

Time of reckoning for the ruling party

Elections 2014 are a referendum on the adequacy of the ANC to be the omniscient party of South Africa, writes Thebe Ikalafeng



IN 1994 when the ANC stood for the first democratic elections the question was not if, but the margin of victory for the previously banned liberation movement.

The South African population of roughly 80 percent black were expected to vote ANC, bar a few philosophical or cultural options offered by the IFP, Azapo, PAC or UDM and others.

The decisive 63 percent margin of victory was a resounding mandate for the late Nelson Mandela and Africa's oldest liberation movement to reshape the South African agenda and global narrative.

His successor Thabo Mbeki's 66.3 percent and 69.7 percent subsequent margins of victory in the 1999 and 2004 elections consolidated the ruling party's mandate as the people's trusted messiah. Although the party did not achieve the desired two-thirds majority with Jacob Zuma, it nonetheless did not erode the ruling party's mandate or status.

Expectedly, as it consolidated its democracy and the ANC deepened its governing experience, South Africa needed adaptable and different leaders for different times. And the success of the ANC, as Rushil Ranchod says in *A Kind of Magic: The Political Marketing of the ANC*, has been its ability to "reinvent itself" through time.

Mandela was the new South Africa's global pied piper and the embodiment of peace, reconciliation and humanity Mbeki was the efficient workhorse that had to lead the party's mandate to dismantle the National Party's abhorred legacy, deliver on the hopes of South Africans for a new dawn of opportunity, and earn South Africa respect as a global African nation.

Whereas Mbeki was accused of being "out of touch" and "autocratic", Zuma stepped in with a reputation as an accessible and consultative leader with a "common touch".

The party's "better life for all" promise was not just a slogan coined by Stanley Greenberg and Frank Greer, the US political advisers behind the ANC's 1994 post-apartheid election campaign that was memorably implemented by South Africa's TBWA Hunt Laszaris. It succinctly captured the mandate and vision of the ANC to lead South Africa out of the apartheid abyss.

Between 1994 and 2012, the promise of a better life for all was being delivered by growing the country's GDP more than 175 percent against a population growth of 25 percent, increasing access to electricity (58 percent - 85 percent), water (61 percent - 74 percent) and sanitation (50 percent - 62 percent), and a global reputation as Africa's standard for doing business and number one destination for foreign direct investment (FDI).

As a result, for a long time, the ANC - and therefore South Africa - could do no wrong. The successful hosting of the 2010 Fifa World Cup



VOICE OF REASON: Nelson Mandela casts his vote at Ohlange High School in Inanda, north of Durban, on April 27, 1994, on the left, and, right, at a polling station in Houghton on April 22, 2009. The writer says it is now time for voters to put the ANC to the challenge thrown to them by Madiba: 'If the ANC does to you what the apartheid government did to you, you must do to the ANC what you did to the apartheid government.'



PICTURES: AP AND REUTERS

was a crowning global moment for the young and proud democracy.

These are no doubt a result of the ANC's relatively successful agenda for a better South Africa. They are also the ANC's undoing in a nation whose lot, while vastly improved, expected and deserved much more.

Consequently, in the lead-up to the fifth democratic elections, things are quite different.

Jacob Zuma's 2008 prediction that the ANC will rule until Jesus comes didn't seem to count on a barrage of formal and informal internal and external challenges and challengers to the ANC's dominant mandate.

There has been a seismic shift between the environment in which the ANC contested between 1994 through to 2009 and 2014. Jesus is threatening to arrive sooner than anticipated.

The growing disparities between the haves and have-nots, chronic unemployment of as much as 30 percent (and higher among the youth), labour disruptions that have rocketed and rising perceptions of corruption have the ruling party facing unprecedented challenges and challengers.

For the first time, the born-frees,

those born since Mandela's February 11, 1990 release or the historic elections of 1994, are going to play a critical role in the vote.

They will be adding their muscle and vote to represent a vocal, albeit generally apathetic, bloc that represents 58.5 percent of people under the age of 34 who generally have no attachment to the liberation struggle. There has been a dramatic rise in the black middle class that is estimated to have grown by as much as 10 million between 2001 and 2010.

