



20 years
of music:
Simphiwe
Dana on
her new
album

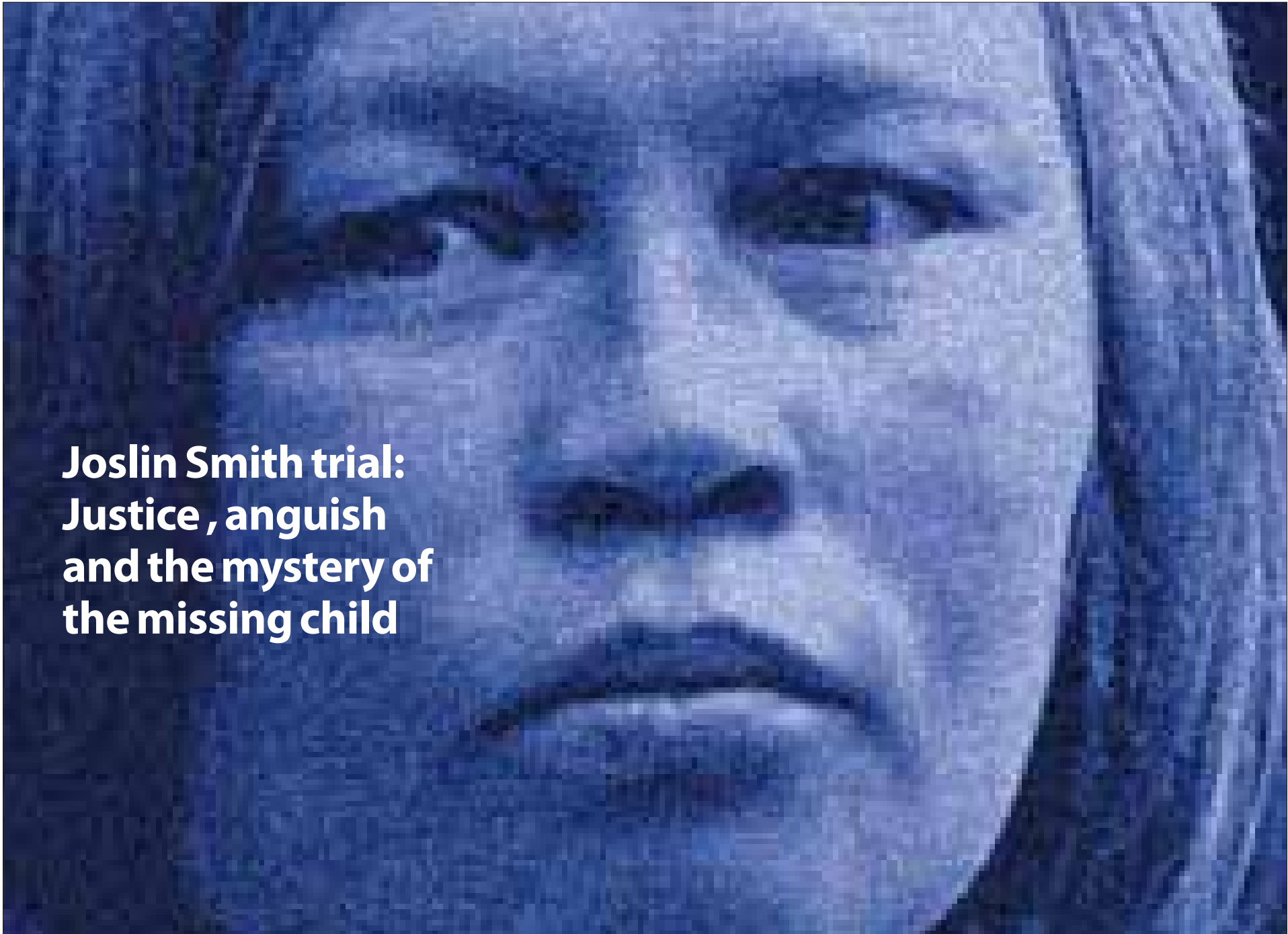


'Ancient'
dragonflies
are the
sentinels of
freshwater
resources



Shivambu
must go:
EFF faction
demands
leadership
changes

DA ramps up call for W Cape police powers



Joslin Smith trial:
Justice , anguish
and the mystery of
the missing child

IN BRIEF

Unlikely judges

A former drug smuggler and other unconventional characters are on the ballot to become judges in Mexico’s judicial elections this week, *Reuters* reports. The judicial candidates are raising concerns about Mexico’s new process of electing judges, which allows the public to vote. The controversial measure was introduced by the country’s former president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, and was approved by his successor, Claudia Sheinbaum. Although both leaders endorsed the reform as a system that would eliminate corruption, several people with questionable professional backgrounds are among the judicial candidates. “I’ve never sold myself as the perfect candidate,” says Leopoldo Chavez, a former prisoner of the US who was convicted for smuggling more than 4kg of methamphetamines in 2015. Chavez is campaigning as a federal judge in Durango, a cartel-controlled area for marijuana and opium. His fellow candidates include Francisco Hernandez, a former judge dismissed over allegations of sexual abuse and corruption and Fernando Escamilla, who previously advised lawyers for members of the ultra-violent Los Zetas cartel.

The voyager

A cat and his human embarked on an adventurous sea journey after he quit his job and arrived in Hawaii to a cheering crowd, according to *Associated Press*. Four years ago, Oliver Widger, 29, saw his life change after being diagnosed with a condition that carried a risk of paralysis. His diagnosis gave him a new perspective on life, leading to his decision to quit his job at a tyre company, liquidate his retirement savings and set sail with his tortoiseshell cat, Phoenix. The budding explorer said he was \$10 000 in debt with “no money” and “no savings” when he decided to document his adventure to millions of followers on Instagram and TikTok. After teaching himself to sail using YouTube and spending months refitting a boat for \$50 000, Widger set sail on the Pacific Ocean while giving regular updates to his followers. He arrived in Hawaii last Saturday and was welcomed by excited fans and the governor of Hawaii, who presented him with a proclamation. Widger says his story resonated with those feeling worn out by the daily grind. “I think people have seen that it’s possible to break out,” he said.

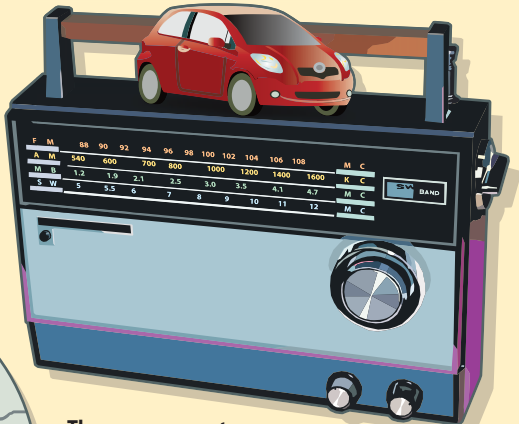
Wild encounters

A brawny kangaroo who survived severe flooding in New South Wales, Australia, took his frustrations out on an unlucky local and even allegedly resorted to attempting to drown him, the *BBC* reported. A woman named Kristy Lees watched the scuffle between the marsupial and a man named Don James from the rear-view mirror of her and her husband’s car. The kangaroo initially targeted the couple’s car when he was distracted by the sight of James walking away a distance behind them. According to Kristy, the kangaroo locked in on his new target and chased him before the two began punching each other. In an attempt to back away from the feisty creature, James tripped and fell into a pool formed by the floods. That’s when the kangaroo took his chance to allegedly try to drown the man, a behaviour that’s apparently normal when kangaroos feel threat-

NUMBERS OF THE WEEK


The radio levy in US dollars (worth R1 652) that Zimbabweans have to pay before they can have their cars licensed and insured in accordance with a new law approved by President Emmerson Mnangagwa. The fee, *The Independent* reports, will be directed to the state broadcaster, Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation, which has been accused of sharing government propaganda and reducing advertising revenue

\$92



The area percentage of Gaza that the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) said they planned to control, *Euronews* reports. The IDF told local media it would place Palestinians into three small regions in Gaza, while it occupied the remaining three-quarters of Gaza

75%




The number of children in Europe conceived from a sperm donor carrying a rare genetic variant linked to cancer, *The Guardian* reports. The sperm of the man conceived at least 67 children between 2008 and 2015 in the continent and the 10 have been diagnosed with cancer. The genetic variant, TP53, could potentially cause Li-Fraumeni syndrome in individuals and predispose them to cancer. The case was presented to European Society of Human Genetics in Milan

10

The number of months since a New York jury found the US President Donald Trump guilty on 34 counts of falsifying business records linked to hush-money payments to adult film star Stormy Daniels. At the time, Trump became the first former president in the US to be convicted of a crime

12



Graphic: JOHN McCANN Compiled by: MAMAPUTLE BOIKANYO

ened, according to experts. Fortunately, the kangaroo’s attempt was interrupted by James’s friend, who spooked the large animal by approaching with his car. The hapless James had also reportedly suffered a shark attack 12 months prior. “I feel like they’re trying to kill me, all these animals,” James reportedly said.

Haste makes waste

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has demanded punishment for four people deemed responsible for a launch failure that resulted in the loss of a prized warship, according to a *CNN* report. As workers attempted to launch a 5 000-tonne naval destroyer last Wednesday. A malfunction in the launch mechanism led to the ship’s stern sliding prematurely into waters near North Korea’s Chongjin Shipyard. The vessel’s hull was crushed, its bow stranded on the shipway, its stern section flooded with water. Kim, who reportedly rushed the repair process of the ship before its launch, called the accident a criminal act that would see the responsible people being punished. For the incident, authorities arrested the munitions deputy director, Ri Hyong Son; Kang Jong Chol, chief engineer of the Chongjin Shipyard where the

accident occurred; Han Kyong Hak, who leads the hull construction workshop; and the deputy manager for administrative affairs, Kim Yong Hak. Kim reportedly ordered that the ship be restored ahead of the ruling Workers’ Party plenary session in late June. A defence analyst from South Korea suspected that the rushed repairs led to the botched launch.

Prisoner in disguise

A former police chief in Arkansas, US, who was serving an 80-year prison sentence for rape and murder, escaped from his cell while he was disguised in police uniform, the *BBC* reports. Grant Hardin, who was a police chief in the small town of Gateway, pleaded guilty to first-degree murder after he fatally shot 59-year-old James Appleton in 2017. Appleton, an employee at the city’s water department, was in a car speaking to his brother-in-law, Andrew Tillman, the mayor of Gateway, when Hardin shot him in the head. The motive for the murder is unknown. While Hardin served his 30-year prison sentence, DNA evidence linked him to the rape at gunpoint of a teacher on school premises while she left a classroom to use the bathroom. For that crime Hardin was sentenced to another 50 years. He escaped prison last Sunday and is still at large.

Operation Endgame

Multiple Western countries have pulled the rug from underneath a Russian-led network of cybercriminals, leading to the issuing of arrest warrants for 20 suspects. Law enforcement entities cooperated in Operation Endgame, initiated by German authorities in 2022, to track down the leaders of malware operation groups that targeted hundreds of thousands of computers worldwide, with India, Italy, the US, Australia and Poland significantly affected. Germany, the US, Canada, France, Denmark, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom collaborated in neutralising malware tools used to target systems of firms and government institutions. Such tools were reportedly operated by Russian cybercriminals such as Vitalii Nikolayevich Kovalev, 36, a Russian national whom German investigators have labelled as the “most successful blackmailers in the history of cybercrime”. Out of 37 alleged perpetrators, authorities were able to compile enough evidence to issue 20 international arrest warrants. Holger Münch, the president of

Germany’s crime agency, Bundeskriminalamt, said the extradition of the cybercriminals was unlikely because many of them operated from Russia or Dubai.

State-sponsored abuse

Human Rights Watch released a report this week detailing how the Ugandan LGBTQ community has faced increased persecution since the enactment of anti-gay laws in the country two years ago, *Al Jazeera* reported. The laws criminalise consensual same-sex relations with life imprisonment and punishes the act of aggravated homosexuality” with a death sentence. According to Kampala-based organisation Defend Defenders, eight cases of physical and sexual violence, including corrective rape, were identified within 24 hours of the law’s enactment in May 2023. This mirrored what was to come. According to the Human Rights Watch report, the government has led campaigns of misinformation and persecution alongside widespread police abuse such as arbitrary arrests, harassment and extortion of people who are or perceived to be queer. The report highlights a significant surge in widespread abuses and discrimination, placing LGBTQ families, allies, activists and individuals in increasingly vulnerable situations.

Neanderthal artwork

A Neanderthal who inhabited present-day Spain 43 000 years ago may have created artwork on a large pebble, according to a study published in *Archaeological and Anthropological Sciences* and cited by *Discover* magazine. This find potentially changes the widely accepted view that Neanderthals were less intelligent or sophisticated than *Homo sapiens*. The pebble is interpreted by scientists as a face, featuring intentional indentations that possibly represent eyes, a mouth and a red dot marked with ochre where a nose would be. The object, according to the study, could “represent one of the oldest known abstractions of a human face in the prehistoric record”. The pebble differs from the tools excavated from the site, which bear marks of use and are much smaller than the decorated pebble. The object is also marked with a carefully placed fingerprint. This feature of the pebble makes the object “the oldest known non-utilitarian object with a fingerprint made in Europe”, the scientists said. — *Mamaputle Boikanyo*

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Calls for Shivambu’s head to roll

A faction in the uMkhonto weSizwe party aligned to traditional leaders wants a leadership change that could affect others besides the secretary general

Mandisa Nyathi

The uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) party is again facing pressure from within its ranks to remove secretary general Floyd Shivambu, as well as other leaders.

A top-level leadership overhaul has been proposed in a 29-page strategy document circulating among members. In the document the administration is accused of straying from the party’s founding values.

But Shivambu’s supporters have hit back, saying any calls for his removal can be laid squarely at the feet of “tribalism”.

The document calls for the restructuring of the party’s leadership to reassert its direction. It proposes Shivambu’s removal as secretary general and recommends that traditional leader and former MK party member of the KwaZulu-Natal legislature Nduna Phumlani Mfeka take over the role.

The move against Shivambu is gaining traction among members of a faction in the MK party aligned with traditional leaders, who believe the party has drifted away from its support base in KwaZulu-Natal and its core principles, particularly its respect for traditional leaders.

Mfeka, who is an ally of founder Jacob Zuma, resigned from both the MK party and parliament earlier this year but rejoined this month at the request of senior traditional leaders.

The growing rebellion is not limited to Shivambu. Zuma loyalist Mzwanele Manyi has also emerged as a casualty in the battle, after he was removed as party chief whip on Tuesday for being “incompetent”.

Tensions surrounding Shivambu have been escalating since February, when Zuma’s daughter, Duduzile Zuma-Sambudla, publicly criticised his leadership in a series of posts on X. She accused him of weakening the party and labelled him “the worst” thing to have happened to the party.

The document criticises what it describes as the growing centralisation of power in the party’s unelected leadership and blames internal feuds on exclusivity and opaque decision-making. It calls for a more inclusive and transparent leadership model that reflects the views of grassroots supporters.



Faction: Supporters of uMkhonto weSizwe secretary general Floyd Shivambu blame calls for him to be ousted on tribalism in the party. Photo: Luba Lesolle/Getty Images

It also demands a shift toward a more open and participatory leadership model, one that reflects a range of perspectives and ensures decisions are made transparently and collectively, in alignment with Zuma’s expectations.

But Shivambu’s sympathisers argue that the discontent with him stems from him not being from KwaZulu-Natal, backed by tribalism in the party.

“One thing about the SG [secretary general] is he is trained for such terrains — he simply doesn’t care about small minds who do not see his value in the party, which is why they are frustrated because president Zuma sees it.

“Tribalism is a problem in the party — the SG contributes a lot that will help us in the elections,” his supporters said.

But members of the opposition faction argue that his “arrogance” is the reason behind the hostility he faces.

“The man is very arrogant and when he came here he came with a superiority complex and not an attitude to know or understand how we do things, which is the reason behind the opposition he faces ... he came with the mindset to take over,” a source said.

Shivambu did not respond to requests for

comment from the *M&G*.

The MK party’s top structure includes Zuma, deputy leader John Hlophe, Shivambu, national chairperson Nkosinathi Nhleko, deputy chairperson Sebiloane Mokotjo, deputy secretary general Nombuso Mkhize, treasurer general Mpiyakhe Limba, national organiser Joe Ndhlela, head of the presidency Magasela Mzobe and Nhlamulo Ndhlela as party spokesperson.

None of these officials was formally elected and critics within the party have raised concerns over the legitimacy and accountability of its leadership.

The document recommends a new leadership slate that includes Khanyisile Litchfield-Tshabalala as deputy national chairperson, Khabo Nene as deputy secretary general, and former public protector advocate Busisiwe Mkhwebane as treasurer general.

It also calls for the overhaul of the national high command — the party’s highest decision-making body — proposing the inclusion of individuals with experience in “ground forces” and the liberation struggle.

Nhlamulo Ndhlela did not wish to comment.

The party’s strategy also recommends the creation of a royal council to oversee policy documents before they are circulated to lower structures.

Other proposals include the formalisation of the uMkhonto Business Movement, hosting regional consultative conferences and reviving the party’s traditional programmes such as mini-rallies, community clean-ups and meet-and-greet campaigns.

The proposed reforms aim to reposition the party ahead of next year’s local government elections and re-establish a stronger connection with its grassroots support base.

Financial governance is also addressed in the document. It suggests decentralising control of party finances by allowing provincial structures to manage bank accounts — but only under strict oversight from the treasurer general’s office.

“This should be done with all expenditure reports submitted to the treasurer general’s office and approval given to the province in writing before payments are made. No form of expenditure incurred or to be incurred by the MKP must occur without prior consultation with the treasurer general’s office,” it says.

This comes after opposition factions expressed dissatisfaction with Shivambu’s alleged financial mismanagement and a perceived lack of accountability.

This coincides with members arguing that Shivambu had cut the salaries of staff members, including cleaners and administrative staff, in KwaZulu-Natal.

In a letter dated 15 March, Shivambu acknowledged delayed salary payments, citing unexpected technical problems and assuring affected employees that the leadership was working urgently to resolve the issue.

Discontent with Shivambu has been increasingly visible on social media, where party members and supporters have openly criticised his leadership.

In April, Shivambu was criticised for his controversial appearance at an Easter church service conducted by Malawian fugitive from the law Shepherd Bushiri, which sparked a rare public rebuke from the party and condemnation from the government. The incident was seen by many as a lapse in judgment and further eroded Shivambu’s standing in the party.

The MK party, which made a strong showing in KwaZulu-Natal during last year’s general elections, is under pressure to maintain its momentum and coherence ahead of the next electoral cycle.

But a highly placed source said although the strategy document outlines bold reforms, its implementation depends on whether Zuma will support the calls for changes to the party’s leadership and direction.

“The growing discontent is loud within the party and president Zuma knows it very well. We are hoping for his support in this quest before elections to also encourage people to work towards us taking over the whole of KwaZulu-Natal,” the source said.



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Three accused are going to jail but

The judge has handed down sentences — but a little girl is still missing and a community’s anguish remains raw

Des Erasmus

In a sombre and methodical judgment, Judge Nathan Erasmus on Thursday sentenced Kelly Smith, Jacquen “Boeta” Appollis and Steveno van Rhyn each to 10 years in prison for kidnapping and to life imprisonment for trafficking Smith’s daughter, Joslin.

Justice might have been served on the perpetrators but the whereabouts of the girl, who was six years old when she went missing from the Middelpas area of Saldanha Bay on 19 February last year, remain unknown.

Thousands of viewers had logged onto the livestream of the case at least an hour before proceedings started.

“Today we get justice!” “This is what we are here for,” “Joslin, we love you so much,” “Justice for Joslin,” some wrote. The trial has gripped South Africa, and also attracted international interest.

The community — described by Erasmus as uniting during the ordeal — remains heartbroken. But there is still hope, it was heard this week during sentencing proceedings, that Joslin would be found.

And there were still people searching for the blue-green-eyed child.

“This is the most difficult element in any trial,” Erasmus said as he began the sentencing, reiterating that decisions of such magnitude could not be made in anger. Instead, they should reflect mercy, where appropriate.

Departing from standard practice, he directly addressed the accused to explain the court’s reasoning.

All the factors he described showed their moral blameworthiness, he said, and even though they were on drugs at the time, “it was no excuse”.

“If it led you to the commission of the offences, you had the opportunity to tell me. You simply didn’t do that.

“In fact, it seemed through the course of this trial, that you, Mr Van Rhyn and Miss Smith, found it amusing ... didn’t take it seriously.

“There is nothing that I can find that is redeeming and deserving of a lesser sentence than the harshest I can impose.”

He said that all three would have their names added to the child protection register.

In determining a fair and just sentence, he said, the court had to balance multiple considerations: the personal circumstances of each accused, the nature of the offence, the interests of the community and the broader purpose of sentencing.

“There is an outcry from the community for retribution,” he said.

“Yes, it is part of the purpose of the sentence because those that harmed society must pay for their deeds.”

He emphasised that punishment must also deter others who would “dare to undermine the moral values of society”.

While the defence had urged the court to focus on rehabilitation, Erasmus said, in this case, it would not be a priority.

He commended probation officer Errol Pieterse for his comprehensive pre-sentencing reports on all



Incarcerated: Judge Nathan Erasmus (below) on Thursday sentenced Jacquen ‘Boeta’ Appollis, Steveno van Rhyn and Kelly Smith (above), convicted earlier this month of kidnapping and trafficking Joslin Smith, to 10 years in prison for the former and life imprisonment for the latter crime.



three of the accused, produced under tight time constraints at the judge’s own request.

“Pieterse’s report was one of the most comprehensive I have seen.”

Turning to Appollis, Erasmus acknowledged two previous encounters with the law but said they would not weigh in sentencing.

He described Appollis as having come from a supportive home with opportunities for success, which were derailed by substance abuse.

Although he had acted as a father figure to Joslin and Smith’s other two children, Erasmus said, “It doesn’t seem as if you were gainfully employed for any substantial period and were, for a great extent, reliant on Smith for subsistence.”

Pieterse’s report described Appollis’s demeanour as lacking remorse and displaying twisted truths, even on the eve of sentencing.

“In your personal circumstances, I do not find any mitigation factors,”

Erasmus concluded.

Addressing Van Rhyn, Erasmus echoed Pieterse’s assessment — a “menace to society”.

He acknowledged Van Rhyn’s troubled upbringing, marked by long absences of his father due to work and alcohol abuse. Despite some support from his mother, Van Rhyn had embraced a life of crime beyond drug use.

Erasmus rejected the suggestion that he had been rehabilitated, citing his failure to comply with prior parole conditions and continued criminal behaviour, including violent offences and housebreaking.

“I had expected a person who had gone through what you have — whose father was murdered at a young age — to understand the consequences,” Erasmus said.

“Your attitude in this court shows one who doesn’t care ... You yourself are a father of a young daughter.

“You have shown absolutely no

remorse and no concern.”

Judge Erasmus found no mitigating circumstances.

Smith was described by Pieterse as “manipulative”, a conclusion supported by victim impact statements and family reports.

“You went as far as to blame your parents for your conduct in this matter,” Erasmus said. “Besides on one occasion earlier, and yesterday, I saw no indication of remorse.”

Although the court acknowledged Smith has two other minor children, Erasmus said their care arrangements meant her role as a caregiver carried less mitigating weight.

“You were born under difficult circumstances but your grandparents cared for you and gave you the opportunity for a stable life,” he said, adding that unlike her co-accused, Smith had completed her schooling.

Still, she had rejected familial support after descending into drug use.

“In the personal circumstances,

I do not find mitigating circumstances,” he said.

Erasmus reaffirmed that sentencing must strike a balance. While not bound solely by statutory minimums, the seriousness of the crime demanded a severe response.

“I don’t need to stress the seriousness [in the] kidnapping of a six-year-old, depriving her of freedom of movement and liberty,” he said.

Defence counsel had argued there was no evidence that Joslin had been harmed. Erasmus dismissed this claim outright.

“There is no merit in such an argument. Depriving someone of liberty and movement cannot at least go without emotional harm.”

In recounting the events, Erasmus described the callousness of Smith’s prior remarks to an evangelist, Nico Coetzee, in August 2023, when she expressed her desire to “get rid of her child” to improve her life with Appollis. “How callous is that?” Erasmus asked.

The court also considered Smith’s prior stints in rehabilitation and a pattern of interventions, including when the Andrews family had cared for Joslin.

A day before her disappearance, Smith was reportedly enraged over a chicken theft accusation against Appollis and had vowed revenge on the complainant.

“Your conduct there seemed not to be an isolated incident,” Erasmus observed.

“You put the blame on others for treating your child like a commodity and selling her off.

“Van Rhyn and Appollis went along — both of them parents. Your daughter, Mr Appollis, would have been three years old at the time.”

Central to the decision to convict Smith was Coetzee’s testimony.

