are arrested, threatened, terrorised or killed, nothing will prevent ethical journalists who have integrity, from capturing the reality of events in Egypt. Many will agree that to deny freedom of the press is to deny democracy.

Fadheelah Patel
Krugersdorp

Ramphele must join the DA, because she belongs there

THE GOINGS-ON in AgangSA over the past week just confirm how difficult it is to figure Mamphela Ramphele out. When she raised her hand to take the initiative to give South Africa an alternative route, I admired her courage. Her “spot diagnosis” of the ills of the ANC was amazingly accurate, although her assessment of the root causes was not.

The speech she gave at her launch of Agang got me all emotional as she reminded me of the excitement we all felt at the dawn of democracy and how it all went terribly wrong with the ruling party. I almost joined Agang, but happily, I did not.

She claims black consciousness credentials and yet she has not said a word about that part of her life since before 1990. She has spent all this time in the bosom of white liberals.

She tells us she has never belonged to a political party before. Well, has she been voting since 1994? She may not have been a card-carrying member of a

political party, but if she voted, the party she voted for is her party. We know that party is definitely not the ANC, and judging by who she hangs with, it is a no-brainer to figure out it has to be the DA.

Then she tells us she has not been a member of a political party because she is not a joiner. Then she goes out to form a political party and expects me to join?

She has spent the last 20 years castigating affirmative action and BEE recipients. How does she think she got her wealth? Because she is brilliant? That is staggering in its arrogance. She and Moeletsi Mbeki smoke the same stuff when it comes to this issue.

I would never vote for the DA and I am glad I did not join Agang, otherwise I would have been delivered to the DA by Ramphele.

My advice to Ramphele is: join the DA; that is where you belong.

Shadrack Jere
Durban