A unity of the tripartite alliance and the ANC in general that were a hallmark of the party have unravelled. To compound the ruling party's problems there is growing discontent with President Jacob Zuma for a range issues headlined by the Nkandla controversy.

For the first time in its short 20-year governing history, there is a growing possibility that the ANC, while expected to win, will not gain a decisive mandate.

In pitting its record on creating a better life for all, the ANC will not just be challenging Helen Zille and the DA's proposition for building "one nation, one future" or Dr Mamphela Ramphele's promise "to restore the promise of our great

nation and offer the hope of a better future for every South African".

The ANC may be able to weather the DA and Agang's and other parties' messages primarily around corruption, inefficiency, patronage and Zuma's leadership and moral arc.

They'll position Zille and the DA as relics of the past who have shown their true character by flip-flopping on BEE and affirmative action, and fronting token, privileged and inexperienced Mmusi Maimane and Lindiwe Mazibuko while governing with a male and pale Western Cape cabinet that's bent on returning "boers" to leadership.

They'll say the DA's "one nation, one future", exactly the same as its predecessor, the DP, put forward in 1992 shows a yearning for the good old days.

They'll say like the DA's Stop the ANC campaign in the 2009 elections, as it was with the DA campaign with Zach de Beer and a primary message of Stop intolerANCe Vote DA is a continuation of a deep-seated rejection of black rule in South Africa rather than an issues-based campaign against ANC failures.

They'll dismiss the DA's success in central Cape Town as an elitist

focus on minorities at the expense of the struggling majority black voters in the Western Cape. They'll position Ramphele as a privileged suburban with illegitimate struggle credentials whose declared R55m wealth shows she's out of touch with ordinary South Africans.

They'll say Agang's enlistment of the services of a US lobbyist, Andrew Sillen, shows she's pushing a Western agenda.

But the ANC will not be able to easily dismiss its prodigal *enfant terrible* former youth leader Julius Malema who while facing a barrage of fraud, corruption and tax charges has been as effective against them as he was for them. Malema and his EFF's promise to the poor and young to create "economic freedom" and nationalise mines and financial services to accelerate a better life.

While they'll dismiss him as a disgruntled former cadre, his charismatic appeal and ANC insider knowledge present the grand old party with its biggest challenge for this "lucrative" segment's vote.

They will probably ignore the rest of the fringe parties - the IFP, ACDP, FF+, Cope and others and let them battle it out for insignificant

parliamentary seats, perks and inaudible noise in the back benches, rather than as serious challengers to lead the nation.

In countering the anti-Zuma sentiment, they'll argue that the ANC is not about Jacob Zuma but the collective. They'll argue that the ANC is not about the cult of personality but the party of the people for the people by the people, many of whom such as Mandela, Chris Hani, OR Tambo, Walter Sisulu, Joe Slovo, sacrificed their lives for a better and free South Africa.

They'll put the legacy (and face) of ANC stalwart Mandela as the embodiment of the ANC and at the centre of the ANC's campaign to remind South Africans how life is better with the ANC because of the sacrifices of Mandela.

They'll count on the real assumption that the majority of South Africans, especially the elderly and rural, attribute the democratic gains, opportunities and security to the party and not the person.

As a 20-year anniversary campaign, a trip to the Apartheid Museum signals how the messages could play out: remembering the past suffering and inspiring hope for a better life.

But now that the ANC is in power, primarily, they'll need to balance that with a demonstration of delivery on the "better life" mandate.

Back then the ANC's message, while anchored on the promise of a better life for all, put the apartheid legacy of the National Party that butchered Hector Pieterse, Hani and many others during 1976, Sharpeville and Boipatong and countless others at the centre of an undesired life.

Consequently, the literature, narrative and campaigns for 1994 put these evil experiences at the centre of the choice between the ANC and the National Party. To counter, with a much smaller governing scope, the DA will seek to make a case that the success with central Cape Town (with a blind eye to the rest of the (black) province) is a microcosm of how well they'll run government.