During a prayer service on 3 March last year — weeks after Joslin’s disappearance — Coetzee recognised Smith and recalled her earlier statements.

He said Smith had said she would be willing to accept as little as R5000 if the buyers could not afford the R20 000 she wanted.

Coetzee also testified that, according to Smith, the sale would take place in January or February last year. He said that Smith had told

Joslin’s fate remains unknown

him the Middelpoos area would “be like a movie scene” when the child went missing.

He had told his employer what Smith had said, long before it came to be in the public domain.

The state said Coetzee’s evidence corroborated that of Lourentia Lombaard, who was accused number four in the matter before she turned state witness.

Lombaard testified that she overheard Smith telling Appollis that she had received money from a sangoma for the child. When he asked her how much it was, she said R20000.

Lombaard told the court she and Van Rhyn had been promised money for their silence.

Erasmus has said there would be a separate trial for Lombaard, to determine whether she should be granted indemnity.

However, while sentencing the trio on Thursday, he said Lombaard “did nothing to protect” Joslin.

Smith, Appollis and Van Rhyn did not testify.

The courtroom was heavy with grief and tension this week, when the final arguments and victim impact statements were delivered.

On Tuesday, a series of probation reports compiled by Pietersen were read into the court record. They offered a disturbing psychological profile of the trio, underlining

themes of drug abuse, denial and a near-total absence of remorse — most notably from Smith.

Pietersen had described Smith as the probable mastermind behind the crime. Although she had matriculated and was employed at the time of her arrest, she struggled with tik addiction and had a long history of volatile behaviour, particularly toward her children and other close relatives.

The report laid bare Smith’s manipulative tendencies, her lack of contrition, and her refusal to accept responsibility.

During interviews, she fabricated accounts of being sexually abused as a child and falsely claimed rejection by her parents in what Pietersen characterised as an attempt to solicit sympathy. He found her disengaged and self-serving.

“She merely speculated that her daughter could be trafficked as a ‘sex slave’ but she believes her daughter to be alive,” Pietersen wrote, adding that Smith appeared more concerned about avoiding prison than with the fate of her missing child.

In an emotional victim impact statement read to the court on Wednesday, Smith’s biological mother, Amanda Daniels — who is caring for Smith’s two remaining children — condemned her daughter’s actions.

“You have broken this family

apart,” Daniels said.

She said Smith had told her that she would “talk” about what really happened to Joslin when she was in court but Smith never testified.

“I feel like my heart has been ripped from my body,” Daniels said in the statement, read out by court preparation officer Deonett Boltney.

Appollis was described by Pietersen as quiet and reserved, and as having admitted to using drugs including tik, dagga and Mandrax.

Although he had prior convictions for theft and violating the Marine Resources Act, Pietersen said that Appollis had once lived a relatively ordinary life, participating in club rugby and showing consideration for others.

The report suggested that Appollis might have been manipulated by Smith.

During interviews, he became emotional when reminded of his own two minor daughters and the trauma Joslin must have experienced.

Had it not been for drugs, Appollis might have lived a good, law-abiding life. But it was troubling that he continued to profess his innocence, falsely claiming Joslin had gone to

school on the day she disappeared — a claim easily debunked.

Pietersen recommended that he should be incarcerated.

Van Rhyn, the father of a five-year-old, has a long criminal history that includes robbery, drug trafficking and housebreaking. He is also awaiting sentencing in a 2022 murder.

He had left school after grade six and fell into a life of crime and substance abuse.

Pietersen could find “not one iota of remorse” in Van Rhyn, who denied involvement in Joslin’s disappearance and blamed the police, the witnesses — and even the judge.

“He has a propensity toward criminal activities and is, therefore, a threat to society at large,” Pietersen said, recommending the maximum sentence for him.

Court proceedings were dominated not only by arguments in mitigation and aggravation of sentence, but also by the emotional pleas of those who had searched for Joslin, taught her or sought to give her a better life.

Among them was Natasha Andrews, whose family had wanted to adopt Joslin, and Cecelia Oliver, a community member involved in the search for the child.

Oliver detailed in her witness statement how she was still so traumatised by the ordeal, she could not look at or put on the clothes she wore when searching for Joslin.

Joslin’s teacher, Edna Maart, also gave a statement, painting a picture of a vibrant, intelligent girl whose life was brutally interrupted and how that had affected her school, Diazville Primary, and classmates.

During her testimony, Maart told the court Smith had told her the child had been kidnapped by Nigerians.

But the anguish of Joslin’s disappearance was perhaps most heart-breakingly conveyed in the statement of Daniels: “I cried my eyes out on Mother’s Day. Did you not wish you had your three children with you [on that day]?” she said.

She described how Smith’s eldest son had been mocked at school, taunted by peers saying his mother was a drug user who had sold his sister. “I’ve had to fetch your child out of school because of your wicked deeds,” she said.

Throughout the trial, the three accused gave inconsistent testimony and attempted to discredit witnesses.

Allegations of police torture from Appollis and Van Rhyn at the time of their confessions — which became the subject of a trial within a trial — were dismissed by medical professionals and police.

‘He has a propensity toward criminal activities and is, therefore, a threat to society’

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Joburg’s R89.4bn budget ‘is politically motivated’

Lunga Mzangwe & Aarti Bhana

The Democratic Alliance (DA) has accused the ruling coalition in the City of Johannesburg of allocating its budget to areas where it is most likely to get votes.

“It’s a political budget and it is just to ensure that they are putting money in areas where they know they are going to get more votes [going] to the current ruling coalition at the moment,” said the DA’s Johannesburg caucus leader, Belinda Echeozonjoku.

On Wednesday, finance MMC Margaret Arnolds tabled a budget of R89.4 billion for the 2025-26 financial year, describing it as a “pro-poor and pro-growth budget”.

The capital budget of R8.7 billion (R26.2 billion over the medium term) intentionally targets regions that were affected by spatial planning during apartheid, according to the statement. This includes Alexandra, Diepsloot, Kaalfontein, Orange Farm and Lenasia South.

Echeozonjoku said one of the concerns for the DA was that huge amounts were being allocated to Region E, under which Alexandra township falls, but not much improvement had taken place there.

“You go to Alex today, do you see any of that money making a difference? We do not see where the money is going,” she said.

Speaking after the council sitting, Arnolds said: “The budget reflects

our resolve to drive infrastructure-led growth, accelerated service delivery and restore long-term financial sustainability; with a projected operating surplus of R4.1 billion and a capital allocation of R8.7 billion for this year alone [and] growing to R26.2 billion over the next three years.

“We are focusing our capital investment where they are needed most: revitalising the inner city ... but also in different regions where we are deployed as MMC.”

The key revenue drivers for this year include electricity, for which R25.6 billion is allocated, R20 billion for water and wastewater, R18.1 billion for property rates, R3.3 billion for refuse removal and R4.57 billion

for the national fuel levy, according to budget documents.

Referring to the underdeveloped regions, Arnolds said: We’ve had lots of service backlogs, it’s historical and in the underserved areas. We know that Diepsloot, Orange Farm, Lenasia South and Kaalfontein are basically the step-children of the City of Johannesburg and we are going to fix that.”

Echeozonjoku said the city is allocating money to townships or informal settlements without saying what their plan is to formalise those areas.

“It means you are throwing money into an area that is not formalised. Are you able to see the stand number? Are you able to collect revenue for prepaid meters and things like

that? “How are you going to be able to collect from those areas? You are opening the city up to challenges of illegal connection once again if you are not formalising those informal settlements.

“We are not happy with the allocations that have been done without a proper plan on how to actually collect revenue.”

She added that a lot of money has been taken from transport and the DA.

“We are not happy with that either. The tariffs increase; we felt that there’s a lot of money that could have been redirected as well.”

A sum of R400 million has been set aside for the Johannesburg Roads Agency to resurface roads.

DA renews bid to control W Cape police

The party has bristled at billionaire Johann Rupert’s remarks that the Cape Flats are the epicentre of South Africa’s violent crime problem

Mandisa Nyathi

The Democratic Alliance again called for the devolution of policing powers to the Western Cape, arguing that the centralised control of the South African Police Service (SAPS) has failed people plagued by violent crime, particularly on the Cape Flats.

This renewed push follows remarks made by billionaire businessman Johann Rupert during a meeting between a South African delegation led by President Cyril Ramaphosa and United States President Donald Trump in the Oval Office last week.

Rupert described the Cape Flats as the epicentre of South Africa’s violent crime problem and endorsed the idea of provinces taking greater control over policing functions. He also advocated for the use of advanced technologies such as Starlink — a satellite internet system developed by Elon Musk’s SpaceX — to boost real-time communication, surveillance and modernise crime fighting in neglected areas.

The DA, which controls the Western Cape, has bristled at Rupert’s comments, which were meant to convey that crime affects all parts of South Africa, including what is arguably the best-run province in the country.

“He [Rupert] knows full well that the criminal justice system ... is in the control of the national state,” said the party’s spokesperson on policing, Ian Cameron, who also chairs parliament’s portfolio committee on police.

Cameron called Rupert’s comments “misleading” and said it was “completely false” that the DA controlled the police in the Western Cape, calling for policing powers to

be devolved to the province.

Barely two days after the Oval Office meeting, in which Trump accused South Africa of perpetrating a “white genocide”, Police Minister Senzo Mchunu released the country’s latest crime statistics, which showed that nearly 90% of the country’s gang murders occur in the Western Cape.

The DA’s renewed calls on policing powers follow years of advocacy for decentralised policing, which the party scaled up after the 2012 Khayelitsha commission of inquiry exposed systemic failures of the police service in high-crime areas such as that township.

Former police minister Bheki Cele publicly dismissed the proposal, asserting that it would require amendments to the Constitution, particularly to section 205, which establishes the SAPS as a national competency.

But the DA argues that such powers can be devolved without constitutional overhaul, pointing to section 206(4) of the Constitution, which allows provincial governments to “monitor police conduct” and “promote good relations between the police and the community”.

According to Western Cape Premier Alan Winde, the national government’s inability to invest in modern policing tools has left local officers under-equipped and overstretched.

Cape Town mayor Geordin Hill-Lewis wants the city’s metro police to be given powers to investigate crime, and has also requested that the metropolitan government be granted more authority to determine policing priorities.

Hill-Lewis told a recent media briefing that Rupert’s comments should not be dismissed but rather seen as a wake-up call. “The national government has failed in its duty to



Raid: South African Police Service members patrol the streets on the Cape Flats (above). The Democratic Alliance wants the Western Cape to take over policing responsibility from the national government.

protect citizens. We need local control to try new solutions, and the Constitution already gives us a path,” he said.

Digital access has become a central plank in the DA’s policing reform agenda. The party believes Starlink could close the communication gap that hampers crime prevention efforts, especially in areas with little or no fibre connectivity.

But Starlink’s rollout in South Africa has faced regulatory hurdles. The Independent Communications Authority of South Africa requires that foreign telecom operators hold at least 30% local ownership, a condition South African-born Musk has refused to comply with.

This week Communications and Digital Technologies Minister Solly Malatsi, a member of the DA, defended a controversial policy directive reviewing ownership requirements in the ICT sector, which critics allege is designed to pave the way for Starlink into South Africa.

Appearing before parliament’s portfolio committee on communication, Malatsi said his recently gazetted proposed ICT policy adjustments were intended to broadly attract investment into the sector.

But committee members from the ANC, Economic Freedom Fighters and uMkhonto weSizwe accused him of attempting to bypass legislative processes and undermine local companies by using a ministerial directive instead of amending legislation.

While proponents argue for the use of technology in policing, others have raised red flags about the risks of outsourcing national security infrastructure to a US-based company.

Legal analysts argue that foreign satellite operators may not be bound by South Africa’s data protection laws, which could expose sensitive information to international surveillance.

In an interview with the *Mail & Guardian* last year, KwaZulu-Natal police commissioner Nhlanhla Mkhwanazi expressed frustration with the centralised structure, saying provincial police leaders lack the authority to make operational decisions suited to local realities.

“We have budgets and responsibilities, but we don’t control staffing, deployments or logistics,” Mkhwanazi said, describing the system as “centralised in terms of constraint”. While he stopped short of advocating for devolution, his comments were interpreted by many as validation of the DA’s criticism of national policing.

Criminologist Guy Lamb described Mkhwanazi’s remarks as extraordinary. “SAPS is notoriously hierarchical. For a senior official to speak this frankly signals deep institutional frustration,” he said.

Former minister Cele repeatedly argued that decentralising the SAPS would require constitutional amendments and would fragment national coordination. “Security cannot be divided in a unitary state,” he said in parliament in 2021 — a position still echoed by many within the ruling party.

But political analysts such as Ongama Mtimka argue that there is room for deeper local collaboration within the existing framework. “The Constitution allows for local involvement in crime prevention. What’s missing is the political will to explore those avenues meaningfully.”

While the DA and its allies push for systemic reform, community organisations are urging politicians not to lose sight of the human cost. Residents of the Cape Flats, who face daily threats from gang violence, stress that real safety will require more than new technology or revised laws.

“We need trauma counselling, youth programmes, and jobs. Starlink won’t stop a bullet,” said Anthea Joseph, a youth mentor from Hanover Park. “Tech can help, but healing and opportunity must be part of the equation.”

Good party secretary general Brett Herron rebuked the DA’s stance on policing and crime, arguing that the party was “outrageously washing its hands of responsibility for transforming the culture of gangsterism in the Western Cape until it is given control of the police”.

“The party has been running the governments of Cape Town and the Western Cape for nearly two decades, more than long enough to implement its policies and programmes — but it takes no responsibility for gangsterism, which it blames solely on incompetent national policing.”

Herron argued that the DA leadership is “better suited to running neighbourhood security companies than developing policy to reduce crime”.

“Until the politicians in charge of the city and province, and many in the media, stop regarding the culture of gangsterism as ‘normal’ on the Cape Flats, Cape Town police stations will continue to record the highest numbers of murders in the country,” he said.

Unisa grows from strength to strength in research, global rankings



Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Professor Puleng LenkaBula

Leading since 2021 by Professor Puleng LenkaBula, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Unisa takes great pride in the remarkable strides made in achieving excellence in research on the national and international stages, innovating in catalytic niches, and continuing an upward trajectory in authoritative world rankings.

The university is positioning itself as a global higher education and research leader by fostering collaborations with best-of-breed international partners through a highly focused science diplomacy drive. Unisa casts its partnership net wide, and meaningful partnerships have been – and continue to be – forged with like-minded universities and knowledge organisations across the globe. Three such examples are recent collaborative agreements with Yonsei University in South Korea, Fern Universität in Germany, and the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology in China.

Through hard work and commitment to elevating its research outputs, Unisa improved its position in virtually all of the major world university rankings. Over time, Unisa more than doubled its scores in the Times Higher Education World University Ranking from 14,6 in 2016 to 32,2 in 2024, with improvements across all pillars, and recorded its best score in research. Also in 2024, the Times Higher



Education University Impact Rankings recognised Unisa in the top six for its global contributions to research and education. In the Scimago University Ranking for 2024, Unisa was ranked in the upper quartile worldwide. According to the Webometrics Ranking Web of Universities, Unisa made a dramatic move from 797th to 736th in global rankings and placed 7th domestically. The Times Higher Education University Impact Rankings recognised Unisa in the top six for its global contributions to research and education.

The upward trend continued in the first part of 2025, with Webometrics showing that Unisa rose to 732nd in global rankings, while the QS World University Rankings 2025 lists Unisa as one of the top seven universities in South Africa. In the recent Scimago University Ranking for 2025, Unisa enhanced its position despite an increase in the number of ranked universities to 5 051 and is now ranked jointly 1 005th overall.

“Our research output is improving too,” comments LenkaBula. “According to the latest audited data, Unisa is in sixth

position nationally in terms of research output, up from eighth.”

Adding to this success, 20 Unisa researchers were ranked among the top 2% globally by Stanford University and Elsevier, cementing the university’s position as a hub for impactful scholarship.

These achievements align with LenkaBula’s vision to see Unisa remain relevant, competitive, and impactful locally and globally. She also envisions the university’s research playing a pivotal role in solving social ills plaguing the nation and world, ranging from poverty, inequality, unemployment, crime, racism, and sexism, to divisions within and between nations, and gender-based violence.

Ten catalytic niche areas identified under LenkaBula’s guidance are firmly embedded in the university’s research approach. These initiatives, led by distinguished scholars, address critical challenges in fields such as mining, automotive innovation, and sustainable development, ensuring Unisa remains a hub for academic excellence and societal impact.

With its ever-growing research output and an enviable global reputation, Unisa is destined to become an even more formidable and impactful centre of excellence, participating in the worldwide knowledge arena at the highest level.

AG exposes municipal meltdown

Taxpayers are paying for ill-disciplined, debt-ridden, unaccountable local governments

Lyse Comins

Auditor general Tsakani Maluleke has delivered a damning indictment on the state of municipal finances and lack of accountability, manifested in crumbling service delivery.

This is despite an uptick in the number of clean audit reports for the 2023-24 financial year.

Maluleke painted a dire picture of the widespread poor quality of financial reporting and mismanagement in a briefing to parliament's cooperative governance portfolio committee on local government audit outcomes for the financial year.

"The good news is that we are back to 41 clean audits [out of 275 municipalities], which is where we started back in 2021. So we're no more at the 34 that I talked about last year. However, that makes up 15% of the municipalities across the country," she said.

"It's great that we are reversing this trend around disclaimers of audit opinion. However, the state of financial and performance management disciplines in local government still leaves much to be desired, and so the story, in many ways, is similar to what I would have shared before. I worry ... that I will sound like a stuck record."

Her office's assessment underscored a profound crisis in municipal governance that extends far beyond mere administrative inefficiency.

She said 14 municipalities received disclaimer audit opinions — when an auditor is unable to obtain sufficient audit evidence to form an opinion — while seven had adverse audit opinions, and 35 had qualified audit opinions — meaning the financial statements contained material misstatements in specific amounts, or there was insufficient evidence to conclude that specific amounts included in the statements were not materially misstated.

Ninety-nine municipalities had unqualified opinions and 41 municipalities achieved clean audits.

Maluleke said the metropolitan landscape was particularly alarming.

"The eight metros across the country look after half of the expenditure budget for local government. They look after service delivery that affects 46% of households across the country. Their budgets are quite significant," she said.

"They sit in the centres of economic activity, and so, given the scale of their operations, the complexity thereof, but also the resources that they manage and even their loca-

tion, they should have no difficulty attracting the skills that they need to run their environment.

"Unfortunately, out of the eight, we've got only one clean audit, which is the City of Cape Town. It was the only clean audit last year as well."

Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg and eThekweni were the only metros to achieve unqualified audits with findings.

Maluleke's office was also concerned about the quality of financial statements of the big metros and municipalities, noting that when the audit started only 63 out of 275 municipalities provided quality financial statements.

"By the time we finished, we managed to get 140 credible financial statements through corrections during the audit process," she said.

"The City of Joburg didn't give us quality financial statements when we began our audit. Now that's a big city, the biggest in the country, the biggest on the continent. There should be no difficulty in ensuring that you've got the skills and the capability to do what you're supposed to do, just on compiling financial statements."

The audit exposed shocking institutional decay across infrastructure projects.

"We selected projects mostly in the metros and in those that have disclaimers of audit opinion.

We found that the majority of projects had problems — 77% of the projects we visited had problems. Either they were delayed, there was poor quality work and then we also identified matters around the inadequate maintenance of infrastructure," she said.

"The reason this exists, in our view, is that even if performance agreements are done as a tick-box exercise, they are not monitored. Contractors are appointed poorly through a procurement process that is not in compliance with the law and one that does not lead to the best decision. So the contractor that's appointed is one that's not equal to the task, then they are not managed — contract management capability is not there.

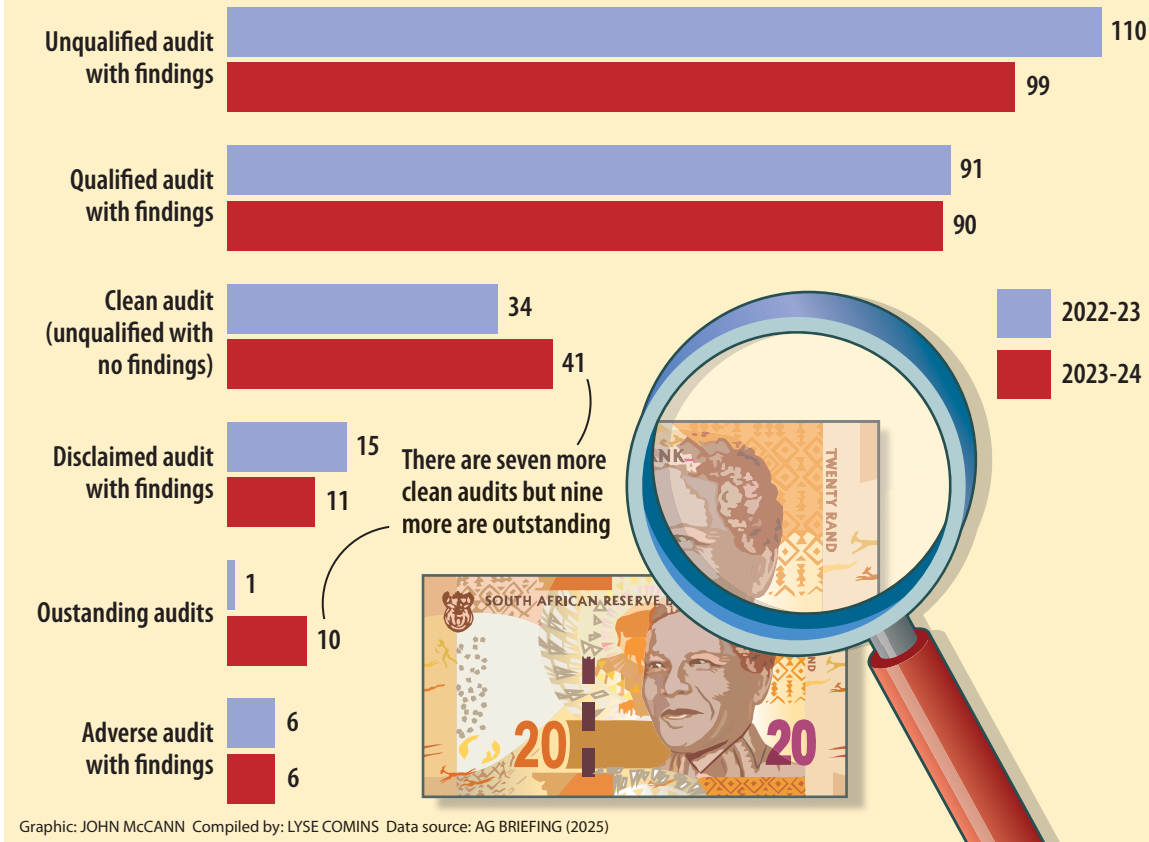
"The municipality doesn't have employees within it that have a set of standard operating procedures, a set of disciplines and even a set of skills to monitor the performance of these contractors, and we're seeing even once they've seen problems with the performance of the contractor, they don't hold them accountable.

"Other than the municipalities that have got clean audits, you've got the majority of municipalities with material compliance findings, mostly in the area of procurement and contract management. In a nutshell, it tells us that we do not yet have a

SA's municipal finances under scrutiny

Outcomes of auditor-general's overall audit of 275 municipalities

By number of municipal audits, 2022-23 compared with 2023-24



Despair: Auditor general Tsakani Maluleke has slammed metros and municipalities.

Eskom and the water boards," said Maluleke.

She said suppliers and creditors to municipalities were waiting 286 days on average to receive money due to them, because cash flow were tight in many municipalities. Many of the suppliers then charged interest and penalties, much of which ended up as fruitless and wasteful expenditure.

The treasury's Eskom debt relief programme aimed at helping municipalities enter into a settlement arrangement with the power utility had failed.

"It's not working — 84% of the municipalities that participate in that programme are not complying with the conditions that they subscribed to. Again, in many instances, that's a discipline issue," Maluleke told members of parliament.

The auditor general's report noted that cooperative governance and traditional affairs (Cogta) MECs, the minister and provincial legislatures were not doing their jobs in overseeing municipalities.

"The Municipal Systems Act provides that the MEC of Cogta must compile a report that analyses the performance of each municipality and that report must include remedial action that the MEC or municipality is undertaking and provide a report to provincial legislature every year on how municipality is responding," Maluleke said.

"We have found those reports are either not done or if they are done they are done late; they are also either not tabled in the legislature and if tabled they are not dealt with in the legislature.

"We believe wholeheartedly that if MEC did their part they would not be lurching from crisis to crisis and if the legislature played their part they wouldn't be waiting for the AG to say there is a disclaimer here, they would be monitoring these movements as a matter of course."

She said the cooperative governance minister's compilation report was often not done or done late.

"We have to get every single player in the ecosystem of accountability doing their part otherwise we will not arrest the decline of local government," Maluleke said.

this question for the past 10 years.

"The answer is that in most instances, the work of the consultant is not being reviewed. They say, well, there's 2% [of cases] where the consultants didn't deliver. But much of the problem is either consultants are appointed late, the underlying documents are not available or that their work is not being managed properly by the people who appointed them," she said.

"What it tells you is that you've got CFOs and finance staff in place. They appoint consultants every year, and then once the consultant is there, they basically leave their desks. And so the consultant must engage with the auditors, which, in our view, tells a story about the culture and discipline more than even skills."

"There is an element where the people under the CFO, there are some who are appointed and don't have the skill to do the basics. However, much of the problem, we believe in local government, especially in this area of overusing consultants, relates to discipline."

Municipal debt continues to spiral out of control as many municipalities approve unfunded budgets.

"We see unauthorised expenditure, meaning that where you've got expenditure levels approved, people are spending beyond that ... And of course, that then compromises the financial health of those municipalities. Many ended up with a deficit situation, and many have got major creditors that they don't pay, such as

culture, a state of control, procedures and even accounting mechanisms.

"Metros are not any better. And given their significant budgets, one would have thought that this area of procurement would enjoy tremendous attention by the people that hold the purse."

Buffalo City's engineering crisis epitomised municipal dysfunction, the auditor general said, telling MPs: "They have had a vacancy for a district engineer responsible for electricity for 80 months — that's six years and eight months."

An identical vacancy for sanitation engineering had remained unfilled for 24 months.

Maluleke said the financial mismanagement is systemic and deeply entrenched.

"This year 219 municipalities spent together R1.47 billion on consultants purely for the purpose of helping them compile financial statements. Last year we reported R1.37 billion so the number is not really changing.

"This is when there are CFOs [chief financial officers] in place and there are finance functions that are populated with people that have been appointed. We also note that municipalities that get disclaimers of opinion also still spend on consultants on average R6 million.

"Municipalities with adverse findings also spend on consultants. The ones with qualified audits also spend on consultants. It tells us then that the key question is: why is it that, even when there's consultants being appointed, we still get bad quality submissions?"

She said her office had been asking

EFF to use 'Kill the Boer' for 2026 elections

Mandisa Nyathi

The Democratic Alliance (DA) wrote to Ramaphosa after the chant's renewed circulation, stating that such rhetoric deepens racial mistrust. DA leader John Steenhuisen said it contributed to a climate of fear, particularly in



Constitutional law professor Pierre de Vos said the legal acceptability of the chant depends heavily on context. “If the words amount to incitement to cause harm, or can

"We are not going to apologise for singing a song of struggle," he said in July 2023 at the party's 10th anniversary celebrations at FNB Stadium in Johannesburg. "It carries our pain and our defiance."

2025: ?

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



Obituary

The writer who refused to bow

Vashna Jagarnath explores the life, the message and the legacy of the Kenyan literary giant

Ngugi wa Thiong'o

5 January 1938 – 28 May 2025

Ngugi wa Thiong'o has died. But if ever there was a writer who prepared us for this moment, for the refusal of forgetting, for the insistence that the spirit of resistance cannot be imprisoned, it was him.

Born in colonial Kenya in 1938, Ngugi's life was shaped from the beginning by rupture and fire. He witnessed the brutal violence of British colonial rule, the fracturing of communities under settler capitalism and the psychic wounds left by forced conversions, Christianisation, and land dispossession.

He was also shaped by the courageous resistance of the Mau Mau uprising, that great peasant revolt that has often been sanitised into nationalist myth. But Ngugi did not trade in myth. He held the truth in his hands, raw, inconvenient, luminous.

For many in the Global North, Ngugi was first encountered through the deceptively simple novels of his early career: *Weep Not, Child* (1964), *The River Between* (1965), and *A Grain of Wheat* (1967).

These were works written in English, in the mode of a young man taught to believe the English language was the vehicle of modernity.

But Ngugi would later reject this lie so forcefully, so completely, that it would cost him his freedom. And in doing so, he would chart one of the most radical literary and political journeys of our time, from a colonial subject to a prisoner of conscience, to a living weapon of decolonisation.

Like Frantz Fanon Ngugi took on the betrayal of predatory postcolonial elites with the same fury that he confronted colonialism. In 1977, after staging *I Will Marry When I Want* with villagers at Kamiriithu, a Gikuyu-language play that tore into the heart of post-independence corruption and neocolonial betrayal, Ngugi was detained without trial.

In prison, he wrote *Devil on the Cross* in Gikuyu, on toilet paper, using a smuggled pen. It was a defiant act not just of storytelling but of linguistic reclamation.

From that point onward, he would write first and foremost in Gikuyu, translating his work into English only later. As he declared in *Decolonising the Mind*, "African writers must choose to write in the languages of their people ... the language of real life, of work, of struggle."

This was not the kind of superficial gesture common in performative forms of decolonial posturing. Ngugi understood language as infrastruc-

ture, as the battleground where cultural memory, political power and selfhood are contested. To decolonise the mind, one must dismantle the internalised grammar of empire.

And yet, it is his final towering novel, *Wizard of the Crow* (2006), that best captures the full scope of his vision. Written in Gikuyu and translated by Ngugi himself into English, this nearly 800-page epic is a grotesquely comic, eerily prophetic tale of a fictional African dictatorship called Aburiria, a mirror held up to the postcolonial state.

Here, language shifts and warps like the body of the dictator himself. Time becomes absurd. Gender fluidities are hinted at and then crushed under patriarchal panic. The body politic is both spectacle and corpse.

The ruler of Aburiria, known only as "The Ruler", is an egotistical despot obsessed with being deified by the Global Bank. His ministers compete in a frenzy of sycophancy, constructing a Tower of Babel-style monstrosity called Marching to Heaven to honour him. In this theatre of grotesquerie, we meet Kamiti, an unemployed philosopher-turned-healer, who assumes the identity

of the "Wizard of the Crow", and Nyawira, a feminist revolutionary and leader of the underground Movement for the Voice of the People. Their love, forged in resistance and trickery, is one of the most quietly radical elements of the novel.

It is gendered solidarity, not romance, political tenderness, not bourgeois desire.

Through magical realism, satire and parable, Ngugi lays bare the mechanics of post-colonial authoritarianism, not as a betrayal of the nation but as its logical continuation under the rules of global finance.

The Ruler's body literally inflates with the disease of power. The Global Bank operates like a god demanding tribute. In this world, development is disease, progress is punishment and the nation is a prison.

The grotesque becomes the logic of governance. And this is not just an African story. In *Wizard of the Crow*, we already meet the future — a spectacle of power obsessed with worship, paranoid about dissent and surrounded by ministers so stupid and servile they parody themselves.

This is not just an African story. In the US, The Ruler is reborn in orange skin, yelling on *Fox News*, flanked by cronies who echo his lies, drunk on performance and grievance. As Ngugi made clear, the absurd is a structure, not an accident.

But *Wizard of the Crow* is not merely critique. It is a manual of survival. It insists on the subversive power of storytelling, the plasticity of language and the insurgency of

Graphic: JOHN McCANN



laughter. It gives us spells, not the supernatural kind, but the magic of those who refuse to die quietly.

What Ngugi taught us, especially those of us working and writing from the Global South, is that liberation must be total. You cannot free a people without freeing their tongues, their bodies, their histories, their archives, their dreams, in a world where Euro-American liberalism continues to demand to be respected as a great moral authority while it continues its long bloodlust, now most visible in the agonies of Palestine.

Ngugi's refusal to write in English was more radical than any slogan. It was a withdrawal of consent from the epistemology of empire.

In a moment in which decolonial posturing is often insufferably bourgeois we must affirm Ngugi's refusal of abstract theory. He was always concerned with the poor. With peasants. With workers. With women and men who labour and laugh and conspire and survive.

Ngugi was a Marxist, and his Marxism was never academic. It pulsed through his literature, in the rhythms of Gikuyu oral storytelling, in the community workshops of Kamiriithu, in the bodies of characters like Nyawira who refuse subordination to both domesticity and to the state.

Ngugi wrote against the singular hero. Against the myth of the nationalist saviour. Against the idea that liberation is a flag or a parliament. For Ngugi, the masses were the protagonists. The collectivity was the hero. Even in *Wizard of the Crow*,

where Kamiti could have become a messianic figure, he retreats. He is shaped and saved by Nyawira, and together they dissolve into the revolutionary underground, not as symbols, but as catalysts.

Ngugi also took women seriously, even as he struggled, at times, with fully unlearning the patriarchal codes embedded in tradition and revolution alike.

His later work, including *The Perfect Nine* (2020), reclaims Gikuyu mythology to centre female protagonists, exploring disability, desire and divine power through poetic epic. It is a late-life meditation on gender and creation, a text that invites rereading and feminist critique.

That critique will have to grapple with the shock that exploded through the literary world in March last year when Ngugi's son, Mukoma, took to Twitter to claim his father had abused his late mother Nyambura.

Mukoma's sister, Wanjiku, appeared to dispute the allegation. At the moment, the facts do not appear to be clear. *Al Jazeera* took down the article it had published on the allegations saying, "In light of fresh information, *Al Jazeera English* is unable to support some elements of this article, whose text we are withdrawing from the site."

To read Ngugi today, especially from South Africa, is to confront our own betrayals. Our own post-liberation rulers drunk on vanity, greed and violence. Our subordination to the demands of capital. Our own crises of language, where English and a Europeanised form of Afrikaans dominate elite spaces, while isiXhosa, isi-

Zulu, Sesotho and others are treated as relics of the home, not instruments of thought.

It is also to recognise the quiet brilliance of resistance, in shack settlements, in feminist groups and networks, in union struggles, in autonomous student reading groups, in WhatsApp forums of working-class learners.

Like Kamiti and Nyawira, our people know how to conjure survival amid enduring oppression and its accumulation of pain and trauma.

Ngugi was never awarded the Nobel Prize, despite decades of speculation. But he didn't need it. The people who needed to read him found him. He gave us language as a weapon. He gave us stories as conspiracies. He gave us laughter that bites like acid.

To lose Ngugi now, in the midst of so much backsliding and betrayal, is to feel momentarily unmoored. It is to wonder — who will write us back into being? Who will remind us that our tongues are sacred? That the crow, the scorned, unwanted black bird, is a prophet?

But Ngugi wa Thiong'o prepared us for this too. He taught us that the dead never die in vain. That the story never ends, it only passes hands.

He also taught us that stories are complex and that liberators can also be oppressors.

Vashna Jagarnath is a historian, political risk and DEI consultant, labour expert, pan-African and South Asian political analyst and curriculum specialist.

Dragonflies help save ecosystems

As natural sentinels of freshwater resources, the ancient insects signal the health of aquatic ecosystems

Sheree Bega

Long before there were dinosaurs, there were dragonflies. That's one of the things about the ephemeral insects, with their long, slender bodies and gossamer-thin wings, that fascinates entomologist Charl Deacon.

Dragonflies, known for their striking aerial acrobatics and near 360-degree vision, are one of the oldest groups of winged insects on Earth.

"The dragonfly group is ancient, and based on fossil records, their origin dates back around 300 million years ago," said Deacon, a postdoctoral research fellow at Stellenbosch University.

"The staggering age of the first dragonflies provide us with a look into how life was in the distant past. Contemporary dragonflies retain most body features of ancient dragonflies — except their size — emphasising that they are highly successful insects."

Dragonflies, a blanket term for both "true dragonflies" and "damselflies", are a relatively small group of insects, consisting of about 6 400 species worldwide.

For Deacon, what makes these expert fliers interesting is that they are valuable insects for assessing water and land quality. "Groups of dragonfly species in a defined habitat can tell us a lot about deteriorating environmental conditions and the requirements to restore degraded areas."

To ensure the long-term survival of dragonflies and other creatures that share their habitats, they must be included more widely in biodiversity conservation efforts and policies. This is the key recommendation from a group of dragonfly experts from 17 countries, including South Africa, Mexico, Australia and the United States.

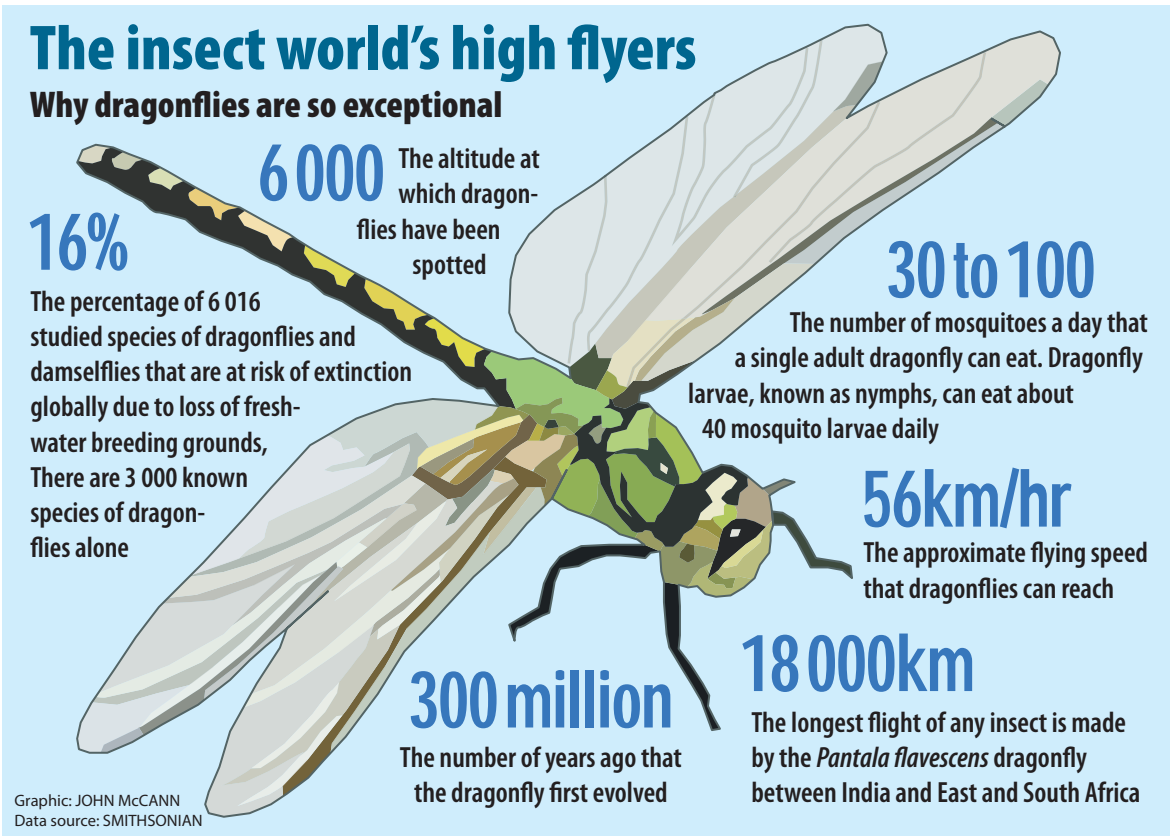
Their recent review, published in the journal *Insect Conservation and Diversity*, proposes a five-point action plan to promote dragonflies in freshwater and riverbank conservation.

These are expanding and enhancing dragonfly assessment and monitoring; including dragonflies in standard environmental toxicological risk assessment; learning from dragonflies to improve landscape conservation efforts; ensuring the integration of dragonflies with other plant and animal conservation initiatives; and promoting dragonflies in environmental education.

The scientists said global dragonfly conservation hinges on these five actions implemented across different regions and landscapes.

Deacon noted that although dragonflies are sensitive to changes in their habitats, at the same time, they can recover remarkably well when environmental pressure is lifted. "This means that we can investigate them to learn how we can improve conditions for them, and the other creatures they share their habitats with."

Dragonflies inspire curiosity and appreciation, he said. "Being sur-



Delicate: South Africa has 65 types of damselfly and 96 types of dragonfly, including the damselfly *Allocnemis leucosticta* (above left) and the dragonfly *Ceratogomphus triceraticus* (above right).
Photos: Charl Deacon

The ability of dragonflies to survive under different environmental conditions depends on the traits or characteristics of individual species.

"For some species, these traits may help them adapt to or benefit from human activities, such as creation of ponds. Others, however, may lack these traits, making them vulnerable to local extinction. While databases on the traits of dragonflies are expanding, other unknown characteristics may also play a role in their ability to adapt to changing environments."

The researchers called for conservation efforts that link water and land, improve connectivity between habitats, and better maintain water and soil quality. This landscape approach is based on the idea that efforts to protect dragonflies will also benefit other organisms that share similar habitats and requirements.

"Updating regional species lists and developing field guides and digital applications help with species identification. These resources also have great potential to develop knowledge on how they live in ecosystems and interact with plants and animals they share these ecosystems with."

The scientists emphasised the value of citizen science in enhancing research on conservation and management requirements. "Understanding the cultural role of dragonflies across various regions, will, in turn, spark interest in them, encourage a desire to protect them, and feed into policymaking."

Deacon noted that insects face multiple difficulties, including habitat loss, habitat transformation, habitat fragmentation/isolation, environmental pollution, over-exploitation of natural resources and the co-extinction of plant and animal species that interact with insects.

They make up a huge proportion of total biodiversity and have important ecological roles. Some are pollinators, others are predators of nuisance species, some are food sources for a variety of animals, and some help regulate decomposition of organic inputs and soil quality.

rounded by dragonflies, it is striking to notice their charisma — most dragonflies appear to be attuned to the presence of people in their environments, some would even approach visitors, sometimes seemingly posing for just long enough to show off their beauty."

About 16% of dragonflies are threatened.

Globally, they face relatively similar threats, including habitat loss or modification, water pollution, over-abstraction of water resources and the spread of alien invasive species including fish, amphibians, crustaceans and plants.

Overarching these threats, which often interact, is climate change and its associated extreme weather events.

According to the review, dragonflies could also help measure the success of conservation efforts.

Some examples include the global reduction of human exploitation of wetlands through sustainable land-use practices, beaver reintroduction programmes in Europe, habitat restoration programmes including management of highly invasive alien species, sustainable drainage systems development in cities to enhance resilience to extreme weather and water-related events —

creating new dragonfly habitats — and clean energy projects.

South Africa is home to 65 damselfly species and 96 dragonfly species. Population sizes vary from one location to the next, and according to environmental conditions, Deacon said.

"For example, during wet years, dragonfly population sizes may be inflated, while during dry years, dragonfly populations decline. The dragonfly species with specific habitat requirements are most at risk, while those with broader habitat preferences are more resilient, even benefitting from artificial habitats in urban and agricultural areas."

In South Africa, water pollution, which affects the survival of larvae, and the spread of invasive alien trees in water-adjacent areas, shading out sunny dragonfly habitats, are "particularly worrisome".

Dragonfly survival depends on both land and water. "They breed in water, and this is where the eggs and larvae are found. But the surrounding land is where the adults are found, and where they mature, hunt, pursue mates, and seek suitable habitat to breed."

About a third of the species in South Africa are endemic. "While the northeastern region of South

Africa is home to the widest variety of species, most endemic species are found in the Western Cape," Deacon said.

In their review, the scientists said it is essential to continue and expand the assessment and monitoring of dragonfly population sizes, distributions and the groups of species that live in specific areas.

This information feeds into international conservation prioritisation frameworks and initiatives for understanding conservation risks and declines relative to human pressures and ongoing climate change.

"Monitoring and evaluation during the early stages of conservation programmes are critical to ensure that dragonfly populations, habitats and ecosystems are effectively assessed over time. This approach also helps to quantify threats and measure the level of conservation success. Information gathered through assessment and monitoring must be translated into practical conservation efforts and policy decisions.

By including dragonflies in broader conservation initiatives, conservation policies and management globally will become more effective. "We need policies that focus on overall biodiversity protection, with dragonflies being an important component," the authors said.

'We can ... learn how we can improve conditions for them and other creatures'

'Polluters are derailing green policy'

A new report points fingers at mining and fossil fuel giants for successfully blocking South Africa's energy transition for 20 years

Sheree Bega

South Africa's largest corporate polluters have worked persistently over the past two decades, in public and in private, to derail an effective climate policy response by the government, according to non-profit shareholder activism organisation Just Share.

The group has released a report which sets out in detail the 20-year history of industry interventions in climate regulatory processes. It focuses on the Carbon Tax Act and the Climate Change Act, both of which are foundational to the country's climate response and should require significant action from business.

"Various aspects of our work ... over the past five years have strongly indicated that business was influencing the evolution of climate policy," Emma Schuster, a senior climate-risk analyst at Just Share, said at the launch of the report. "We wanted to understand the degree of that influence and establish an evidence-based account of its impact."

She said the two Acts have been "the targets of persistent industry intervention". Just Share used corporate submissions on legislative processes and records of industry's private meetings with the government, which were largely obtained via requests under the Promotion of Access to Information Act.

This showed how industry interventions, predominantly via Sasol Limited and industry associations Business Unity South Africa and the Minerals Council South Africa, have achieved significant regulatory concessions and extensive delays, which have "substantially compromised" the effectiveness of the Carbon Tax Act and the Climate Change Act.

"... What is actually striking is how much we can't see, especially when it comes to the bilateral meetings between government and high-emitting companies, which remain hidden from public view and knowledge, unless specific requests for this information are made. Even then, we have no idea whether we are getting the full picture," Schuster said.

While the report is by no means a comprehensive record of government and business interactions, "even so, it demonstrates a clear pattern of influence".

The implications of corporate influence are profound. "The failure of the government's climate policy response to drive meaningful greenhouse gas emission reductions by big polluters means that the just transition to a low-carbon economy is not supported by a robust regulatory framework, which holds emitters accountable," the report said.

This threatens to leave South Africa "economically vulnerable, environmentally compromised and increasingly out of step" with global efforts to mitigate climate change.

Major polluters with powerful financial incentives to maintain the status quo resist regulation aimed at forcing them to internalise the social and economic costs of their operations — costs which are often borne by the rest of society, especially the poorest and most vulnerable.

"It is the government's role to stand firm in the face of such resistance and to develop effective regulation, which addresses this profound injustice. But, as this report demonstrates, [the] government is susceptible to industry pressure."

"The corporate actors responsible for the pushback against climate regulation do not act for the benefit of the majority of South Africans but instead represent a narrow set of elite vested interests."

Their historically powerful role in the economy, and the access that this affords them to policymakers, means a "cohort of major polluters dominates the national economic dialogue" and appears to have succeeded repeatedly in persuading the government to roll back its progressive climate-related policy initiatives.

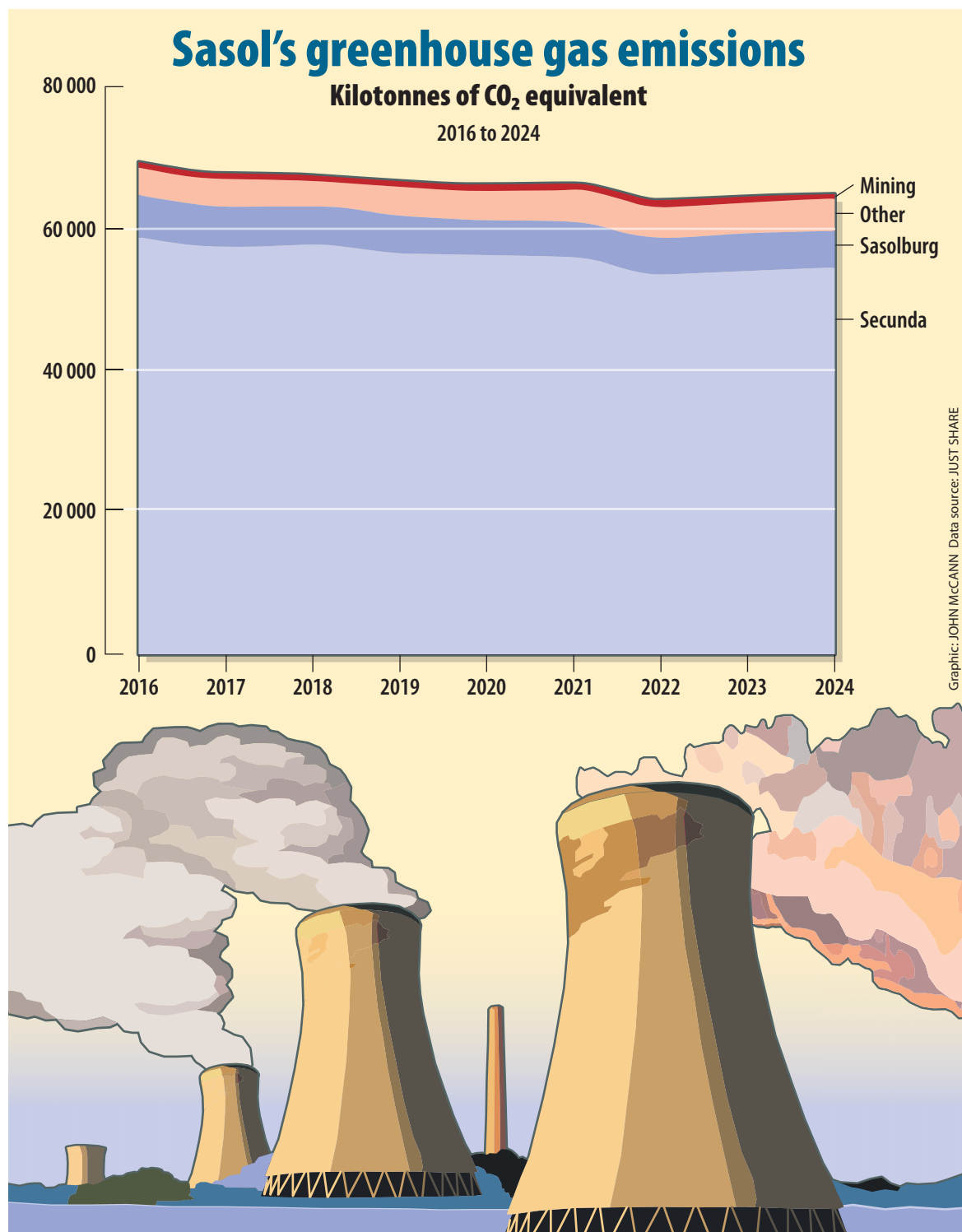
This success has been reinforced by the absence of any significant countervailing action from other local businesses, which stand to be severely affected if the country fails to decarbonise. This includes those in the automotive, agricultural, tourism and insurance sectors and the renewable energy industry.