They have sought the help of former architect of the ANC's better life message and polling adviser Stan Greenberg who recently spoke of his disillusionment with Mandela's successors to help deliver their "one nation, one future" promise.

On the other hand, like the ANC in 1994, the EFF and Agang, with no governing experience or baggage, will seek to anchor their campaigns on "hope" and focus their energies on repositioning the ANC as the National Party reincarnate.

They'll put it to the voters that it is time as the late Nelson Mandela suggested in a 1990's address to a Cosatu Congress that "if the ANC does to you what the apartheid government did to you, you must do to the ANC what you did to the apartheid government".

Twenty years ago, a vote in the first democratic elections was a referendum to affirm the legitimacy of the ANC. This year, the vote will be a referendum on the adequacy of the ANC to be the omniscient ruling party of South Africa.

The differentiator in this election campaign will probably be less about the specifics but more about trust, relevance and leadership. All parties and their leaders will sadly be left wanting.

But after all votes are counted, the ANC will still rule South Africa, albeit with a less decisive mandate than in 1994. It is both a sign of a maturing democracy and the ANC's own doing in squandering a once impenetrable mandate and legacy.

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Zille's party showing hypocrisy in the debate on equity

JIMMY MANYI

THE YEAR is 2014, Madiba the man is gone but his spirit lives on. In some quarters, there is some level of anxiety as to what happens now, now that the man with the big shoulders is gone.

I have listened to many ANC speakers who were at pains to explain that the principle of non-racialism, no domination of one racial group by another, and South Africa is for all who live in it that Madiba stood for, was not a personal mission of his but rather the mandate of the party, which was articulated as far back as 1957 by AJ Luthuli, former president of the ANC in his letter to prime minister JG Strijdom. We therefore start the year in the safe hands of the ANC.

I must add that it would be naive in the extreme to suggest that there was no Mandela effect. It is instructive to point out that even when a presentation is a team effort, if the presenter is a tired person with no charisma, the whole effort goes to waste.

Therefore, Madiba the person did a sterling job in representing what the ANC stands for.

The question though is whether Madiba's magnanimity was fully understood and reciprocated or perhaps the roots of racism were far deeper than imaginable. Somehow, there is more evidence pointing to the latter.

In about June 1995, during the



Rugby World Cup, Madiba moved to unite the nation by wearing the Number 6 jersey as he entered the stadium to congratulate the Springboks. At the time, an overwhelming majority of black people who voted for the ANC were opposed to the Springbok emblem.

By wearing that jersey, Madiba risked his political equity for the sake of fast-tracking the objectives of the Freedom Charter to ensure one nation united in its diversity.

Sadly though, this euphoria was short-lived because in March 1998, just under three years later, the late rugby boss Louis Luyt, may his soul rest in peace, took Madiba to court and accused him of not properly applying his mind in respect of the political decision that he took to establish a commission to look into transformation issues in rugby.

Most rational people were brought to tears; others extremely angered by the ungratefulness of

Luyt and his ilk when Mandela said in court, "I would never have imagined that Louis would be so insensitive, ungrateful and disrespectful to say when I gave my affidavit (submitted earlier to the court) I was lying".

After Madiba had languished in jail for 27 years and came out without any bitterness, and in fact in some instances went against his own comrades to forge national unity, why did Luyt and his supporters not give him the benefit of the doubt?

The question is, given the amount of time this ANC government is spending in courts, are Madiba's fears not justified when he expressed some discomfort in going to court for the Luyt matter fearing that this might open floodgates and set a bad precedent resulting in government being undermined?

Notwithstanding the accountability that is required to the South African population, why is it that the good intentions of this ANC government are always distorted, second-guessed and undermined?

Is this not the abuse of the hard-negotiated constitutional democracy? Why is it that when section 15 (3) of the Employment Equity Act is clear and explicit that quotas are excluded, Helen Zille and the DA continue to make false and unfounded allegations that the Employment Equity Act uses racial quotas?

How different is this from the Luyt saga as described earlier, that disappointed Madiba?

Zille and the DA refuse to commit to measurable proportions of

black representation that reflect their quantum of economically active population, yet in their recent conference they acknowledged the centrality of race in the redress mechanisms.