"These industries do not appear to play any significant role in engaging the government on climate policy, leaving industry associations representing the interests of high emitters to set the agenda, and establishing major polluters as the arbiters of what constitutes acceptable climate progress," the report said.

Schuster said industry associations play a crucial role because they allow individual companies to project their public commitment to positive climate action while they are able to act on their behalf and take positions that might contradict these.

"The industry associations are not bound by the same transparency requirements as companies are. They don't face shareholder or customer pressure and, crucially, they can speak within a unified voice, which obviously is much more influential with the government."

The report said industry players opposed to climate action have mastered the art of "economic hostage-



taking" through inflating their contributions to society and ignoring the damage they cause, while creating a false dichotomy between climate action and economic prosperity.

The carbon tax, initially proposed in 2006, has been systematically weakened over time in the face of consistent industry opposition.

"Consequently, the effective carbon tax is one of the lowest in the world ... and has achieved neither the internalisation of the cost of emis-

sions by big polluters nor a meaningful reduction in greenhouse gas emissions."

After repeated extensions of the low-rate, introductory "phase 1", South Africa's carbon tax is set to continue to allow up to 85% to 95% of tax-free allowances to remain at least until 2031. Between December and January, after the release of the treasury's discussion paper on phase 2 of the tax, Sasol had three private meetings with it, the report said. When the now defunct March budget review was released, the most important proposals for increasing the effectiveness of the carbon tax in phase 2 had been abandoned.

Similarly, after at least a decade of preparation, the first Climate Change Bill was released for public comment in 2018. Also "the subject of protracted opposition from industry", the Act was only promulgated last year and became operational in March.

Not only have key provisions of the Climate Change Act not commenced, but high emitters have successfully lobbied to eliminate criminal penalties for exceeding carbon budgets.

Corporate actors have persistently

driven a narrative which appears to have had a significant impact on policy outcome. This is characterised by three themes, which are "deployed repeatedly over time", Schuster noted.

The first theme is "positive contribution framing", where industry positions itself as essential to jobs, growth and the economy, and "then threatens that regulation making its life more difficult will have catastrophic impacts on these things".

The second is developing country framing. Here, it argues South Africa is only a small emitter and should not be a leader in climate action, to the detriment of their industry.

"Finally, is the pace and scale framing where industry acknowledges a transition is necessary but again that moving too fast or being too ambitious will only be damaging."

Schuster said each of these arguments is "politically potent" and, together, they manage to frame climate action in opposition to development goals, "wilfully ignoring that the transition is about growth and development that replaces the current high unemployment, high poverty, coal-based economy with one that is more just and sustainable".

The scale and success of corporate influence is undeniable and yet most of it remains invisible, Schuster added. "This imbalance has real consequences. South Africa's climate policy is not achieving its goal of reducing emissions and implementing the polluter-pays principle and it's ordinary people, especially the poor and vulnerable, who will bear this cost."

The development of climate policy has been fundamentally imbalanced, allowing corporate interests to consistently override public interests in

effective climate action. "The success of high emitters in weakening climate policy now threatens the competitiveness and the stability of the entire economy."

This, however, is not an inevitable outcome, she emphasised. Just Share is calling for greater transparency in government dealings with industry, inclusive policymaking that elevates marginalised voices and evidence-based policy impact assessment that is free from corporate interference.

Without these changes, South Africa's climate policies will continue to serve elite interests "at the expense of people and the planet".

Sasol noted the release of the report and said it would study it further, while Business Unity South Africa had not responded to the *Mail & Guardian* by the time of publication.

Minerals Council South Africa spokesperson Allan Seccombe said it acts as the principal advocate for mining in engagements with the government on policy, taxes and other areas affecting mining.

"The Minerals Council seeks to create, in partnership with key stakeholders, a conducive policy, legislative and operating environment that facilitates growth and investment to grow the mining industry for the benefit of the economy and all South Africans," he said.

He added that the council participated in workshops and provided data and responses "to the challenges we were facing as an industry and as broader business" and its members were supportive of climate action within the national context and compliant with relevant laws.

"The Minerals Council has supported critical reforms that reduced load-shedding and accelerated renewable energy adoption."

'As this report demonstrates, [the] government is susceptible to industry pressure'

Thought Leader

Comment and analysis from the Mail & Guardian



Universities, revive Joburg's hippest 'hood

Melville was an asset undervalued by the city and universities. It is in decay but it could be restored

Melville, once declared one of the world's hippest neighbourhoods, is in serious decline. The suburb is an important asset to our academic life and must be restored.

I often host students and faculty from universities in Europe and the US. For a long time, Melville was the automatic place for academic visitors, professors and students to visit and stay while passing through Johannesburg.

Located next to the University of the Witwatersrand, one of our two great universities, as well as the up-and-coming University of Johannesburg (UJ), Melville has long provided a convivial environment for academics and post-graduate visitors. In 2020, just five years ago, *Time Out* magazine ranked Melville as one of the 40 coolest neighbourhoods in the world.

Academic travel matters, and academics want to enjoy their experience of travel. For decades Melville, buzzing with coffee shops, restaurants, live music venues, galleries and a very good second-hand bookshop provided exactly what academics and post-graduate students needed to enjoy their time in Johannesburg.

The turn to Zoom during Covid has reduced academic travel quite a bit, but spending two days on Zoom rather than travelling for a conference is a painful and vastly less rewarding experience.

Melville was hit hard by the Covid lockdown though, and has been hit just as hard by the general collapse in the functioning of the Johannesburg municipality.

Many of the restaurants on the once world-famous 7th Street shut down during the lockdown and many of the buildings on the strip remain empty. If there had been some vision to support the strip, understanding it as a wider asset to the city, and the country, this could have been avoided.

Driving into Melville recently with a group of students and academics was a depressing experience. Coming up Main Road, which divides Melville and Westdene, is bleak.

There are three large holes, which are so big they cannot be described as potholes, on Main Road that have been left unattended for months — aside from placing a plastic barrier in front of them.



Left Lens
Imraan Buccus

Some of the shopkeepers dump their refuse on the pavement next to the pedestrian litter bins rather than keeping it for the weekly refuse collection.

The homeless people on Main Road, many struggling with addiction, live in squalor and the lack of public toilets has inevitable consequences.

Uber and delivery drivers face the same lack of access to toilets with the same unfortunate results.

Turning into Melville itself is no less disheartening. Streets no longer have working lights, there are a couple of abandoned and looted or vandalised houses, and some of the electricity poles have a mess of dangling wires, some live.

Around the suburb piles of rubble have been left on the pavements after work done by Egoli Gas and various arms of the municipality. It seems that it is no longer expected that rubble will be removed after maintenance work alongside the streets.

The 7th Street strip, with its many empty buildings, has large ditches filled with sand at each end. They have also been there for months.

On the corner of 3rd Avenue and 7th Street, part of the road has been left in a dug-up state and with a pile of rubble sitting on the road. It too has been like this for months.

Private property owners are beginning to do the same. On the corner of 2nd Avenue and 7th Street a homeowner has left two large piles of building rubble on the pavement for months.

A slow water leak has been trickling down 7th Street for months. There are no drain covers on the strip. This is unsightly and a hazard for pedestrians. The road markings have long faded away. Anyone on the strip who looks like they may have some money is immediately accosted by desperate people trying to get a few rand.

Water outages are common in the area, sometimes going on for as long as two weeks. There are also occasional electricity outages that can go on for days. This makes things very difficult for the owners of the B&Bs that remain in the neighbourhood, as well as the surviving restaurants and other businesses.



Graphic: JOHN McCANN

Driving out of Melville on 9th Street towards Parkview, a suburb that remains in good nick, there are more piles of rubble on the pavements and more deep holes in the road. As on Main Road, both the rubble and the holes have been left for months.

It is not immediately clear why nearby suburbs such as Parkview, Greenside and Parkhurst are in a good condition while Melville is in decay.

An academic neighbourhood requires a good bookshop and, thankfully, the good second-hand bookshop on the Melville strip endures, but it's no longer open in the evenings. There are some signs of new life after the devastation of the lockdown though. De Baba, a new bakery and coffee shop at the bottom of the strip is always buzzing.

On the other side of the road there's a new and very hip coffee shop, Sourcery. It would fit right into Brooklyn, New York, and is perfect for an arty and academic neighbourhood like Melville. A vinyl-obsessed friend tells me that the music selection is extraordinary. Unfortunately, Sourcery seems empty most of the time. The same is true of Arturo, an excellent and equally hip African Latin-American fusion restaurant further on up the strip.

Some of the problems faced by Melville are a result of South Africa's wider social crisis. For as long as we face catastrophic levels of unemployment people will be forced to live on the streets. The heroin epidemic is

also a national problem. Although the municipality can take some steps to ameliorate some of the consequences of these problems it cannot fix them.

But much of the sad state of Melville is a result of the failures of the municipality. Some of these failures could be resolved in a single day. Light bulbs could be installed on the street lights, the large holes on Main Street, 7th Street and 9th Street could be fixed, the rubble left along the pavements could be removed, the water leak on 7th Street could be attended to and the road markings redone.

The private businesses dumping their waste alongside the pedestrian bins on Main Road could be fined, as could the private homeowner who has left piles of building rubble on the corner of 2nd Avenue.

Other issues that fall within the remit of the municipality, such as the failure to provide public toilets on Main Road, cannot be resolved in a day, but with some vision and energy they could be resolved in a few months.

Getting the water and electricity systems functional is a much bigger project but is also something that can be achieved with the right commitment. The abandoned properties, with at least one house stripped to nothing but its walls, should be expropriated and sold, with the money invested into regeneration projects.

There should also be active support, including subsidies, for art galleries and live music venues. All the world's great cities actively support cultural life and the same should be done in Johannesburg. Again, this is something that would, even with the right vision and commitment, take at least a few months to kick into gear.

When Melville was the vibrant and world-regarded home to Johannesburg's arty and academic scene it was a major asset to the city. It was an asset to the city's residents, and to visitors to the city, including its wider tourism economy. Melville was also an important asset to the city's two universities, making visits by academics and post-graduate students from elsewhere in the country and abroad an enriching and fun experience.

There is scant hope that the municipality will, on its own, take the initiative to act to restore Melville to what it once was and can easily be again.

Universities are powerful institutions in society; Wits University and UJ should lobby the municipality to act to restore Melville as one of the world's great academic neighbourhoods. A well maintained and vibrant Melville would be a boon for the city.

With the right commitment it would only take a single day to begin to turn things around.

Dr Imraan Buccus is a research fellow at the University of the Free State and the Auwal Socioeconomic Research Institute, ASRI.

Thought Leader

Mail & Guardian

The fault in our Starlink narratives

Addressing the nascent computer industry in 1990, information theorist Neil Postman questioned the unspoken assumption that the capacity to process information is at the heart of society's ills.

"If children die of starvation in Ethiopia, does it occur because of a lack of information?" he asked. "Does racism in South Africa exist because of a lack of information? If criminals roam the streets of New York City, do they do so because of a lack of information?"

Postman's prophetic words are important to remember in the aftermath of last week's Oval Office sitdown between President Donald Trump and President Cyril Ramaphosa and his delegation.

In that infamous meeting, South Africa's richest man Johann Rupert pleaded the case that the country's police stations are in desperate need of Starlink — the communication technology controlled by the world's richest man, Elon Musk.

Rupert has rightly received acclaim for his articulation of the fact that crime is devastating to the whole nation, and not one group in particular. But this particular point is worth considering.

Crime and its causes in this country are many, varied and nuanced. To his great credit once more, Rupert used the Western Cape as an example of its complexity. So often seen by outsiders as an oasis in a broader swamp, the province's neighbourhoods endure some of South Africa's most brutal, seemingly interminable violence.

Such crime is not going to be solved overnight with a satellite. But would the use of Starlink — presumably as a surveillance tool — have a measurable effect?

Lacking further evidence, we are not going to dispute the possibility. What we will caution against, however, is reducing our motivations to simple narratives.

The Starlink discussion is turning all shades of ugly and threatens to be the latest issue to tear at the perpetually shaky unity of our government.

Black economic empowerment has emerged as central to the debate. Resentment towards the policy has always existed but it has bubbled closer and closer to the surface as the economy falters, and the government endures sustained attack from a superpower using propaganda to cast redress as racial persecution.

As a democracy, it is incumbent on us to continually revisit the effectiveness of our practices, but it must be done for the right reasons.

The state should consider the unintended consequences that have flowed from its policies. The country might consider that in the Oval Office, the world witnessed not only our weaknesses but our peculiar, imperfect oneness as a people and ask where we are willing to compromise and for what real gain.



There are new killers on the loose

They come in the form of the shot borer beetle and people who don't appreciate the shade, leaves and flowers of trees in urban areas

Christian Stephen

There it was in stark black and white, the sad news that legendary Brazilian photographer Sebastião Salgado had died at the age of 81 in Paris. It is terrible news but the great man lived a full life travelling to the remotest corners of the world to document the lives of people, the environment and the relationship between the two.

Sometimes brutal but always beautiful, his images of human suffering led some to call him the "aesthete of misery". Probably his most well-known image is the one of hundreds of workers at the Serra Pelada gold mine in Brazil swarming up crude wooden ladders weighed down by heavy containers.

But there are thousands of other equally unforgettable images — always black and white and often with the contrasts of light accentuated — from Salgado's trips to the wildest areas on Earth, from the Amazon to the Arctic.

In the documentary *The Salt of the Earth*, co-produced by German director Wim Wenders and Salgado's son Juliano Ribeiro Salgado, the acclaimed photographer, a man after my own heart, says: "We humans are terrible animals."

Something that I didn't know about Salgado is that after experiencing the horrors of the Rwandan genocide, in 1998 he put aside his cameras and founded the Instituto Terra. In a grand reforestation project he planted hundreds of thousands of trees in the Rio Doce valley in Brazil.



Purple haze: Jacaranda in bloom are beauties, but condemn the aliens.

Amid the relentless barrage of stories about the forests being chopped down, or cleared to make room for planting, or just burnt in raging fires caused by climate change, these projects offer a glimmer of hope. And the sheer numbers of the trees planted are truly awe-inspiring.

India has an impressive number of inspiring characters who are leading the way in reforestation projects. Jaggi Vasudev, more commonly referred to as Sadhguru, founder of the Isha Foundation, says his ambition is to plant 2.4 billion trees. And with his gleaming white turban and flowing white beard the yogi, mystic, teacher and author has the gravitas to convince even the doubters that this ambitious plan is completely achievable.

Here in Johannesburg we are constantly told we live in "the biggest man-made forest in the world" with more than 10 million trees growing in the city.

But Johannesburg is in danger of

losing its place as the leading tree destination in the world, because our trees are not immune to the city's dangerously high crime rate. As yet the trees don't have a category in the crime stats, but if the rate of attrition continues to climb, the police commissioner will be reeling off some depressing figures of deaths, damage and murders.

The biggest culprit is the aptly named shot hole borer, also known as PSHB (the P stands for polyphagous, which means the beetle can feed on multiple types of trees).

Here is an expert definition of this criminal's modus operandi: "The beetle infests trees by tunnelling deep into the trunk or branches and depositing a fungus that effectively poisons — and eventually kills — the tree. If the tree is a PSHB 'reproductive host' species, then the borer will reproduce in the tree at an alarming rate: a reproductive host tree can house up to 100 000 borer beetles. The offspring then fly out of the host

tree and infest more trees."

Evidence of this habitual criminal's killing spree can be seen all over Johannesburg. Bare, blackened tree skeletons with rotting branches.

Unfortunately the lethal little bug is not the only criminal attacking our trees. Humans won't let a two-millimetre sized insect from Vietnam outdo them when it comes to murdering trees.

I have seen jacaranda trees viciously attacked by chainsaw-wielding suburbanites because they are unhappy with the "mess" from the leaves and the beautiful mauve blossoms when they fall.

I have seen a majestic plane tree in Bez Valley ruthlessly sawn down at ground level because a homeowner had opened a hair salon in his garage and didn't want the tree to impede the entrance.

I have seen massive oak trees subjected to hideously slow deaths by criminals who set fire to piles of the trees' own leaves at the base of the trunk.

These are trees that are on the pavement and supposedly belong to the city, but much like the smash-and-grabbers at traffic lights or armed hijackers who drive off with your car, not many of the tree killers are brought to justice.

The problem here might be that all of the trees mentioned are what is politely termed "exotics" brought in from Europe and South America to line the streets of the first suburbs of the rapidly expanding city. Some, like the jacaranda, adapted so well to their new home and reproduced so abundantly that they have been declared "alien invasive plants guzzling up all the town's water and are harmful to the environment and surrounding species".

Sounds familiar doesn't it?

Even by today's standards the tree situation cannot be called a genocide but Sebastião Salgado would surely have found inspiration here for his searing photographs.

Thought Leader

Why is a building memorable long after the paint dries?



Ask Ash
Ash Müller

All buildings have their own stories and they hold those of the people who built them, lived there or used them

Everyone remembers the corridors of their school and the distinct smell of specific classrooms. If you've ever been divorced, I am certain you will never forget those cold courtroom walls as you went in to finalise the legal process. It's hard to forget the home where your baby took her very first steps. And one cannot possibly erase the feeling of time spent within hospital walls, where the happiest of hellos and hardest of goodbyes intertwine.

Buildings shape us and live inside us as the years go by.

Cities with their people and properties evolve through human stories.

South Africa, with its rich layers, contradictions, and painfully beautiful potential, is bursting with spaces that people have emotionally connected with for centuries.

As I stood inside a heritage building last week at a property launch, I was reminded of just how many of Cape Town's buildings are not just structures but characters in the city's ever-evolving plot. I looked at the 120-year-old solid, bulky wooden beams above me and admired the original sun-dried brick walls — almost two centuries of history right at my very feet.

And now, this building will receive a new lease on life as she enters her new chapter. She will become a modern apartment block. The developer will combine the old with the new, transforming this heritage building into something inspiring. They will incorporate modern, contemporary design, all the while maintaining the extraordinary façade with its vintage architectural charm.

Have you ever sat and thought about the buildings in our cities and how they came to be?

Let's take those three tall towers (known affectionately by Capetonians as the Tampon Towers) perched awkwardly at the base of the Mother City's iconic Table Mountain. I have tweeted a lot about these pepper pots, and the general consensus is that people either really love or really hate the towers.

This controversial trio of architecture, officially known as Disa Park, is situated in Vredehoek, Cape Town. Big and brutalist in look and feel, it was designed by the architectural firm Bergamasco, Duncan & James. The towers were cylindrical in shape to withstand the strong Cape Town winds that are experienced in this section of Vredehoek.

Some see them as charming reminders of youthful independence: their first-ever student digs, where they shaped the early days of their lives. Even today, those who



Imagine 17!: Not all architecture is appealing, such as the Disa Towers in front of Table Mountain. But even these buildings invoke people's memories. Photo: Supplied

live there love the towers' close proximity to nature trails and the cosmopolitan vibe of the Mother City.

Others view them as visual intrusions on one of the world's natural wonders. Some of my Twitter, now X, followers have said the building sways when gale-force winds blow, and sometimes, a window or two has blown out.

Did you know that the original plan was to build 17 of these towers at the base of Table Mountain?

And have you ever wondered why three towers of this size were allowed to be built this high and so close to the base of Table Mountain?

There is, of course, a fascinating story behind all of my above questions.

Back in the 1960s

and 1970s, Cape

Town was dealing

with a "white housing"

shortage under

apartheid. More

housing needed to

be built specifically

in areas designated

for white residents. In an

effort to speed up construction

and encourage development, the

government suspended many building

restrictions and relaxed zoning

regulations in white group areas.

Developers took full advantage

and started building much taller

buildings than was previously

allowed. Cape Town then

experienced a surge in high-rise

developments.

Murray & Roberts, the

company behind the construction

of Disa Towers, found a loophole.

They built the base of the towers

just below the legal development

line at the foot of Table

Mountain, then went upward.

They were able to bypass height

restrictions legally, and technically.

Thankfully, only three towers

were built, namely: Blinkwater,

Platteklip and Silverstroom.

Construction was completed in 1969.

Each one has 18 storeys and is

54.86m high. The diameter of each

tower is 24.384m. Amenities include

a tennis court, squash court, swimming pool and braai area.

With a total of 287 apartments and 340 parking bays, the cost to build this development at the time was R3 million.

The third tower took just 63 days to build. If only we could close a pot-hole in record-breaking times such as this.

And what was the monthly rent for an apartment in Disa Towers back then? R55 to R160 a month. This rate included water and electricity.

The son of the National Party finance minister at the time — Nico Diederichs — was a junior partner in the company that developed

Disa Park. The conspiracists say his involvement could have also

contributed to these controversial towers being built at this location.

Today, those towers remind us of a complicated era — one where architectural

ambition often trumped environmental and social

ethics. But they also reflect how policy shapes our skylines, for better or

worse.

Other notable buildings

built during this cowboy

period of development

include Blouberg Heights, an

extremely tall block that stands

out like a sore thumb in the coastal

suburb's landscape.

Blouberg Heights, built in the

1970s, is 17 storeys high and is on

Sir David Baird Drive in Bloubergstrand,

Cape Town. It is the only building of

its kind in this area, as other

structures are much lower.

Gardens Centre Tower is on Mill

Street and Upper Buitenkant Street,

Gardens, Cape Town. It was also

built in the 1970s during this era of

the "white housing" crisis. It was

completed in 1973, measuring 81m

with 22 floors.

This erf was once the home of the International Hotel before it was transformed into a residential tower with a shopping centre component.

Last, the well-known Twin Towers in Sea Point were also built during this period of relaxed regulation. These two identical towers are right next to each other on Beach Road. All this was done in the name of alleviating the housing shortage for the white people, who were the only ones permitted to live in these areas.

It's crazy to think that these developments were all built as a solution to a housing crisis at the time, yet their effect on the Cape Town skyline will be experienced by so many generations to come. They've left a significant imprint on the city's urban history.

Perhaps they are a fundamental lesson for us all when it comes to the sustainability and essence of urban planning and design.

Not all buildings are pretty. Not all histories are happy. But they all deserve to be heard.

The concrete and steel don't just support floors. They support stories. They tell us who we were, how we lived, and if we're paying attention, what we should carry forward.

Sometimes in our rush to innovate, we forget to anchor.

We want smarter buildings, ROI, the latest tech and green ratings. Buildings shouldn't only help us move forward; they should also help us look back. Urban development should always listen to a place's heartbeat before changing its face.

In the end, people don't remember square metres.

They remember how a place made them feel. How a room held their joy or sorrow.

How a view reminded them of something they'd forgotten.

Ask Ash examines South Africa's property, architecture and living spaces. Continue the conversation with her on email (ash@askash.co.za) and X ([@askashbroker](https://twitter.com/askashbroker)).

25 YEARS AGO

The government has underspent on its land reform and land restitution budgets by a whopping R1.4 billion over the past four financial years.

This disclosure — by Minister of Agriculture and Land Affairs Thoko Didiza in parliament — comes amid concern that the government has been too conservative in applying an excessively bureaucratic land policy.

Didiza's confirmation follows her disclosures in parliament earlier this year that only 4 923 of the 87 200 claims for land restitution had been settled.

In her reply to a question from the Democratic Party, Didiza gave various reasons for the underspending during the four financial years, including approved posts not being filled.

She also explained what action had been taken under each programme. In the 1998-99 financial year "the policy, staff and systems are generally now in place for the programme to be implemented effectively, although some problems persist".

Another problem was that R6 million for legal aid to claimants had not been used.

— *Mail & Guardian*, 26 May to 1 June 2000

VERBATIM

"Ramaphosa was blindsided by Trump with those unfounded accusations and the display of images that were misrepresented – in one image, pictures of burials were from Congo. Our world is in real crisis; real refugees are being turned away from the borders of the wealthiest nations, real babies will die because international aid has been abruptly stopped, and real genocides are happening in real time across the globe." — Ghanaian President John Dramani Mahama, referencing Trump's claims of white genocide and giving some Afrikaners refugee status.

"I am rather surprised when I hear that policies of black economic empowerment militate against the growth of our economy ... our economy was held back over many years by the racist policies of the past. Black people were brought in as hewers and wood and drawers of water ... They were not seen as active players in the economic landscape of our country." — President Cyril Ramaphosa responding to FF+ leader Corné Mulder questioning affirmative action.

"Many people were killed ... Some of those killed were my relatives. There were too many injured people for ambulances to reach. The remains of bodies were all over the place." — Bushra Rajab, who was sheltering in Fahmi al-Jarjawi School in Gaza when Israel attacked, killing 36 people as they slept.

"[T]hat is white supremacy on steroids. And it should come as no surprise that he would take these types of steps, because these are the things he talked about on the campaign trail. That type of cruelty is what we have seen since Donald Trump took office on January 20th." — Activist Nikema Levy on rolled-back investigations into the police on the fifth anniversary of George Floyd's killing by police officer Derek Chauvin.

Thought Leader

SA politicians also weaponise migration

South Africa must rid itself of issues that prevent a fair, rights-based approach to people's mobility

OPINION

Leleti Maluleke

Headlines in recent weeks have been dominated by the meeting between President Cyril Ramaphosa and Donald Trump, after the US president granted asylum to white South African farmers.

Framed by Trump as a response to alleged land seizures and violence, the move has been widely criticised as a politically motivated gesture aimed at energising his conservative base ahead of the US mid-term elections.

This culminated in a televised version of what Trump might conceive of as version two of *The Apprentice* in the Oval Office. Despite the ambush, the South African delegation held its ground and demonstrated that white farmers are hardly at disproportionate risk in the country. Many find Trump's politicking distasteful in the context of having essentially characterised other asylum-seekers to the US as criminals or illegal migrants.

As much as Trump's reality-TV delusions persist, this moment presents an opportunity for introspection, given South Africa's own issues with immigration. While the United States faces scrutiny for the politicisation of asylum, South African politicians have similarly weaponised migration to serve populist agendas.

South Africa stands at the centre of intricate migration dynamics that continue to shape its socio-economic landscape, development trajectory, and national security concerns. As one of the continent's most industrialised economies, South Africa has long been a destination for migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees from across Africa.

In a bid to intensify efforts against illegal immigration, Home Affairs Minister Leon Schreiber recently launched Operation New Broom, a nationwide, technology-driven initiative aimed at identifying, arresting and deporting undocumented foreign nationals, particularly those occupying public spaces.

The operation is supported by biometric verification systems, which help detect fraudulent documents and verify a person's immigration status. This initiative forms part of a broader strategy to clamp down on illegal migration through the use of real-time data and enhanced border control mechanisms.

A substantial proportion of migrants cross the border without any documentation. The majority originate from Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi, Lesotho and Nigeria. These migration flows were and still are driven by multiple push and pull factors, including economic hardship, civil unrest and environmental changes in migrants' home countries.

As climate change, organised crime and extremist activity intensifies in some areas, internal displacement and cross-border migration into South Africa are expected to increase, further complicating the country's migration governance.

In an attempt to curb the influx, the



A moment to reflect: The US is politicising the issue of asylum, but in South Africa some populist politicians do the same. Photo: Delwyn Verasamy

South African government erected electric fences along its borders with Zimbabwe and Mozambique. This was inefficient; illegal migrants continue to enter illegally by damaging the fence.

The establishment of the Border Management Authority (BMA) has augmented the fencing efforts. The BMA's mandate is to manage and secure South Africa's borders. This includes facilitating legitimate movement of people and goods while preventing and mitigating illegal activities at ports of entry and within the border law enforcement area.

In the 2024–25 festive season, the BMA recorded a 215% increase in the prevention of illegal border crossings, intercepting more than 50 000 undocumented people, a sharp rise from 15 924 in the previous year.

Despite the deployment of drones, surveillance equipment and improved patrols, South Africa's border security continues to be problematic.

The BMA and the police have both acknowledged ongoing issues, including infrastructural decay and systemic corruption among border officials, which compromise the integrity of enforcement efforts.

The government has, since the democratic transition, enacted legislation intended to manage migration more effectively. The White Paper on International Migration (1999) laid out the foundational policy vision, highlighting the importance of balancing national interests with human rights obligations.

The Refugees Act of 1998 and the Immigration Act of 2002, later amended in 2004 and 2007, were designed to regulate the entry and

residence of foreign nationals, establish procedures for asylum, and address irregular migration. Yet, implementation has often lagged behind legislative intent.

There is a discernible disconnect between policy and practice, particularly with regard to consistent border control and fair refugee processing systems.

There is no definitive method to accurately determine the number of undocumented migrants in South Africa. Estimates vary widely and are often politicised. This is not unique to South Africa — globally, countries struggle to account for their undocumented populations because of the clandestine nature of illegal migration.

The socio-economic and political costs of irregular migration are often cited by critics of the government's migration policies. Based on Professor Albert Venter's 2005 political risk model, undocumented migrants can strain overstretched public services and social welfare systems.

The perception, and sometimes the reality, of competition for resources has fuelled xenophobic sentiment and periodic outbreaks of violence, which in turn strain South Africa's diplomatic relations with neighbouring countries. For example, relations with Zimbabwe, Nigeria and Malawi have, at times, become tense following attacks on their nationals living in South Africa.

Civil society and political parties continue to play an influential role in shaping public discourse on immigration. While ActionSA and the Patriotic Alliance have pushed for stricter immigration enforcement and border controls, the Democratic Alliance has generally supported regulated immigration tied to

economic opportunity and legal compliance.

The Economic Freedom Fighters, on the other hand, have condemned mass deportations and raised concerns about the financial and humanitarian costs of hardline immigration policies. The government spent more than R52 million deporting about 19 750 people during the period April to August 2024.

The total number of deportations for the 2024–25 financial year reached nearly 47 000, an 18% increase from the previous year. Many of those deported re-enter, considering the risk worth incurring due to the desperate socio-economic conditions in the region.

Despite these problems, it is important to acknowledge the positive contributions migrants make to the economy and society. Many fill critical labour shortages, create businesses and bring cultural diversity.

Effective migration management should not only focus on enforcement but also on integration, inclusion and sustainable development.

A balanced and humane migration policy must consider the structural drivers of mobility across the region, such as poverty, inequality and conflict, while also upholding the rule of law and national security.

While South Africa's migration landscape is shaped by regional and global forces, it would be inaccurate to suggest that the country has consistently implemented evidence-based migration policies or applied them uniformly.

Although frameworks such as the White Paper on International Migration (1999), the Refugees Act (1998) and the Immigration Act (2002) lay a strong legal foundation, their implementation has often been ad hoc, reactive and vulnerable to political influence. South Africa's adoption of a non-

encampment model for refugees and asylum seekers, rooted in a rights-based approach aligned with the Constitution and international obligations, is commendable in principle.

It allows refugees to live freely rather than being confined to camps. But this model also presents significant administrative and logistical problems, particularly in ensuring access to services, legal protections and regular documentation.

One clear example of these difficulties is the persistent dysfunction in the asylum system, where application backlogs and lengthy appeals processes have left thousands in prolonged legal uncertainty. According to the United Nations Human Refugee Agency, South Africa continues to host one of the largest unresolved asylum caseloads globally, largely because of administrative inefficiencies and under-resourced institutions.

These issues point to the urgent need for a more coherent, data-driven approach to migration governance that matches South Africa's progressive legal commitments with practical capacity to implement them.

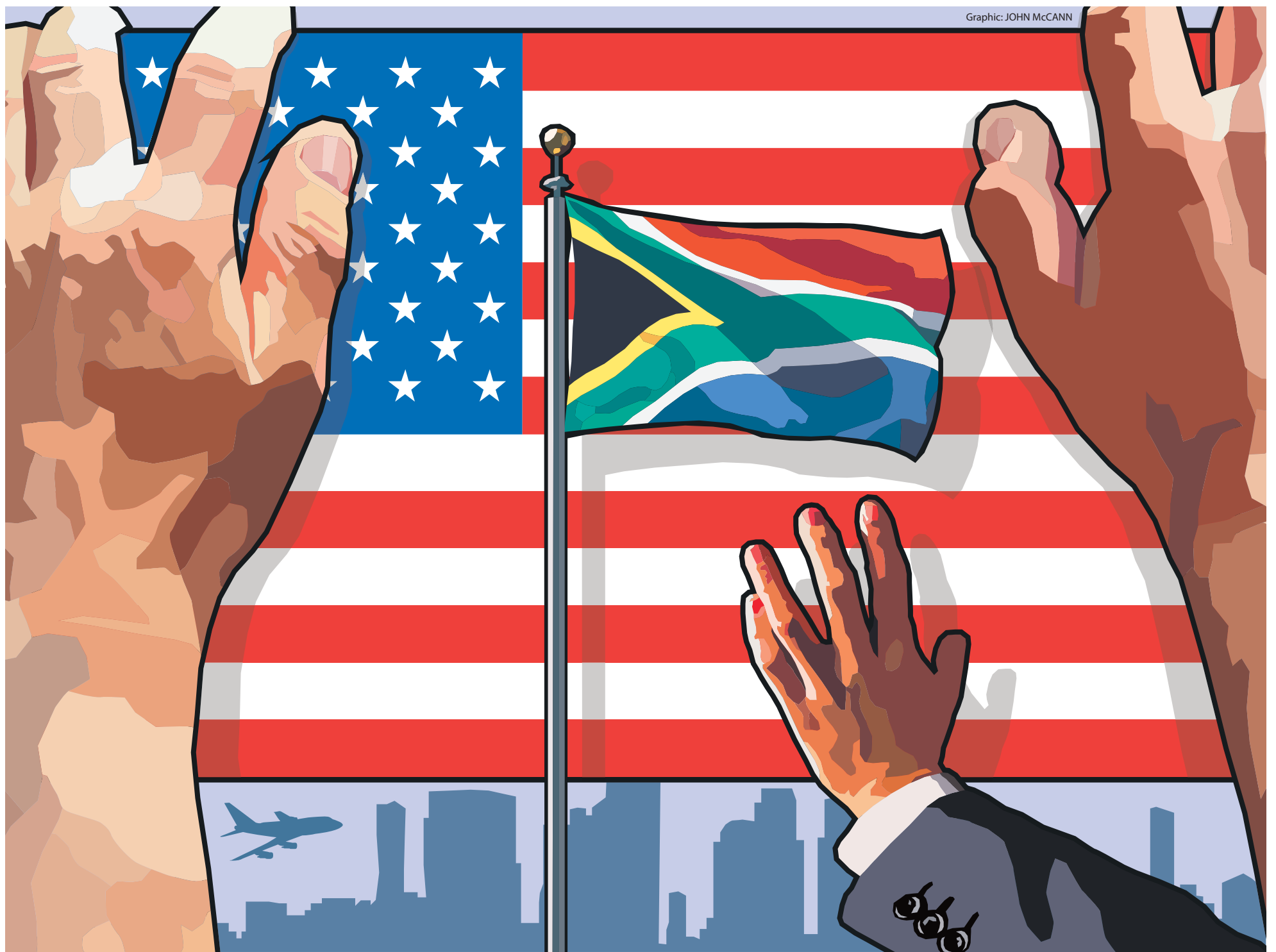
Another example is border management. Despite the creation of the BMA and investment in surveillance technologies, porous borders and corruption among officials undermine state efforts and contradict policy goals.

To build a migration regime that is secure, fair and reflective of constitutional values, South Africa must commit to depoliticising migration governance, investing in institutional capacity and using reliable data to drive reform — rather than responding to public pressure or electoral cycles.

Leleti Maluleke is a peace and security researcher at Good Governance Africa.

A balanced and humane migration policy must consider the structural drivers of mobility

Thought Leader



Unpacking our response to 'the 59ers'

We joke about the Afrikaners who went to the US, but our shared South African identity evokes our compassion and hope they haven't made a mistake

OPINION
Joy Owen

It is Tuesday evening. I am seated with a friend and my son in our favourite restaurant in Bloemfontein. My son listens to our conversation as I note that the 49 Afrikaner migrants (or 59 as some reports suggest) incorrectly and problematically afforded refugee status through executive order by the Trump administration have landed in the US.

Their departure is called the "Great Tsek" on social media. We laugh conspiratorially.

South Africans respond to most situations with a trademark humour that inspires much hilarity. We repeat the in-joke in multi-cultural and multi-classed spaces — taxis, buses, lecture halls, at a Sunday braai, in a coffee shop, between co-workers — we evoke the reality of co-created belonging through humour.

Our humour, a shared South African-ness irrespective of historicised divisions of race, class, creed or gender, masks our discomfort, or psychological and emotional pain. Whether we are supporting Tyla's right to self-define as coloured — while ridiculing and stereotyping

colouredness — and interrogating black Americans' failure to unpack the context of coloured in South Africa, or vituperatively disowning Elon Musk, South Africans have a unique, enmeshed and complex affinity and loyalty to each other.

Amorphous and responsive, this loyalty is an organic response to a perceived threat, or a show of appreciation or forgiveness — recall our troetelnaam (pet name) for our president: Cupcake.

South African humour and loyalty are revealed on TikTok, Instagram and X. On these platforms we deconstruct the perceptions and slights of "ordinary" South Africans as we digest and metabolise the news together, as South Africans, and as global citizens in conversation with other global citizens. We find solace in our derision, and the truth etched onto the edges of that laughter.

The phrase "Great Tsek" is an incisive commentary on the double-edged nature of the 59ers' departure. As South African stayers imagine saying that, they remind us of a socio-cultural memory in which white Afrikaners would chase black people from their farms with the word "voertsek" (go away, get lost). And in return, based on commentary from

a few of the emigrants, we can duly imagine the 59ers exclaiming "voertsek" as they took off from OR Tambo International Airport. The phrase, Great Tsek, thus points to a rejection that is mirrored by those who stay (are left behind) and those who leave.

Amid the laughter M, a young black woman who has experienced the harrowing loss of dispossession of family-owned land in the Free State through apartheid's legalised appropriation of land, comments:

"I'm laughing, but they're still South African, man! What are they going to experience there? It doesn't matter that they are white. I worry about them. They are us."

As a national human collective — South Africans — we don't want to be rejected, or "left behind". It is a typical human response to excise the offending parties from our collective.

But still there are those among us, like my friend, who compassionately tries to understand the reasons for the 59ers' departure, and hopes that they haven't made a mistake that will have enduring negative repercussions.

The reasons for emigration are multiple, but this particular departure underscores a severance of ties with the land of their birth, our South African humour, and much

more that embodies a particular national expression of humanity. The 59ers are not Europeans; much less American. They are South Africans; and we are a complicated mengelmoes (mixture) of peoples who embody various amalgamated traditions, languages, orientations, humour, oppressions and battle scars.

Violence, risk and resilience are endemic to the South African narrative, no matter which ethnic tributary you lay claim to as you arrive here on the shores of a contemporary South Africa that is being lived in the trenches and robustly debated on the streets of social media. Those who speak, who stay, who worstel (struggle) with the inadequacies of the state, birth South Africa's next chapter in which every lineage and narrative have value.

We navigate turbulent racialised, ethnicised and citizenship currents, potholed roads and jagged promises of well-being for all in rickety boats, maladapted vehicles and kaal voete (bare feet) together. We are not necessarily seasoned or adequately equipped; and the shoreline of our dreams is unfamiliar, with the horizon blurred and distant. But for those who stay, the vision of a South Africa that supports the well-being of

all her citizens inspires us to put our shoulders to the wheel, and to live not only for ourselves but for others.

Each one who voluntarily remains behind assumes an active role in envisioning, dreaming, crafting, moulding and building South Africa's next chapter. Each one.

And so, during supper when my son asks what the word "colonisation" means I try simply to chart South Africa's convoluted history. His response — "not all white people are like that" — is not a negation of our past. Rather his words confirm, as a seven-year-old, that his immediate and direct experience does not align with our "black and white" histories.

They offer a moment of pause, as I come to terms with what my lineage has experienced pre-apartheid, what I have experienced during and post-apartheid and the future my son is living into existence.

He demands from me, and you, a conscious recognition of how far we have travelled as South Africans to be here — constructing our futures with clear sight of our histories. His words defy an easy, glib and uncontextualised narrative of what makes us South African.

And, like M, he inspires us to accept that we are complex and incomplete as South Africans, whether at home, or in the US, without each other.

Professor Joy Owen is the head of the department of anthropology at the University of the Free State.

I'm laughing, but they're still South African, man! I worry about them. They are us'

Thought Leader

Strengthen law against digital child labour

In many cases, the digital economy is a perceived lifeline for families struggling to make ends meet but in the process children are exposed to harm

OPINION

**Lethokwa George Mpedi
& Tshildzi Marwala**

Scrolling through social media often reveals a troubling trend: the commodification of childhood. Across platforms, South African children are increasingly featured in monetised content, from baby fashion showcases and toy unboxings to preteen dance trends and family video blogs (vlogs).

Many of these “kidfluencer” accounts, typically managed by parents or guardians, generate substantial income through brand partnerships and online followings.

Although such digital content may appear harmless, even entertaining, it raises serious concerns about consent, exploitation, privacy and the psychological effects of growing up in the public eye.

This presents a legal and ethical challenge. South Africa’s legal frameworks, like those in many countries, are designed to regulate physical labour. They have not evolved to address the complexities of the digital economy, where children do unpaid or underpaid work, often without informed consent or sufficient oversight. These children usually lack meaningful agency and legal protection, falling into a regulatory grey zone.

The dangers are not speculative. Documentaries such as *Child Star* and *Quiet On Set: The Dark Side of Kids TV* have exposed the long-term harm faced by children pushed into public roles without adequate safeguards.

These cautionary tales resonate in the South African context, where economic inequality and limited opportunities may push families to monetise their children’s digital presence as a survival strategy.

South Africa’s Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) prohibits the employment of children under the age of 15, with exceptions granted in the performing arts. It also outlines protections for children aged 15 to 18, barring their involvement in hazardous work.

But these provisions were crafted with physical labour in mind. They do not address the nature of digital content creation, where the line between performance and personal life is increasingly blurred.

Similarly, the Children’s Act affirms a child’s right to dignity, privacy and protection from exploitative practices. Although this offers a foundation, it does not speak directly to the nuances of social media or digital platforms. Moreover, the Cybercrimes Act, which criminal-

ises harmful online communication, does not explicitly address issues of coerced or exploitative digital content involving children.

International frameworks to which South Africa is a signatory further strengthen the case for reform. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child obligates signatories to protect children from economic exploitation. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) Conventions No 138 and No 182 set out standards on the minimum age for work and the prohibition of the worst forms of child labour, respectively. The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights also call for companies to protect the rights of children engaged, directly or indirectly, in their operations.

While these instruments offer crucial guidance, they require contextual adaptation to digital realities. For example, how should digital “labour” be defined? When does family-generated content cross the line into commercial exploitation? And what responsibilities do platforms and advertisers have in this ecosystem?

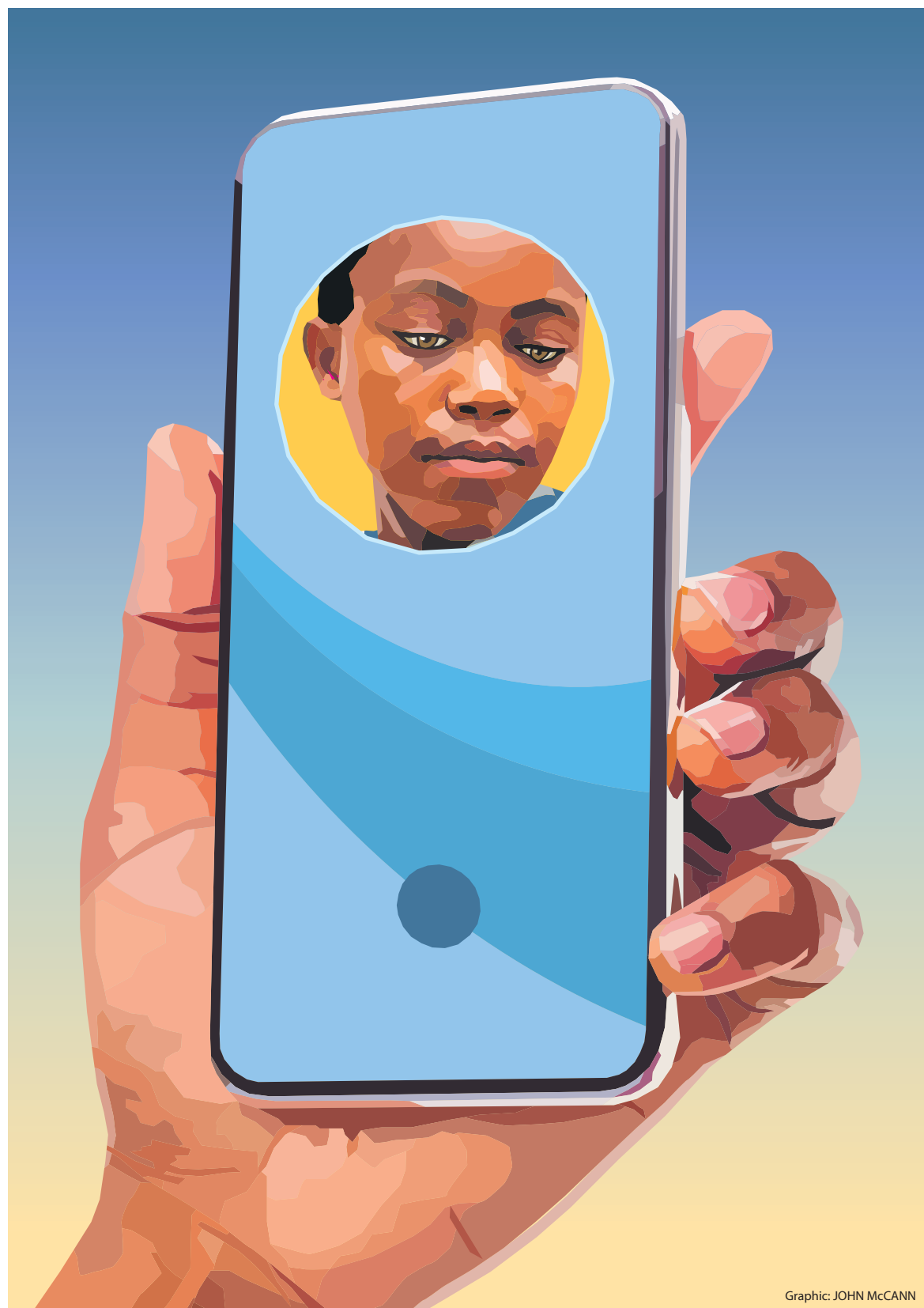
South Africa’s persistent socio-economic inequality amplifies the urgency of these questions. Children who achieve online fame may bring significant income into households, but often at the expense of their education, well-being and right to privacy. As the ILO notes, child labour and poverty are “inevitably bound together”.

Grace Abbott’s enduring observation that “if you continue to use the labour of children as the treatment for the social disease of poverty, you will have both poverty and child labour to the end of time”, is profoundly relevant.

Monetising childhood in exchange for short-term financial gain is a dangerous trade-off, one that risks normalising digital exploitation as a form of survival.

New technologies are further complicating the child labour landscape. AI-generated content, sometimes involving deepfakes or manipulated images, has created a new frontier for abuse. Europol’s 2024 operation dismantling a global network distributing AI-generated child sexual abuse material is a stark reminder that exploitation is no longer limited to the physical world.

South Africa must urgently criminalise the production and distribution of such content and equip law enforcement with the skills and tools necessary to investigate



Graphic: JOHN McCANN

these offences. The existing legal framework must also be expanded to encompass exploitative digital activities, including the misuse of children’s data and images in AI-generated content.

The Protection of Personal Information Act (PoPIA) is a key legislative tool, but further regulation is needed. This includes mandatory consent protocols, limits on data storage and sharing, and redress mechanisms for affected children. AI-driven monitoring tools must also be subjected to strict ethical impact assessments to ensure they do not introduce new forms of bias or surveillance harm.

There is considerable scope to build a forward-looking legal and regulatory framework. First, South Africa should develop tailored legislation that recognises digital content creation as a form of child labour when monetised.