This hypocrisy of the DA validates the anxiety reported in the media that under DA rule, apartheid will return.

The toilet saga in the Western Cape where a bucket system is replaced by a "new and improved", wait for it, bucket system, is a real expression of where the DA places the humanity of black people. This is NOT what Madiba spent 27 years in jail for.

US President Barack Obama had this to say in memory of Madiba: "There are too many of us who happily embrace Madiba's legacy of racial reconciliation, but passionately resist even modest reforms that would challenge chronic poverty and growing inequality. And there are too many of us who stand on the sidelines, comfortable in complacency or cynicism when our voices must be heard."

The DA talks about "broadening the opportunities", which in reality simply amounts to an attempt to maintain the status quo by co-opting a few black faces who are "not like the others". Some well-meaning blacks in the DA are unfortunately yoked into this assimilation strategy.

Malcolm X would have said the DA just does "House niggers". How else does one explain the disproportionality between the DA

making a fundamentally progressive point of agreeing with the ANC government's reference to race and the paucity of blacks in top levels, and then be cold-footed in agreeing to a fair and inclusive quantification system as a remedy? In Xhosa, this is called *Lala gusha ndikucebe*. Mr Trollip, please translate this to your fellow members. The truth is that the EE Act which, by the way, came into effect during the Madiba presidency, only makes reference to numeric goals and targets. How else should progress on redress of racially engineered disenfranchisement be measured?

Importantly and contrary to the disinformation campaign of the DA, the targets that companies are monitored on are NOT imposed by the government; these targets are set by the companies themselves.

Furthermore, in the event that the company fails to achieve its own set targets, the director-general review system has a rational process that allows for explanations that are genuine, which may have caused the non-achievement of those targets. Levies are not applied arbitrarily.

There is nothing new and profound about the stimulus approach that the DA is only now 15 years later proposing. Since inception, the Commission for Employment Equity, a creation of the ANC government, which I must add includes members of Business Unity SA (Busa), has always been empowered to carry out recognition awards for companies that are performing well

on Employment Equity. It is unfortunate that to date, no company has met the envisaged standards to qualify for the prestigious recognition.

So the strengthening of the enforcement mechanisms could have been avoided if the desired levels of transformation were achieved.

By the way, the ANC government is still lenient in the enforcement measures as approved in the recent Employment Equity Amendment Bill. The government could have simply promulgated section 53(4) of the Employment Equity Act, which would have given it an immediate power to refuse doing business with offenders or stop existing contracts with companies that are not transformed.

The statistics for the Commission for EE makes a startling revelation that almost 75 percent of the skilled workforce in South Africa is black.

However, it would seem that the 25 percent white skilled base is the only resource that companies in South Africa largely use.

Lastly, the DA and their sympathetic economists are always at pains to point out, albeit incorrectly, that economic growth is the only solution to unemployment.

The truth is that owing to the complexities of our economy, which the various inclusive growth plans of the government are trying to deal with, South Africa at some stage (during the GEAR period) in our democracy experienced phenomenal economic growth that was not

matched by employment, duped "jobless growth". So, no, economic growth on its own is not a solution to unemployment. No wonder the ANC has coined the term "inclusive growth".

The DA must not oppose ANC government policies just for the sake of opposing them without offering cogent and well-considered alternatives that are genuine and without racist undertones.

At this point it may be useful to point out that the multiracialism of the DA must not be confused with non-racialism.

Zille and the DA must be ashamed of exhibiting Louis Luyt tendencies where well-meant remedies are treated with disdain.

Following their belated admission that race is directly correlatable with disadvantage, which was visited upon our people by apartheid, the Progressive Professionals Forum calls on Zille and the DA, as the remaining larger and recognisable reminder of our racist past, to do the noble thing, seize the moment and apologise for apartheid.

The DA has failed to show any remorse for having been an active participant in the racist system that oppressed black South Africans. Instead, the DA continues to display brazen arrogance as if 20 years of political liberation is enough to reverse more than 300 years of successive forms of colonialism, racism and exploitation.

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