Such legislation should clearly define the rights of child influencers, including rights to privacy, compensation, education and redress.

Second, the law should mandate parental accountability and introduce independent oversight of commercialised child content. This could include a registry for child influencers, compulsory financial trusts for income generated and psychological

assessments to monitor well-being. France’s recent “Kidfluencer Law” offers a valuable model, requiring earnings to be placed in protected savings accounts and setting limits on the hours children may appear in monetised content.

Third, regulations must compel digital platforms to implement stronger child protection mechanisms. This includes age verification systems, flagging and removing harmful content, and providing transparent reporting channels. Algorithms that amplify exploitative content should be audited and adjusted.

Fourth, South Africa should invest in education campaigns about the risks and responsibilities of sharing children’s content online. Digital literacy programmes in schools and communities could equip children and parents with the knowledge to navigate these spaces safely.

Fifth, companies operating in South Africa must be required to conduct AI-enhanced due diligence across their supply chains. Blockchain technologies can provide traceability, helping verify that child labour, whether physical or digital, is not hidden in production or promotional pipelines.

Given the borderless nature of the internet, international cooperation is essential. Harmonised laws, interoperable monitoring systems, and data-sharing agreements will be critical for tracking and prosecuting offenders who exploit children across jurisdictions.

As a regional leader in digital policy, South Africa is well-positioned to advocate for a continental framework that protects African children from digital exploitation. The African Union’s Digital Transformation Strategy and the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights offer platforms through which such protections could be formalised and mainstreamed.

The digital economy offers enormous potential, but also exposes children to unprecedented forms of exploitation. While South Africa’s legal foundation provides a starting point, it must now be modernised to meet the demands of the digital age.

By implementing robust protections, leveraging ethical technologies, and fostering international collaboration, South Africa can lead in crafting a just, inclusive and child-safe digital future.

The digital world should not merely be a space of risk for children, it can, and must, become a space of rights, resilience and responsible innovation.

Lethokwa George Mpedi is the vice-chancellor and principal of the University of Johannesburg. Tshildzi Marwala is a rector of the United Nations University and UN under-secretary general. The authors’ latest book on this subject is *Artificial Intelligence and the Law* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2024).

**Provisions
[protecting
children] were
crafted with
physical labour in
mind, not digital**



The team: The M&G’s Luke Feltham, Wendy Mosetlhi, Hoosain Karjieker and Marion Smith flank the ambassador of Azerbaijan Dr Huseyn Rahmili (centre).

The launch of ‘The Diplomat’

Marion Smith

The launch of *The Diplomat*, which took place on 16 May at the University of Pretoria’s Javett Art Centre, was attended by the ambassadors and embassy staff of more than 45 embassies.

Hoosain Karjieker, chief executive of the *Mail & Guardian*, opened the event by reaffirming the publication’s values.

“For nearly four decades, the *Mail & Guardian* has maintained an unwavering commitment to investigative journalism, thoughtful analysis and coverage that matters,” he said.

The keynote address was delivered by the mayor of the City of Tshwane, Nasiphi Moya, who welcomed the diplomatic community and acknowledged their contribution to international relations.

“The City of Tshwane values the presence of these diverse diplomatic missions. The role played by embassies in building relations between countries does not go unnoticed,” she said.

Editor-in-chief of the *M&G* Luke Feltham explained the vision behind the platform.

“This is an attempt to be part of the solution instead of the noise. By working with you — diplomats — by opening our pages and our platform, we want to bring those dinner-table conversations to a wider audience. We want this to be a space for honest, nuanced and respectful dialogue.”

The goal of *The Diplomat* is to spotlight projects and initiatives that reshape public perception and highlight the work of embassies in South Africa.



Keynote speaker: Tshwane mayor Nasiphi Moya.

In his closing remarks, *M&G* chairperson Roger Latchman reminded guests of the broader responsibility that media and diplomacy share.

“We must resist sensationalism, restore public confidence and recommit ourselves to accuracy, fairness, and informed discourse.”

Other guest speakers included Elelwani Pandelani, the head of Nedbank diplomatic and non-resident banking, who spoke about the importance of building strong, lasting relationships beyond financial transactions.

Laurie James, a forensic profiler at Cybareti, addressed the rapidly evolving cyber landscape, noting that no corner of the world is untouched by digital threats.

Karjieker noted that *The Diplomat* aligns with the core mission of diplomatic work and thanked Wendy Mosetlhi and Marion Smith for bringing the event to life.

“Their efforts and insight have been instrumental in shaping this initiative,” he said.

Smith, who leads *The Diplomat* section and brings years of experience in diplomatic engagement, spoke about her motivation for taking on this work.

“I have a love for learning and diplomacy. I’d like to use some of my global experience and expertise to contribute meaningfully in this space,” she said.

“I also look forward to using *The Diplomat* to raise awareness of the importance of identifying and countering disinformation.”

Smith said a diplomat’s first responsibility is to understand, then to share that understanding — “and that’s what *The Diplomat* aims to do”.



View: The ambassadors and other staff of 45 embassies attend the launch of *The Diplomat*.

Lebanon Golf Championship

The Fifth Annual South African Lebanese Golf Championship, hosted by the Embassy of Lebanon, took place on Sunday, 25 May 2025, at the Wanderers Golf Club in Johannesburg.

The tournament welcomed a distinguished group of participants, including the ambassadors of Austria and India, the chargé d’affaires of Thailand, the military attaché of Argentina, and the representative of the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation.

Professional South African Lebanese golfer Lora Assad competed, alongside members of the Cedars and Phoenicians golf clubs.

Ambassador Kabalan Frangieh of Lebanon expressed his gratitude to all participants. As his tour of duty in South Africa comes to an end, he spoke of his hope that this annual event remains a fixture on the embassy’s calendar.

Expressing gratitude: Ambassador Kabalan Frangieh of Lebanon.

Tournament Results
A Division winner: Damon Zoghby – 2025 Champion
B Division winner: Vincent Shahim
C Division winner: Terence Joseph
Best guest: Lora Assad – with an outstanding 67 shots



Celebration: The Yemeni community in South Africa came together to commemorate the 35th anniversary of Yemen’s National Day.



Yemen marks 35th National Day anniversary in South Africa

On 22 May, the Embassy of the Republic of Yemen marked the 35th anniversary of Yemen’s National Day — commemorating the unification of the country’s northern and southern regions.

To honour the occasion, the embassy, its staff and the broader Yemeni community in South Africa extended congratulations to His Excellency President Rashad Mohammed Al-Alimi, chairperson of the Presidential Leadership Council, its members, the Yemeni people and the country’s armed forces.

A small gathering was held at the ambassador’s residence in Pretoria, where members of the local Yemeni community and students studying in South Africa came together. The event reflected on the significance of the unification and Yemen’s continued path toward peace and stability.

The embassy reaffirmed its commitment to supporting Yemeni citizens in South Africa and strengthening ties between the two nations.



RESEARCH WORLD

**DEADLINE
EXTENDED**

The Mail & Guardian’s Research World flagship project will showcase research from the countries research centres, being all universities, research councils, government research agencies and industrial research. It is important to see ‘research’ in the broadest sense, wherefore all ‘faculties’ (and by extension all research) output will be published on the Mail & Guardian website.

South African research in all fields is world-class and something we as Mail & Guardian are proud of highlighting through this initiative.

We believe it is of great importance to offer this opportunity for all South African research to be recognized by all and also to enlighten the world about our achievements. The call for entries is now open and all entries (inclusive of research paper) to be submitted via the special entry on the Mail & Guardian website.

All research will be adjudicated by a panel of experts who will then select the 20 most significant research papers which will be published in a special print edition that will be a part of the Mail & Guardian newspaper on 22 May 2025 and which will be unveiled at the accompanying event.

CLOSING DATE FOR ENTRIES: 25 AUGUST 2025

AWARDS EVENT: 29 SEPTEMBER 2025



For all enquiries please email: research-world@mg.co.za
For all entries please visit: www.mg.co.za/research-world
or use the QR code



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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

Unisa is a dedicated distance Higher Education institution which is funded by the Department of Education and Training in South Africa. In keeping with its mandate as a Comprehensive, Open and Distance Learning (CODEL +) Institution, which offers a variety of academic and career-focused programmes.

Unisa is inviting applications for the following position.

PORTFOLIO: FINANCE AND UNISA BUSINESS ENTERPRISE

DEPARTMENT: FINANCE

Director: Budgeting and Cost Management (P4)

Five (5) Year Fixed-Term Contract

Ref: D:BUDGCMGT/ FBE//AM/2025

The purpose for this position is to oversee and steer the financial planning, budgeting, and cost management for the institution, ensuring equitable, efficient and effective resource allocation to drive financial stability while supporting the university's mission, strategic goals, and operational needs. To plan and direct the budgeting and cost management function in order to achieve sound financial management within the Institution in support of the Institution's Comprehensive Open Distance e-Learning (CODEL) and strategy.

Key performance areas entail: Leadership and Management through among others; Providing strategic input into the development of the overall departmental strategy, ensuring that financial objectives are clearly communicated and embedded; Leading the formulation and execution of comprehensive budgeting frameworks, policies, and procedures that align with Unisa's strategic goals and departmental priorities; Overseeing the annual budgeting process—including forecasting, planning, and periodic financial performance reviews; Driving and directing the development of the directorate's operational plans and objectives in line with the overarching departmental strategy, plans and objectives while ensuring compliance with relevant legislation; Overseeing the continuous review of policies, processes, practices, procedures, and systems to support robust budgeting and cost management; Driving the development of the directorate's annual performance review; and Providing clear direction in the directorate's area(s) of specialisation, ensuring that all financial planning and budgeting initiatives are targeted, efficient, and aligned with institutional goals. **Operational, Leadership and Process Management** that entails among others; Providing leadership regarding all the operational functions in the directorate from an overall perspective, encompassing; Costing Control and Management Accounting, Financial Planning and Budgeting, and Management Reporting and Analysis Resource Allocation. Identifying, assessing and formulating mitigating actions with regard to risks facing the University inclusive of financial risk that may arise within the sphere of budgeting and management accounting; Ensuring the maintenance and management of the Strategic Resource Allocation Model continuously refining methodologies to support informed decision-making; Leading the development and enhancement of the Activity-Based Costing model alongside other emerging models in order to supply accurate and actionable financial insights for strategic decisions; Overseeing comprehensive analysis of the data, (operational, financial and strategic), utilising diverse reporting platforms to deliver insights on cost effectiveness, cost-benefit analyses, benchmarking, and rationalisation; Monitoring the consolidated income and expenditure continuously, in order to amend the budget in respect of additional income expenditure; Providing guidance, expertise and advice to the Management on emerging trends, best practice and applicable policies and legislation and Embed financial sustainability by promoting a green, Institution-wide culture among others. **Forecasting, Budgeting and Financial Management by:** Compiling and managing the functional budget in alignment with the portfolio and Institutional budget, ensuring disciplined financial stewardship; Overseeing and monitoring functional expenditure within budgeted parameters; Identifying, analysing and performing analytical reviews for external auditors, mitigating, and reporting on variances periodically; Directing and overseeing the funding of functional operations and budgeted activities ensuring that the allocation of financial resources adheres to sound financial principles; Authorising the procurement of contractor services, office supplies, other operating costs, and equipment in line with the approved budget, maintaining cost effectiveness; Participating in strategic planning sessions with management and relevant departments to establish planning parameters for the compilation of the central consolidated budget; Overseeing and managing the development and implementation strategic costing models, particularly the Activity Based Costing model; and Developing training material and ensuring coordination of training and consultation on Activity Based Costing Principles among others. **Governance and Reporting** through; Monitoring and reporting of functional initiatives, ensuring all key performance indicators are met and communicated effectively; Monitoring and reporting on legislative and statutory compliance as defined and set by government and professional bodies; Actively promote sound institutional governance by participating in required governance structures and serving on pertinent forums; Compiling detailed reports on the Directorate's performance at the required intervals reflecting all relevant statistics; Regularly reviewing financial reports and ensuring timely accurate financial information for management decision making and planning; and Managing the process of the monthly and quarterly budget utilisation review process including forecasting to year-end as part of management reporting to the Management Committee, FIECoC and Council. **Technical Competences** include; 10–15 years of progressive experience in financial management; Management accounting including familiarity with Activity-Based Costing (ABC); Cost management and budgeting; Financial management account reporting; Financial forecasting; Understanding and application of IFRS; Understanding and application of Tax/VAT legislation; Financial budget system and modern ERP systems; Variance analysis; and Management accounts.

Requisite qualifications and experience include a minimum of a Bachelor Honour's Degree/ Postgraduate Diploma/Professional Bachelor's Degree in Accounting, Cost and Management Accounting. Essentially a non-negotiable minimum of 10 years' relevant work experience with at least 5 years' in a management role. Registration with any of the relevant Accounting Professional bodies such as CA(SA), CIMA, SAIPA, and/or ACCA.

Skill Placement (Pty) Ltd has been solely retained to source and assess applicants for these roles. Interested and suitably qualified applicants should forward a motivational letter, a comprehensive Curriculum Vitae, Prescribed completed and signed application form, copies of qualifications, Identity document and Proof of SAQA verification of foreign qualifications, where relevant to godwin@skillplace.co.za. Remuneration is commensurate with the seniority of the position.

CLOSING DATE: 06 JUNE 2025.

• The detailed advertisement together with the prescribed application form can be found on the Unisa website (<http://www.unisa.ac.za/vacancies>) • Unisa is not obliged to fill an advertised position • Late, incomplete and incorrect applications will not be considered • We welcome applications from persons with disabilities • Appointments will be made in accordance with Unisa's Employment Equity Plan and other applicable legislation.



UNISA university of south africa

Academic Jobs

CPUT

With its various campuses and diverse cultures supporting the spirit of *ubuntu*, the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) transforms its students through world-class researchers who inspire knowledge production and innovation that are cutting edge.

CPUT looks forward to appointing competent, qualifying candidates in its various faculties and support departments in the following positions:

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

- Assoc. Prof/Senior Lecturer (Permanent) and Rotational Head of Department (5-year contract): Foundation Phase Teaching/Early Childhood Education
- Lecturer: English
- Lecturer: Natural Sciences
- Lecturer: Afrikaans Home Language
- Lecturer: Mathematics (Re-advertisement)
- Faculty Manager

FACULTY OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS SCIENCES

- Senior Lecturer (Permanent) & Rotational Head of Department (5-year contract): Ophthalmic Sciences
- Senior Lecturer/ Lecturer: Diagnostic Ultrasound
- Senior Lecturer: Nursing Sciences (Contract ending 31 March 2028)
- Lecturer (Permanent)/Junior Lecturer (5-year Contract): Nuclear Medicine Technology (Re-advertisement)
- Lecturer: Nursing Sciences
- Clinical Practice Instructor: Clinical Chemistry (3-year contract)
- Technician: Ophthalmic Sciences x 2

FACULTY OF ENGINEERING AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

- Senior Lecturer: Automatic Control
- Senior Lecturer/ Lecturer: Civil Engineering (Re-advertisement)
- Senior Lecturer/ Lecturer: Textile Technology (Re-advertisement)
- Senior Lecturer/ Lecturer: Mechatronic Engineering (Re-advertisement)
- Senior Lecturer: Electrical Engineering (Re-advertisement)
- Senior Lecturer: Electronic Communication (Re-advertisement)
- Senior Lecturer: Power Systems (Re-advertisement)
- Senior Lecturer: Computer Engineering (Re-advertisement)
- Faculty CE & WIL Coordinator (Re-advertisement)
- Faculty Language Coordinator (Re-advertisement)

Please consult the CPUT website for more information. Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information; however, the University reserves the right, at any time, if circumstances require, to make changes to any of the published details.

FACULTY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

- Senior Lecturer: Mathematics (Re-advertisement)
- Senior Technologist (2 year fixed-term contract): Agrifood Technology Station
- Professor/Associate Professor (Permanent) and Rotational HoD (5-year contract): Food Science & Technology
- ECP Lecturer: Mathematics x 2 (2-year contract)
- Lecturer: Statistics
- ECP Lecturer: Physics

FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

- Assistant Dean: Learning and Teaching (5-year contract)
- Senior Lecturer: Public Administration & Governance (Re-advertisement)
- Senior Lecturer: Tourism & Events Management (Re-advertisement)
- Lecturer: Marketing x 2
- Work-Integrated Coordinator

FACULTY OF INFORMATICS AND DESIGN

- Senior Lecturer: Media & Communication (Re-advertisement)
- Lecturer: Applications Development
- Lecturer: Multimedia x 2 (Re-advertisement)
- Professor: Information Technology

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES (ICTS)

- IT Risk and Compliance Officer
- IT Infrastructure Specialist (Re-advertisement)

DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

- Student Counsellor
- Student Development Officer (1-year contract)

Closing date: 15 June 2025

Please visit www.cput.ac.za for further information and application details; or email servicerecruitment@cput.ac.za

#CPUT20YEARS

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Cape Peninsula University of Technology
creating futures

BELLVILLE DISTRICT SIX GRANGER BAY MOWBRAY WELLINGTON



University of Venda
Creating Future Leaders

During the 2025 University of Venda (UNIVEN) Autumn Graduation Ceremonies a total of 2,713 graduates were conferred with their certificates, diplomas, and degrees. Out of the total number of qualifications conferred, one thousand, seven hundred and eleven (1,711) were bestowed upon female graduates, while one thousand and two (1,002) were conferred upon male graduates. In line with UNIVEN's progressive growth, this graduation ceremony witnessed the conferral of 39 doctoral degrees, 97 master's degrees, and 406 honours degrees.



This Autumn Graduation Ceremony, comprising of seven sessions, took place from Tuesday, 13 May to Friday, 16 May 2025 at the University Auditorium.



Speaking during this Autumn Graduation Ceremony, UNIVEN Chancellor, Adv Mojanku Gumbi, said that the country (South Africa) has no reason to be dysfunctional because there are competent, qualified graduates who are available to make it functional. Adv Gumbi spoke about some of the wise words from Quran, the holy book of Islam - saying that it provides guidance and comfort during times of adversity, the Holy Book of Quran emphasises patience and faith in God (Allah). It teaches that trials and tribulations are part of life's testing, and those who endure with patience will be rewarded. The Quran also encourages seeking guidance from God and relying on His mercy and wisdom during difficult times.



The Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Bernard Nthambeleni mentioned that he was pleased to inform attendees that the number of UNIVEN's NRF-Rated Researchers has been steadily increasing with the addition of ten new ratings for the following distinguished researchers, effective from January of this year, listing Professor Ntakadzeni Madala who obtained C1 rating; Professor S Lee - C1 rating; Professor Joseph Baloyi - C2 rating; Professor Ntsieni Mashau - C2 rating; Professor Felix Fushai - C2 rating; Professor J Ndogmo - C2 rating; Professor C Sigauke - C2 rating; Professor JB Ogola - C2 rating; Dr Thendo Makhado - Y2 rating and Dr HP Khosa-Nkatini - Y2 rating.

UNIVEN Chancellor, Advocate Mojanku Gumbi Confers 2713 qualifications During the 2025 Autumn Graduation Ceremonies

Prof Nthambeleni said he is proud to celebrate the remarkable achievement of UNIVEN's newly NRF-rated researchers. "Their pioneering research and exceptional contributions to the scientific community not only elevate the esteemed reputation of our institution but also serve as an inspiration to our forthcoming generation of researchers."

In accordance with UNIVEN's mission of fostering the development of future leaders, among the graduating class were the following members of the student leadership: former President of UNIVEN SRC, Mr Lebogang John Ndaka; the former SRC Deputy President, Mr Mishumo Maboko; former Secretary General, Mr Ngelekanyo Stanely Maduwa; the current SRC President, Mr Vusi Karabo Mokoena; the current Secretary General, Ms Asekho Ngqandu, the former SRC President, Mr Tsundzuka Hakamela and a substantial number of former and current members of SRC. Prof Nthambeleni congratulated all UNIVEN's past and present student leaders for their exemplary leadership.

When bidding them farewell, Prof Nthambeleni, told them that it is imperative that they retain the priceless lessons acquired during their tenure. "Life will undoubtedly present you with various challenges, but it is crucial to remember that you possess the requisite knowledge, skills, and determination to overcome any adversity. As you embark on your life's journey, commit to being an agent of change and transformation, advocating for those who are voiceless and inspiring others to overcome adversity."



L-R: Mr Sylvester Motadi (UNIVEN Convocation President), Adv Mojanku Gumbi (UNIVEN Chancellor), Ditshephisho Daniel Mamabolo (Senate Medallion Winner- Best Student in the University), Prof Bernard Nthambeleni (UNIVEN Vice-Chancellor and Principal) and Dr Joel Baloyi (University Registrar)

Among the doctoral graduates was Dr Khuliso Kennedy Maimela, who was conferred a Doctor of Philosophy in Public Administration degree. Dr Maimela is a distinguished former lecturer and a former member of the University of Venda Council. He served as the Chairperson of the Human Resource Committee from 2014 to 2019.

Prof Nthambeleni expressed his sincere gratitude for the extraordinary selfless generosity of UNIVEN Chancellor, Adv Mojanku Gumbi and Ms Ndivhudzanyi Ralivhona, commonly known by her stage name Makhadzi who earlier this year reached out to UNIVEN and paid registration fees of many students who were unable to pay their registration fees. He said their willingness to give without expecting anything in return has profoundly impacted UNIVEN students, their families and the entire university community.

UNIVEN Vice-Chancellor and Principal thanked the parents, guardians, lecturers, University support staff, sponsors, National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), and Funza Lushaka Bursary programme for their unwavering support.



UNIVEN Chancellor, Adv Mojanku Gumbi and Mr Sylvester Motadi, UNIVEN Convocation President posing for a photo with UNIVEN Senior and Executive Management

Below are the pictures of doctoral degree graduates:



Academic Jobs, Jobs, Tenders & Notices

Legal Notice

**HIGH COURT OF SOUTH AFRICA
GAUTENG
LOCAL DIVISION,
JOHANNESBURG CASE
NO: 43648/2021**

In the matter between:

**Hilda Keitumetse
Thaloganyo Plaintiffs**

and

**Road Accident Fund
Defendant**

**NOTICE OF SALE:
MOVABLE ASSETS
IN PURSUANCE of
a JUDGMENT of the
above-mentioned
Court and a Writ for
Execution the following
properties will be sold
in execution on the 25
June 2025 at 12h00
at 10 Junction Avenue,
Parktown North,
Johannesburg, by the
Sheriff of the High Court
Johannesburg North to
the highest bidder:**

Assorted Bar fridges	24
Steel trollies	19
Cradenzas	4
Wheel chair	1
Garrett metal detectors	11
Strecher with wheels	1
Medical screen	1
L Shape desks	6
5 Draw filling cabinets	1
URN	2
Rexel shredder	4
2 Door Cabinets	29
Single leather chair	8
Hat stands	8
Tea trollies	4
ICU bed	4
Sorters/ Bookcases	164
Big filling cabinets	7
Dividers	30
Medical Beds	2
Oil heater	1

**Dated at
JOHANNESBURG on this
the 23rd day of MAY
2025.**



**TAWANA ATTORNEYS
ATTORNEY FOR
PLAINTIFFS:
Address: 192 TURF
CLUB STREET,
TURFFONTEIN
Phone: 064 520 5470
Email: tawatshe@gmail.
com OR tshepoj@
tawlegal.co.za**

Legal Notice

Attention Policyholder.

If you have a policy with Mangwenya brokers, underwritten by **African Unity Life Ltd FSP 8447** and have failed to make payments toward your policy. Please note that this communication serves as your notice for missed premium/s on your policy as per **Rule 15A of the Policy Holder Protection Rules.**

Meaning that, your policy will automatically lapse as per your policy terms and conditions, effective **31 July 2025**, and you will no longer be covered. If no arrangements are made for the payment of those outstanding premiums.

For any queries, please contact AUL on 086 123 4555.

Legal Notice

Attention Policyholder, if you have a funeral policy under any of the below-listed schemes underwritten by African Unity Life FSP 8447. Please note that this communication serves as your 60-day notice for the cancellation of your funeral policy, effective 31 July 2025. This product has been discontinued and is no longer being offered. Please arrange for alternative underwriting to ensure that you remain covered. For any queries, please contact African Unity Life on 086 123 4555.

- 4D Group Solutions (Pty) Ltd – Tredstone
- Accredinet Corporate Funeral
- African Unity Individual Funeral Plan
- Aul Life Plan
- Beltic Income Protector Plan
- Community For Jesus
- Denise Adams t/a DC Funerals
- Financial Associates Specialist Advisory Services (Pty) Ltd
- MSA Financial Services Consultants (Pty) Ltd – Finlife Formula Scheme
- Hoër Meisieskool
- Infinity Life Insurance ((Pty) Ltd
- Intabanet Funeral Plan
- Kempston Ins Brokers (Overberg)
- Leinstec Underwriting Manager
- LM (Leon) Brokers
- Makufundwe Printers
- Mangwenya Brokers
- Mthetho Investments (Pty) Ltd
- Phillipe Village
- Premier Final Benefit Plan
- Rainbow Funerals (Previously known as Nonna Trust)
- Smart Move Finance (Pty) Ltd
- Taylor Begräfnisdienste (Pty)
- Yarona Cash and Carry
- SA Life Benefit Specialists (Pty) Ltd

Legal Notice

DEPARTEMENT VAN ENERGIE

Kennisgewing ten opsigte van 'n lisensie aansoek ingevolge die Wet op Petroleumprodukte, **1977 (Wet nr. 120 van 1977)** Hierdie kennisgewing dien om partye wat belangstel / geaffekteer word in te lig dat **ENVIRO SOL TRADING (Edms) Bpk** hierna genoem die aansoeker, 'n aansoek ingedien het vir 'n **GROOTHANDEL** lisensie met aansoek nommer **F/2025/04/08/0002.**

**R555 ROAD
STEELPOORT AND
ROOSENEKAL ROAD
STEELPOORT
STEELPOORT**

Die doel van hierdie

aansoek is dat 'n lisensie aan die aansoeker toegeken word petroleum groothandel aktiwiteite te onderneem soos uiteengesit in die aansoek. Reëlins kan getref word om die aansoek dokumentasie te besigtig deur die Kontroleur van Petroleum produkte te skakel by:

***Tel: (015) 230 3600
* Faks:
* E-pos: Siyabulela.
Magobongo@dmre.
gov.za**

Enige beswaar teen die uitreik van 'n lisensie ten opsigte van hierdie aansoek, wat duidelik die aansoek nommer hierbo moet aanhaal, moet ingedien word by die Kontroleur van Petroleumprodukte binne 'n tydperk van twintig (20) werksdae by die ondergenoemde fisieke op posadres

Fisiese adres
Die Kontroleur van Petroleumprodukte
Departement van Minerale Hulpbronne en Energie
18A Landros Mare Straat
Polokwane

Posadres
Die Kontroleur van Petroleumprodukte
Departement van Minerale Hulpbronne en Energie
Privaatsak X 9712
Polokwane 0700

Legal Notice

**DEPARTEMENT VAN
LOST OR DESTROYED
DEED**

Notice is hereby given in terms of Regulation 68 of the Deeds Registries Act, 1937, of the intention to apply for the issue of a certified copy of **Deed of Transfer ST49569/1999** passed by the **ESTATE OF THE LATE BARBARA LUCILLE CARTY, Estate Number: 12790/1998**, in favour of **JOSEPHIE MARIE JOSIANE BOYER DE LA GIRODAY, Identity Number: 470626 0029 085**, unmarried, in respect of certain-:

A Unit consisting of (a) Section No. 22 as shown and more fully described on Sectional Plan No SS 99/1987 in the scheme known as ILLOVO MANSIONS in respect of the land and building or buildings situated at ILLOVO TOWNSHIP, LOCAL AUTHORITY: CITY OF JOHANNESBURG METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY, of which section the floor area, according to the said sectional plan, is 87 (Eighty-Seven) SQUARE METRES in extent; and


(b) An undivided share in the common property in the scheme apportioned to the said section in accordance with the participation quota as endorsed on the said sectional plan.

which has been lost and/or destroyed.

All interested persons having objection to the issue of such copy are hereby required to lodge the same in writing with the Registrar of Deeds: North Gauteng at PRETORIA within two weeks from the date of the publication of this notice.

**DATED AT CENTURION
ON THIS 28TH DAY OF
MAY 2025.**

**Applicant: Rahman
Gradwell Attorneys
Incorporated
Address: 5 Bauhinia
Street, Cambridge
Office Park, Building
26, Suite 31, Centurion,
0157 Email address:
shoneez@rglaw.africa
Contact number: 066
475 7028**



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vanessad@mg.co.za

ELSIE MASHANZHE: 076 556 8777
elsiem@mg.co.za

ILIZMA WILLEMS: 063 026 7450
ilizmaw@mg.co.za



Mail&Guardian

Mail&Guardian

Academics & Courses

CONTACT:
Ilizma
063 026 7450
Vanessa
083 458 8155



COUNCIL ON HIGHER EDUCATION

The South African Council on Higher Education (CHE) is an independent statutory body established by the Higher Education Act (Act No. 101 of 1997, as amended). As the Quality Council for Higher Education in terms of the National Qualifications Framework Act (Act No. 67 of 2008, as amended), it advises the Minister of Higher Education and Training on all higher education matters and is responsible for quality assurance and promotion through the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC).

Applications are invited from interested and suitably qualified candidates for appointment to the following position.

**SENIOR RESEARCHER
RESEARCH AND MONITORING
(PERMANENT)**

Closing date: 13 June 2025

To view the full advertisement, application requirements and response details, please visit www.che.ac.za/newsroom/vacancies

The CHE is committed to Employment Equity and aims to attract and retain talented individuals to achieve its equity objectives. Therefore, people from designated groups, including those with disabilities, are encouraged to apply.



**THE RHODES
SCHOLARSHIPS FOR
SOUTHERN AFRICA**

Ten Rhodes Scholarships for Southern Africa are awarded annually for post-graduate study at Oxford University (UK). Online applications for the 2026 Scholarships open on 01 June 2025.

Do you have what it takes to be a Rhodes Scholar?

If you are an academically excellent young graduate who demonstrates leadership skills; a commitment to making a difference in the broader community and the world; and have the energy to fulfil your potential, you are invited to submit your application for this prestigious global scholarship.

Need more information?

Visit the website for detailed information on the selection criteria and application process:
[Southern Africa - Rhodes Trust \(ox.ac.uk\)](http://Southern Africa - Rhodes Trust (ox.ac.uk))
or contact: southernafrica.secretary@rhodestrust.com

Applications open on 01 June 2025 and close on 01 August 2025.

Academics & Courses

CONTACT:
Ilizma - 063 026 7450
Vanessa - 083 458 8155
Elsie - 076 556 8777

Mail&Guardian

Jobs, Tenders & Notices



CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Leather Value Chain B2B Workshop

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) continues to advance its regional industrialisation agenda under the SADC Industrialization Strategy and Roadmap (2015– 2063), which seeks to transform the region's economies from resource-based to high productivity, value-added industrial hubs by enhancing regional and global value chains, strengthening intra-regional trade, positioning industries competitively in global markets, and fostering robust cross-border production networks. Anchored in this vision, a Business-to Business (B2B) Workshop will be convened to catalyse partnerships within the leather value chain. This initiative aligns with the SADC Leather Regional Model Policy Framework, which envisions a competitive and integrated leather sector driving socio-economic transformation through heightened value addition, market integration, and sustainability. Aligned with the Model Policy Framework's objectives, the B2B aims to support private sector growth and regional integration through a responsive policy and regulatory environment that encourages productive public-private dialogue and enhances the movement of leather inputs and products across borders.

The Leather Value Chain B2B Workshop provides a dynamic platform for stakeholders across the leather value chain, including raw material suppliers, tanneries, manufacturers, technology providers, financiers, and distributors to establish strategic linkages, exchange technical know how, and co-create actionable solutions addressing bottlenecks in production, quality enhancement, market access, and technology adoption. Special emphasis is placed on modernising tanning practices, fostering cleaner production techniques, harmonising quality standards, and strengthening institutional frameworks, which are underscored in the Leather Regional Model Policy Framework.

The B2B Workshop will have the following features:

- Thematic Sessions: Deep dives into challenges and opportunities across the value chain, focusing on modernisation of tannery infrastructure, sustainable practices, quality certification, and intra-regional trade facilitation.
- Breakout Groups: Interactive discussions targeting specific value chain components—tanning innovations, machinery and equipment advancements, skills development, and market diversification strategies.
- Industry Tours: Exposure to best practices in leather processing and manufacturing within the host country.
- Networking Spaces: Facilitated matchmaking for investment, technology transfer, and partnership-building.

The SADC Secretariat invites qualified stakeholders who meet the following requirements to express their interest in participation in the event: All participants from the Member States are welcome to attend at own cost

1. Operational Base: Companies/organisations domiciled and operating within the SADC region.
2. Value Chain Engagement: Actively involved in the Leather Value Chain
3. Company Profile: Ability to provide a company/organisation profile detailing the organisation's history, core activities and technical abilities.
3. Expansion Strategy: Demonstrated current or planned expansion into regional markets, including organisations seeking to extend their services or service provision across the region.
4. Innovation/Uniqueness: A demonstrable unique innovation, specialisation or technical contribution to the leather value chain, e.g., alternative tanning technologies, modern livestock husbandry methods including feedlots, modern branding methods; modernisation and harmonisation of livestock Identification and Traceability Systems; effluent treatment and chrome recovery and innovative production of traditional leather products) machinery and equipment suppliers.
5. Motivation Statement: A clear motivation statement outlining the reason for attending the B2B workshop, highlighting expected contributions and anticipated benefits.
6. Commitment: Availability to attend and engage fully in all workshop activities over the entire duration of the event

Sponsorship will be availed to a limited number of stakeholders that will apply and meet the criteria listed below. The sponsorship package will include transport, accommodation, and meals for selected participants, with a focus on ensuring equitable representation across Member States participating in the leather value chain. The following evaluation criteria will be applied:


Sponsored applicants will be evaluated based on:

- Relevance and Alignment (50%): The applicant's alignment with the workshop's objectives and thematic focus.
- Technical Contribution (20%): Potential to contribute substantive expertise, case studies, or innovations.
- Diversity and Inclusion (20%): Representation of gender, youth, and geographical diversity.
- Knowledge Sharing and Implementation Plan (10%): A clear strategy for disseminating workshop learnings and best practices to stakeholders within the applicant's country and for implementing agreed B2B actions post-event.

Submission deadline

All stakeholders from the SADC region (self-funding and sponsorship applicants) interested in participating in the B2B event are invited to submit their Expression of Interest. Submission of relevant documents as stipulated above (1-7), with the subject matter: "Call for Expression of Interest, Ref "Leather Value for the B2B Workshop" must be sent to: BW_Quotation@giz.de by 15th June 2025, 2300hrs. Please note that documents received after the stipulated time and date will not be accepted. Stakeholders that have expressed their interest to attend the B2B event will be notified and receive further details of the event.

15031M&G



TENDER NO.: AHRI/005/2025

PROVISION OF BOARD SECRETARIAT FUNCTIONS FOR AFRICA HEALTH RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR A PERIOD OF 12 MONTHS

TENDER INVITATION DATE

BRIEFING SESSION DATE

BRIEFING SESSION VENUE

TENDER CLOSING DATE & TIME

TENDER VALIDITY

: FRIDAY, 30 MAY 2025

: NOT APPLICABLE

: NOT APPLICABLE

: FRIDAY, 13 JUNE 2025 @ 12H00

: 90 DAYS

T1.1 TENDER NOTICE AND INVITATION TO TENDER

The Africa Health Research Institute (the Employer) invites Tenderers to tender for:

PROVISION OF BOARD SECRETARIAT FUNCTIONS FOR AFRICA HEALTH RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR A PERIOD OF 12 MONTHS

Tenderers shall request the tender specification document (only available in electronic format) from the following e-mail address:

E-mail address	tendersandcontracts@ahri.org
----------------	------------------------------

Proposal submissions, including all required documentation and information as outlined in the tender specification document, **MUST be submitted electronically only** to the following email address:

E-mail address	tendersandcontracts@ahri.org
----------------	------------------------------

Bidders are advised to utilise this email address for lodging of queries or complaints to AHRI in relation to this bid process:

Contact Person	Mimmy Gumede, Head of Procurement
E-mail address	mimmy.gumede@ahri.org

The closing date and time for receipt of tender documents complete with all necessary documentation and information is as follows:

Date

Time

: FRIDAY, 13 June 2025

: 12h00

NB: No late, faxed or hand-delivered tender documents will be accepted.

ACM/430541



Commission for Gender Equality
A society free from gender oppression and inequality

ADVERT FOR VACANCIES

The Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) is an Independent statutory body established in terms of chapter 9 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. The CGE is committed to a society free from gender oppression and inequality. Applications are invited from suitably qualified persons for the following positions:

HR GENERALIST

REF NO CGE:HR-GEB 2025

SALARY LEVEL: 8 - SALARY PACKAGE: R397.116 PER ANNUM

CENTRE: HEAD OFFICE – JOHANNESBURG

Please quote the name of the position in the subject line and email to recruitment@cge.org.za. Please visit www.cge.org.za and click on 'careers' to view the FULL ADVERTISEMENT. Enquiries: Ms Mesele Matlala -Tel:011 403 7182.

Closing date: 17 June 2025. No late applications will be accepted



Academics & Courses

CONTACT:

Ilizma Willemse 063 026 7450

Vanessa Diedrich 083 458 8155

Jobs

CONTACT:

Elsie Mashanzhe 076 556 8777



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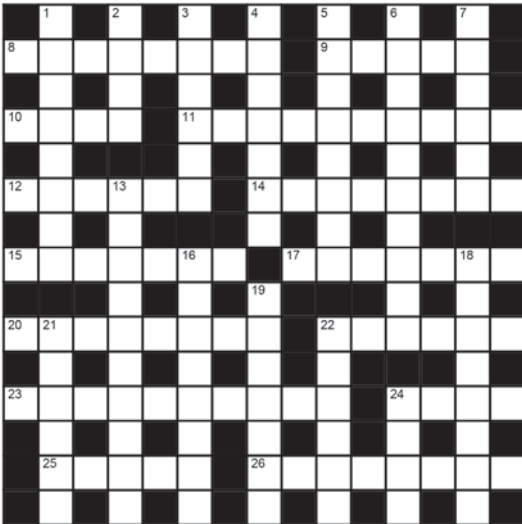
Puzzles & What’s Up

CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

- **World class** — and also from our perspective, not that of the UK or US
- **Multilingual** — every crossword has one Afrikaans (marked **A**) and one isiXhosa (marked **X**) word
- **Fresh & unique** — compiled the previous week especially for the *Mail & Guardian*

- Across**
- 8 Test drive new Rolls Royce Ultina (5,3)
- 9^A Unmask E.L. Municipality to reveal crook (5)
- 10 Turned off puns (4)
- 11 Risk everything — try on robe and fork out (2,3,5)
- 12 Ground study is wet (6)
- 14 Suggestion that *Hotel Love* include nude serving (8)
- 15 Have cheese around chocolate delicacy (7)
- 17 Green is very red around insect (7)
- 20 Sit with their odd unpaying resident (8)
- 22 Wished horse would find rotter (3,3)
- 23 Husband with home–worker together (4,2,4)
- 24 With a test case you get a bit of power (4)
- 25^X It is you starting to nurture goodness; you grow love ultimately (5)
- 26 Secret I found in true love, left and right (8)
- Down**
- 1 Crosspiece raised for horizontal opening (4,4)
- 2 Cut saying name (4)
- 3 Draw out monster (6)
- 4 Scrap with blazing sun, keel over, and die (5,2)
- 5 Cut off established American farm (8)
- 6 Supported once brief trouble was over (10)

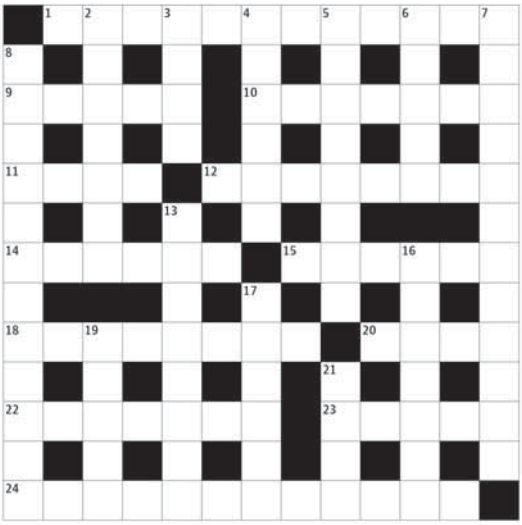
JDE 482
by George Euvrard



- 7 Drew on Sergeant Major to authorise journalist (6)
- 13 Won't undo ad about tramp (4–3–3)
- 16 Standpoint and email hold together (2,6)
- 18 No–one, thank you, has info about reversal (8)
- 19 Imagine doctor had drug to bring back cat (5,2)
- 21 Whimsical question about a nit (6)
- 22 Cleaners offer set arrangement (6)
- 24 Guarded for year after fight (4)

QUICK CROSSWORD

- Across**
- 1 Source not to be cited (3,3,6)
- 9 Made a mistake (5)
- 10 Heavily walked upon (7)
- 11 Wigs? (4)
- 12 Dish of rice, fish and hard–boiled eggs (8)
- 14 Distinctive pattern of a Scottish clan (6)
- 15 Principles of right and wrong (6)
- 18 Capital of Bermuda (8)
- 20 East end of a church (4)
- 22 Insult (7)
- 23 Sexual liaison (5)
- 24 Psychiatrist (slang) (5,7)
- Down**
- 2 Collector of wild fungi, berries, etc (7)
- 3 Receptacle for odds and ends (4)
- 4 Regard highly (6)
- 5 Extend (8)
- 6 Group living under a religious rule (5)
- 7 Yonks (7,5)
- 8 Intimate talk (5–2–5)
- 13 Device controlling inflow into a cistern (8)
- 16 Lacking reverence for God (7)
- 17 On the whole (6)
- 19 Muslim religious jurist (5)
- 21 Solid partition (4)



14 964

LAST WEEK’S SOLUTIONS

Quick Crossword 14 963

R	O	B	U	S	T		D	A	P	P	E	R
O		I		T	C		S		A		H	
C	A	N	T	A	T		P	A	R	T	Y	
O		G		Y		M		I		T	T	
C	H	E	A	P			P	E	C	K	I	S
O			U			A				A		M
	N	O	T	T	I	N	G	H	I	L	L	
A		T			O		O				G	
S	A	T	C	H	E	L		G	U	A	V	A
Y		O		O		O		W		X		L
L	I	M	I	T			G	L	A	C	I	A
U		A		E		Y		S		O		E
M	A	N	G	L	E			W	H	I	M	S
Y												

Cryptic Crossword JDE 481

1	W	2	V	3	A	4	S	5	A	6	I	7	D	8	A
9	O	N	E	A	R	M	E	D	B	A	N	D	I	T	S
10	W		E		B		W		S		V		S		S
11	S	C	R	O	O	G	E		12	E	L	E	V	A	T
13	H		R		R		I		N		G		M		
14	K	I	E	P	E	R	S	O	L		14	T	H	R	O
15	N			A					E				E		L
16	W	A	D	D	L	E	D		18	D	E	P	L	E	T
19	E		E				I		A				O		
21	L	E	A	R	N		22		23	D	E	T	E	R	G
24	L	D		A		A		A	H		A		E		
25	T	I	T	A	N	I	C		26	R	E	F	U	N	D
27	O		I		T		T		U		F		U		E
29	D	O	M	E	S	T	I	C	S	C	I	E	N	C	E
30	O		E		I		C		H		N		S		P

How to play Sudoku: Place a number from 1 to 9 in each empty cell so that each row, each column and each 3x3 block contains all the numbers from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK’S SOLUTION

4	1	6	7	3	8	9	2	5
9	5	3	1	6	2	8	7	4
8	7	2	4	9	5	3	1	6
2	9	4	8	1	3	5	6	7
6	8	5	2	7	9	1	4	3
7	3	1	6	5	4	2	8	9
3	2	8	9	4	6	7	5	1
1	4	9	5	2	7	6	3	8
5	6	7	3	8	1	4	9	2

SUDOKU

								4
			7			3		9
		3			9	7		2
	6	5		9	8			
			3		1	6		
	4	1		5	6			
		8			5	9		6
			8			4		7
							8	



Figuring on biggering: A day of music and culture in Linksfield.

Get the rhythm of the nation at Oskido’s Big Day Out

Oskido’s Big Day Out is back on Saturday 29 November, and it’s set to be bigger, louder and more unforgettable than ever.

Following the overwhelming success of last year’s sold-out edition, the award-winning DJ and producer is bringing his signature lifestyle festival back to Huddle Park, Linksfield, for a full day of music, culture and vibes.

From midday to 10pm, expect an electric mix of house, kwaito, amapiano and hip-hop as some of

South Africa’s best artists share the stage with rising stars.

With immersive zones, curated food experiences and a crowd of 5 000 people expected, Big Day Out 2025 promises to be a high-energy celebration of South African identity, soundtracked by decades of dance floor anthems and new-school flair.

As Oskido says, this is for anyone who’s ever felt the rhythm of our nation — don’t miss the festival that brings it all together.

Culture, family fun and good vibes at RedFest 2025

RedFest returns to Redhill School in Joburg this Youth Day long weekend from 13 to 16 June. The event transforms the campus into a vibrant hub of creativity, community and artistic excellence.

It will feature a line-up of live music with performances from Booshle G, Matthew Mole, Zolani Mahola and more, alongside more than 20 top-notch theatre productions and a magical children’s programme. Comedy, world-class magic shows,

art exhibitions and an artisanal market with more than 80 vendors round out the experience.

The popular Village on Oval will be the festival’s social heartbeat, while YouthFest on Monday showcases the city’s rising stars in music and theatre.

Whether you’re a culture buff, a family on the hunt for fun, or just chasing good vibes, RedFest2025 is your pass to Johannesburg’s creative soul.



Celebration: Flamenco master Demi Fernandez.

Tribute to Demi Fernandez

On Friday 30 May, the Centre for Jazz and Popular Music at the University of KwaZulu-Natal will host a tribute to a man who has shaped generations of musicians — Demi Fernandez.

In celebration of his retirement, a stellar line-up of UKZN guitar alumni will return to the stage to honour their mentor, whose flamenco mastery and passionate

teaching left an indelible mark on South African music.

The evening promises a mix of jazz, Afrobeat, rock and flamenco as artists like Nick Pitman, Solomon Willy, Joshua Swanson, Milton Chissano and Seb Goldswain come together in a celebration of music and mentorship.

Each performer, now a respected artist in their own right, brings a unique style rooted in the lessons and legacy of Fernandez.

Friday

Where Jozi goes to eat after dark

Relish Deluxe blends tradition and modernity in a city that never sleeps – or stops eating well

Hasina Kathrada

It's just past midnight in Rosebank and the streets have exhaled their daytime rush. On Jan Smuts Avenue – where Parkwood and Rosebank blur – a new energy stirs. The neon glow of Minty's garage cuts through the night, not for fuel, but for the irresistible pull of wood-fired dough, chipotle's smoky heat and bold espressos. Welcome to Relish Deluxe, Johannesburg's 24-hour culinary haven, where a wagyu burger at 3am, fresh-baked croissants at dawn or a lingering coffee in a reimagined forecourt feels like a quiet revolution. Only six weeks old, Relish has already woven itself into Jozi's fabric. On two recent weekends, we turned around – upstairs seating packed, the forecourt alive with groups under orange streetlights. Even on a Wednesday evening, it's buzzing; less jam-packed, but no less inviting. And the hype delivers: a Mexican pizza with a charred, chewy crust; steak frites kissed with chimichurri and an Asian slaw chicken burger, tangy and unforgettable. This isn't fast food. It's memory in motion. A love letter to a city that never sleeps. Relish is a café, deli, grocer and late-night diner in one. It fills a gap

in Johannesburg's foodscape – high-quality, halaal dining that defies the clock. Think buttery croissants, soft-serve swirls, artisanal pastas and pantry staples; available always. Young chef Muhammed Patel, in the industry for eight years, channels his family's culinary heritage. "My grandfather cooked for hundreds at weddings," he says. "Food was our heartbeat. Now it's Relish's." His kitchen marries tradition with precision – wagyu burgers are decadent, pizza crusts sing with char and the ras malai cheesecake with saffron and cardamom is decadently unforgettable. "Whether it's 2pm or 2am, the standard holds." Relish sits steps from The Pantry, another petrol-station-turned-destination, signalling a shift in how Jozi eats and gathers. These spaces – once transient, functional – now pulse with connection, embodying the principles of new urbanism. Like London's Boxpark or Brooklyn's warehouse food halls, Relish transforms under-used infrastructure into cultural real estate. A petrol station becomes a plaza. A public square in disguise. What sets Relish apart is its ethos. "The food is halaal," Patel says, "but the space is for everyone." In South Africa, where halaal dining is often sidelined or stereotyped,



Refuel: Relish Deluxe, a café, deli, grocer and late-night diner in a garage forecourt on Johannesburg's Jan Smuts Avenue, is open 24 hours a day. Chef Muhammed Patel (below right).



Relish integrates it seamlessly. Every ingredient is certified, every supplier vetted; not to exclude, but to build trust. That trust draws a diverse crowd: students debating gigs, healthcare workers unwinding, older



patrons savouring morning lattes. Upstairs, conversations spill into the night; downstairs, the wood-fired oven flickers, coffee cups clink and strangers become regulars. This fluidity mirrors Joburg's evol-

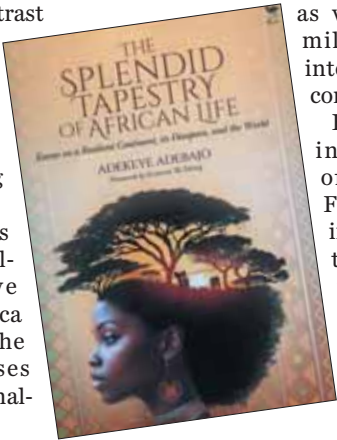
ing identity, a city of hybrid spaces for hybrid lives. Historically shaped by division and utilitarian planning, Jozi now finds belonging in places like Relish, open 24 hours, to all. The global halaal food market, projected to grow from \$2.5 trillion this year to \$5 trillion by 2033, reflects the rising demand for ethical, transparent food; not just among the world's two billion Muslims, but across demographics. South Africa, with 80% of supermarket products halaal-certified, has long lacked consistent, high-quality halaal dining at odd hours. Relish fills this void. Relish isn't just feeding Jozi, it's reshaping its nights, softening its edges. Where once there was fuel and function, now there's flame, flavour and fellowship. As Patel puts it: "We're feeding Jozi's soul, one plate at a time." Under the warm hum of a reimagined service station, it's not a tagline, it's the rhythm of a restless city, reborn.

Essay collection presents a tapestry of Africa

Ahmet Sait Akcay

Africa has always been marked by difference, globally, and this difference always bears negativity, and tends to perpetuate stereotypes. What Adekeye Adebajo's recent work *The Splendid Tapestry of African Life: Essays on a Resilient Continent, Its Diaspora, and the World*, counts for is to challenge and make that difference a positive appeal to the continent. The book is a collection of essays penned over a period of three decades, covering most compelling issues, debates and developments across the continent. It is the outcome of Adebajo's intellectual engagement which evolved and established a comprehensive and grounded critique, thoughts and reviews over the time. The collection is broken into 10 chapters, with 36 essays in total. The titles of essays are full of echoes and implications that bring a global kind of rendering to the issues explored. Among the names invoked throughout the book are William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, Pliny the Elder, Ali Mazrui, John Milton, Jonathan Swift, Chinua Achebe – to name just a few. Even the title of the book resonates

with Nigerian novelist, poet and Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka's latest novel, *Chronicles from the Land of the Happiest People on Earth*, where he laments the decay of beauties spoiled by the politics of corruption in his country. The title of the book also suggests a striking contrast with the issues covered, or more deeply, a politics of difference, which comes to mind when dealing with Africa. This contrast is summed up as follows: Africa we believe versus Africa we think. For the problematic arises out of difference, challenges and analysis. The truth that Adebajo brings into life is not something new, it is something embedded in Africa, which is not and/or cannot be seen from outside the continent. Nigerian poet and scholar Harry Garuba once said that the truth lies at the heart of an unexplored part of Africa that is not yet covered by the Western discourse, namely Afro-pessimism and Afro-romanticism.



I believe Adebajo's attempt in this extensive study is to tap into that unexplored medium of the African domain. He aptly challenges the prevailing eurocentric and discursive representations of Africa foregrounded in the mainstream media, as well as the Western military and political interventions across the continent. For instance, calling France a myth of "Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité", he calls into question the country's sustained hegemonic power in the francophone countries, saying, "France continued to apply democracy inconsistently, sanctioning sham elections in Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Gabon, Niger and Togo between 1992 and 1996, and resuming aid to fraudulent, undemocratic regimes." He adds, "France's intervention on the continent has thus become a costly relic of a bygone age of imperial delusion." The book covers a diverse range of issues, problems and themes around Africa including pan-Afri-

canism; slavery; colonialism; reparations; foreign policy; governance; decolonisation; peacekeeping; Africa and Western relations; terrorism and Cold War problems on the continent, as well as cultural issues. In 586 pages, Adebajo deals with a multitude of issues besetting and underrating Africa. *The Splendid Tapestry* is informative and illuminating, providing an insightful, critical and deconstructive approach to global issues over Africa. Regarding reparations, for Adebajo, one of the most significant recent developments is the agreement by Germany to pay Namibia €1.1 billion in compensation, which was followed by the Netherlands' apology for Dutch slavery, globally. He asks: "Will the more egregious abusers of France, Britain, Belgium, Portugal and Italy follow suit and start to atone for their historical crimes against humanity?" The way Adebajo tackles problems is strategic and optimistic. Bringing African leaders, thinkers, scholars such as Nelson Mandela, Thabo Mbeki, Kwame Nkrumah, Ruth First, Wole Soyinka, Ali Mazrui and many others into his pan-Africanist perspective, he establishes Africa as a global actor through

interactions, encounters and engagement on the global scene. He sees Africa as moving, glittering and shining: "Africa. A breath-taking continent of spectacular beauty conjures up extreme images of paradisiacal Eden as the birthplace of humankind and, in contrast, a conflict-ridden, disease-afflicted 'Dark Continent' that offers a glimpse of apocalyptic Armageddon. "But Africa is a resilient continent that, despite continuing challenges, is currently on the move in the areas of economic development, conflict resolution, and democratic governance." Though the bulk of the book takes a strategic and critical view over the African political landscape, considerable parts are dedicated to cinema, sports and cityscapes. One of the striking points he makes about Nollywood is important to note. He locates Nollywood at the heart of Africa because of its Nigerian location. He maintains: "Nollywood has unquestioningly become one of the few true representations of 'global Africa'." What strikes me most is to read about African cities in the writer's imagination. Adebajo provides astonishing pieces of cities, profoundly lived experiences of Lagos, Abuja, Accra, Abidjan, Johannesburg and Laayoune.

Pharaoh out of time

Set in 3025, Cape Town Opera's *Aida* reinvents itself for a new generation, but the voices and the music remain timeless

Keith Bain

Yes, it's that grandly spectacular opera that plays out in Egypt, its story set in some Eurocentric vision of an ancient land with made-up wars, muddled historical periods and an absolutely cacophonous agglomeration of characters, plots, subplots, wartime heroics, clandestine love, insane jealousy between romantic rivals, hidden identities, an enslaved princess and, of course, no end of political meddling by terrifying high priests manipulating the intrigue behind the scenes.

It's all that and much more — but don't go to Cape Town Opera's *Aida* expecting some *Indiana Jones*-style "adventure in archaeology" rendition of what's surely one of the great classical operas.

This version bypasses the oftentimes ridiculous concatenation of historical references and transcends time and space to instead present a post-*Black Panther* reimagining of *Aida* set precisely 1000 years in the future rather than 4000 in the past.

Whether or not this made-up, fantastical world always works is neither here nor there. If theatre's job is to rip you away from everyday reality and transport you to a faraway place, then this fantastically oversized Magdalene Minnaar-conceived *Aida* does precisely what it's meant to do: it blasts you with every trick in the theatrical playbook — and then some.

Its sets are the most enormous built for Cape Town Opera in decades, the costumes are as out there as you're ever going to set eyes upon and the fierceness with which the cast of apparently millions strides onto stage, puffs its chest, performs, emotes and belts out those surging, soaring, heart-jolting songs while the orchestra performs up a storm — all of it is just so very, very much.

There are elements that could be tempered, reworked, improved upon, but I actually don't care — this is South African opera proving a point.

I've seen *Aida* performed at the great Arena amphitheatre in Verona, on an ancient stage, under the stars and in front of a crowd so massive it knocked my socks off. And while that production had mounted horses trotting onto stage and the voices could apparently be heard from miles away, it lacked the lusciousness, the splendour and — indeed — the phantasmagoric boldness and majesty of CTO's staging.

What that Italian production lacked most of all, though, were our voices, our heart and soul. Because something this big, bold, brash and often transfixing production has in spades are singers of such consummate calibre that the voices alone are enough to break your heart — even before the heartbreaking tragedy of the final scene comes along and finishes you off.

Created with spectacle in mind, *Aida* has always been about scale. Written by Giuseppe Verdi at what was evidently the height of his powers, it's an opera seemingly made for a stage at least twice as big as



Afro-futurist: Nonhlanhla Yende as Amneris (above) in a scene from Cape Town Opera's production of *Aida* (below) which is on at the Artscape in Cape Town until 31 May.



Artscape's Opera House, the space in some scenes tending to become congested.

Sight lines are occasionally a problem, the flamboyantly dressed chorus members in one scene getting lost behind one another.

And there's the minor anxiety caused by witnessing long lines of priests dressed in white struggling to go up and down the immense stairs without breaking character to clutch handrails or search for the steps in the half-darkness.

There's so much to see and it's a pity when some of that gets lost or when the intended symmetry is interrupted by minor blips.

Another, perhaps less forgivable, distraction is the highly visible stage

hands moving the set. Sometimes this happens while intimate scenes unfold at the front of the stage.

One assumes in the year 3025 some more advanced stage technology will exist, along with entirely new textiles and fashion designers not so intent on channelling outfits worn by the bourgeoisie in *The Hunger Games* and *The Fifth Element*.

The costumes, however eye-catching, suggest couture creators 1000 years hence will still be working with the same fabrics that can be seen on the streets of Cape Town today (puffer jackets, I'm looking at you) and I'm convinced that Radamès, the Egyptian general who is secretly in love with Aida, was for much of the show dressed in a pair

of grey tracksuit bottoms.

But, given the expansiveness and grandeur of the show as a whole, such quibbles are, ultimately, nitpicking.

Against the backdrop of show-stopping spectacle, what takes your breath away are the voices, the spell-binding emotional gut punches that erupt from the lungs of these singers.

And there's the beauty and sweetness of the music, the monumental grandeur contrasting with the quiet intimacy of a score that's luscious and stirring and likely to make you want to put on your uniform and go to war for love. Plus conductor Kamal Khan's incredible ability to coax so much out of both chorus and orchestra.

What's also inescapable is the immensity of soprano Nobulumko Mngxekeza's performance as Aida. She opens her mouth and you are captivated; whatever special water she drank as a child, my god, it has given her a mighty set of lungs. The purity and honey-smoothness of her soprano voice carried me away.

Wondrous, too, is her capacity to convey emotion — she is the least diva-ish presence on stage and yet fills the auditorium with Aida's complex feelings. And, have no doubt, what Aida feels is a lot. Verdi puts her through the wringer, the plot forcing her into such a tight, suffocating corner between love and duty.

And she's not alone. Mezzo-soprano Nonhlanhla Yende as Aida's romantic rival, Amneris, the pharaoh's daughter, is similarly stunning.

I had to continually remind myself that she was, technically, the "bad-die", because my ears kept falling in love with her voice. She absolutely won me over; did that magical thing Verdi so cleverly wanted to achieve — make the audience grow to empathise with the antagonist.

It helps that Yende is also the singer most admirably costumed. Apart from her striking hairstyling and make-up, at one point she arrives on stage in some sort of crown that for me so beautifully sums up what this production — visually — is aiming for. Indeed, the accessories — the jewellery, especially — are in a genre of excellence all of their own.

And while the casting of Mngxekeza and Yende seems to underscore the fact that Verdi, in 1871, was a man capable of creating an opera designed around two pow-

erful female characters, the leading men here are brilliant, too.

Lukhanyo Moyake as Radamès is fiery and full of genuine emotion, torn in so many directions and yet you absolutely believe him when he chooses love over nationalism.

And, as Amonasro, Conroy Scott just blows you away with his effortless bass-baritone voice. Despite inadvertently being made to look like he's in *Phantom of the Opera*, he completely owns his role as the scheming, vengeful Ethiopian king, up to the task of emotionally blackmailing Aida, his daughter.

There's plenty of physicality in this production, too. Seldom will you have seen so many opera singers looking quite so confident in their bodies.

There's a harem-style scene, in particular, when a host of women attend Amneris, everyone dressed in gold, and while it's playful, full of rollicking naughtiness and slightly steamy, what's most disarming is how in their element the singers truly are.

And there's Gregory Maqoma's choreography, too, which transforms the energy of the ballet sections completely and in one scene in particular compels the audience to hear Verdi in a new way.

Such newness is a good thing.

Egyptologists have for over a century moaned about the factual and historical inaccuracies evident throughout *Aida*, as though they imagine that Verdi meant it to be a Nat Geo documentary. He didn't. He was paid a fortune to create a spectacle that would emotionally buoy and elevate audiences, transport them, and hopefully continue doing so centuries later.

Well, it's more than 150 years since *Aida* was first performed in Cairo, and while the emotions of its lovestruck trio continue to be sung with incredible potency, this sci-fi re-imagining of the environment in which the story plays out resolves any academic fuss over cultural and historic inaccuracies.

Aida has always been a container for pageantry and spectacle. There've been plenty of humungous productions. Aside from the horses ridden onto stage in Verona (and in New York), ballet dancers twirling ribbons and entire orchestras decked out in Egyptian robes, there've been renditions in Luxor with live camels.

In a 1953 film version, with an 18-year-old Sophia Loren as the titular Ethiopian princess, there is blackface, and Loren's voice isn't even her own — she was dubbed by a professional opera singer.

Aida has seen it all, in fact, including a Met Opera version of it at the start of this year that *The New York Times* referred to as "blandly old-fashioned, without real poetry, theatricality or fun".

What's striking about Cape Town Opera's *Aida* — our *Aida* — is that it is not only grippingly theatrical, but tremendously good fun and hugely accessible. Given the enormity of the heartbreak to which the storyline inevitably leads, it is to the show's great credit that it's able to hold us in thrall of the visual and sonic spectacle, fill us with such delight and plant smiles on our faces before ultimately causing tears to well.

And all of its many constituent elements are a potent reminder, too, of what an extraordinarily rich cultural landscape we're part of here at the tip of Africa.

***Aida* is playing at Artscape in Cape Town until 31 May.**

Friday



No kidding: The annual Kingsmead Book Fair, held at Kingsmead College, in the Johannesburg suburb of Rosebank, attracts lovers of stories, both young and old.

Finding story and soul

A first encounter with Kingsmead Book Fair, where community and unexpected joy come together in celebration of literature

Lesego Chopape

I underestimated the extent to which Johannesburg's Kingsmead Book Fair is revered. Honestly, I did. I thought I'd arrive, park with ease, grab a quick coffee and stroll into a modest school event.

Instead, I circled like an anxious Uber driver, finally parking a few streets down and weaving my way towards the gates, grumbling.

There was a steady, almost ritual-like, stream of people making their way to the school — young, old, families, friends, lovers of words. And I had to remind myself — this is my first time. I must keep an open mind.

Kingsmead College, nestled quietly in Rosebank, didn't look like the kind of place that could transform into a buzzing cultural hub. But that Saturday, it did. And not just any buzz — it was electric, inviting and joyful.

People came in numbers. More than I expected. And I was genuinely surprised, perhaps even moved, by how many still enjoy good old literature in a world of reels, swipes and 10-second dopamine hits.

As I made my way through the entrance, dodging enthusiastic children and chatty clusters of adults, I tried not to be distracted by the enticing aromas coming from the food court. The food trucks and stalls were so perfectly placed you'd swear it was a festival more than a book fair.

I considered giving in to the aroma of sizzling boerie rolls but instead made it my mission to walk around, to understand what it is that pulls people here. Why would anyone willingly choose to spend their Saturday at a school?

And then, as if on cue, I saw it.

Children — wide-eyed and vocal — dragging their parents by the hand, eager to attend storytime or rush into Exclusive Books with the title of a new book already in mind. Young readers, unapologetically loud in their excitement.

Parents, some tired, some amused, but all present.

It was a moment of clarity for me — this wasn't just a book fair. It



One for the books: On her first visit to the Kingsmead Book Fair, held every May in Johannesburg, the writer was surprised by the massive turnout at the event.

was a time for families and friends to gather, to celebrate something deeper. It was about passing the baton of imagination and thought to the next generation.

There were sessions spread across the day, diving into various themes — politics, identity, children's literature, the writing craft and more. But I knew myself. Escapism is my soft place to land.

I read the news daily, soak in its heaviness, and often find myself longing for softness, for sweetness, for something that affirms joy.

So, I headed for the panel hosted by the Romance Writers Organisation of South Africa. I didn't raise my hand or pose a question. I simply sat and soaked it all in, basking in the energy of young people discussing love, dreams and writing as if it were sacred — and it is.

I even picked up a few things I know will sharpen my writing skills.

Observing how people speak about what they love teaches you about how to write about what matters to you.

At some point, after too much walking, listening and light eavesdropping, I found a quiet bench tucked away under a tree. I had just collected a hotdog and needed to rest both my legs and my thoughts.

Turns out, I wasn't the only one eyeing that bench. A young woman approached, smiling kindly before asking if she could join me. "Of course," I nodded.

"I matriculated in 2012 from Kingsmead College," she said, unwrapping her sandwich. "And I've never missed a fair."

She shared, between bites, how this place — the book fair, the school, the tradition — was more than just an annual event to her. "It's part of my fabric," she said, "part of who I am. I love seeing some of my old classmates come here with their kids

or partners. It feels like a reunion.

"A little overwhelming sometimes ... which is why I'm hiding here with you," she chuckled.

We both laughed. In that moment, it didn't matter that I was a first-timer and she was a regular. We were simply two women, enjoying the comfort of stories and sunshine and sausage rolls.

Her words stayed with me long after she left. "Part of who we are." Isn't that what literature is? A thread in our fabric? A familiar scent on a rainy day? A compass when the world feels confusing?

The Kingsmead Book Fair, for me, was an unexpected awakening. A reminder that not everything good is loud or trending. That quiet love — for books, for community, for shared experiences still thrives in this city.

Joburg is often painted with a hard edge: traffic, load-shedding, crime, concrete. But here, in the heart of

Rosebank, under trees and the soft hum of conversation, was something tender. Something beautiful.

A place where stories, fictional and lived, collided. Where readers and writers looked each other in the eye and said, "I see you."

Yes, I was overwhelmed. But in the best way. Overwhelmed by humanity, the joy, the shared curiosity. I walked away with a few books for my nieces, but more importantly, I walked away with a renewed sense of hope.

That in this often chaotic world, there are still places like the Kingsmead Book Fair. Places that remind us to imagine, to dream, to explore ... and, ultimately, to reveal something new within ourselves.

If you ever find yourself in Johannesburg in May, do yourself a favour. Walk a few extra blocks, follow the smell of cinnamon and coffee and allow yourself to get lost among the stories.

Friday

Capturing a sound in an image

From rare Ernest Cole prints to iconic portraits of Makeba and Masekela, this show captures the musicians and the energy of live music itself

Kibo Ngowi

Jazz has to be seen live to be appreciated. That might sound like a platitude that could apply to any genre of music but, for me, it was a revelation. As a person whose ears were more finely attuned to rap and rock from a lifetime of listening, every attempt I made to listen to jazz in the privacy of my home ended in failure. Until I experienced it live.

Some of the best moments of my life have been seated in a dimly lit room in front of a big jazz band. Nothing compares to seeing a six- or seven-piece ensemble playing at the peak of their powers, with an audience congregated to witness the holy communion of drums, bass guitar, double bass, piano, sax and trumpet.

It was only once I had worshipped at the church of a sold-out jazz gig, and sat in the presence of the genre being created live and in the moment, that I was able to appreciate it.

I had this on my mind last weekend when I encountered the booth hosted by Cape Town gallery Peffers Fine Art at the RMB Latitudes Art Fair.

What I found was an exploration of South African jazz seen through the discerning eyes of legendary photographers. It was an encounter with a hard-to-describe beauty, an attempt to capture the ephemeral magic that makes this genre of music so special.

The booth, a selection from the larger *Back of the Moon* exhibition, was the brainchild of Ruarc Peffers, often working with Matthew Blackman of the publisher Blackman Rossouw. Theirs is a fascinating, almost informal collaboration, where Blackman delves into the historical depths, unearthing narratives and forgotten faces, and Peffers brings a curatorial vision to the surface.

The idea for this compelling booth began somewhat organically.

"Initially, it started with Ruarc representing the Alf Kumalo estate and then also working with the Baha Archives," Blackman recounted.

A casual conversation about the Journey to Jazz Festival in Prince Albert led to the idea of an exhibition.

"I made an offhand comment that maybe we could do an exhibition of jazz photography with them," Blackman shared.

This initial focus on Kumalo's work gradually expanded: "As the project developed, we began to pull in all of the other photographers of that era. And then, you know, we finally pulled in the Ernest Cole photographs from the final chapter of the republished *House of Bondage* book."

The Latitudes showing felt like a concentrated essence of that larger exploration, a collection of moments plucked from a rich and resonant past. The exhibition ultimately featured the work of not only Kumalo

and Cole, but also Bob Gosani, GR Naidoo and Jürgen Schadeberg.

Walking through the booth, I was struck by the way these photographers, each with their distinct approach, managed to capture something beyond the mere visual representation of musicians.

There were the familiar giants, Hugh Masekela and Miriam Makeba, their images carrying the weight of their immense cultural impact.

But it was the glimpses of lesser-known figures that truly resonated.

Blackman's research illuminated the story of Gideon Nxumalo, a jazz innovator whose contribution in the Sixties deserves far more recognition.

He found it interesting "how there are these forgotten figures in our jazz history and ... how truly incredible they really were among them".

To see Nxumalo captured at his piano by both Kumalo and Cole felt like witnessing a vital piece of history reclaiming its rightful place.

Similarly, the photographs of Philip Tabane and Julian Bahula, pioneers of the Malombo Jazz Men, spoke to a crucial shift in the South African jazz landscape, a move towards a more homegrown sound. Through the lenses of Cole and Kumalo, their revolutionary spirit was palpable.

This wasn't just a random assortment of photos. It felt like a deliberate curation of narratives. Some images were instantly recognisable, having become ingrained in our collective memory through album covers and publications.

"There's the famous Miriam Makeba by Jürgen Schadeberg, which was an obvious one," Blackman noted.

But it was the discovery of previously unseen or misidentified photos, particularly from the Ernest Cole archive, that held a particular allure.

Blackman recounted the detective-like process of identifying subjects.

He found it "interesting that there's so many photographs in our archives that are sort of unidentified".

These rediscoveries underscored the depth and untapped potential in our photographic archives.

Even a seemingly simple image of Masekela with a trumpet-maker, unearthed and correctly identified, held a quiet power, a glimpse into the everyday life of a legend.

"That was actually the one, interestingly, that Hugh's daughter had never seen before," Blackman shared, highlighting the fresh perspective these discoveries brought.

What, then, makes a jazz photograph truly special? It's a question I pondered as I moved from frame to frame. Jazz, at its core, is an improvisational, atmospheric art form.

How do you capture the fleeting beauty of a saxophone solo, the rhythmic pulse of the drums, in a



Jazz in focus:
The Peffers Fine Art booth at the RMB Latitudes Art Fair in Cape Town (top and left).

Musician Moshe Kgasoane and comedian Loyiso Gola at the Peffers booth (above).

Alf Kumalo's photo of saxophonist Winston Mankunku (above left).

Photo (above):
Thys Dullaart Photography



static image? Blackman articulated this challenge beautifully: "Jazz, being music, is obviously an art form, which is one that is difficult to represent in written language ... But a photo can capture the kind of poetry of that music because there's movement and obviously atmosphere."

The most compelling jazz photographs are those that transcend mere documentation. They aren't just about who was playing but about the feeling, the communication between the musicians, the sheer immersion in the act of creation.

Alf Kumalo's image of Winston Mankunku, shrouded in cigarette smoke, his saxophone a conduit for something profound is an embodiment of a mood, an era, a feeling.

Blackman pointed out some were posed due to the limitations of the equipment. "Many of the early photographs are of jazz musicians posing as if they are in a jazz club rather than actually being in the jazz club."

Yet, even in these staged moments, there's an attempt to convey the spirit of the music. As technology evolved, photographers gained the

ability to capture the raw energy of live performances.

But, regardless of the setting, the great photographs capture moments of intense focus, where the musician is utterly lost in their craft. They're often not looking at the camera; they're in conversation with their instruments, with the music.

There's something inspiring, almost primal, about witnessing that level of dedication frozen in time.

"The key is it's a photographer, who is an artist capturing somebody ... making art themselves; there's this beautiful symbiotic connection."

The response to the booth was enthusiastic and culminated in it winning the audience choice award.

"I was really delighted to see how many young people were coming through, recognising who some of these jazz musicians were and taking selfies next to them," Blackman said.

Leaving the booth felt strangely akin to leaving a jazz gig, my senses still ringing with the rhythm of what I'd just experienced, reluctant to return to the silence outside.

Just as it took witnessing jazz live for me to truly understand its power, it took standing face to face with these photographs to realise how deeply the genre's energy lives beyond the music itself.

There, suspended in stillness, was the very essence I had first encountered in a crowded, low-lit room — the pulse, the presence, the communion.

These images didn't just show me jazz. They made me feel it, again.

A reflection on two decades

Simphiwe Dana talks about her long career, her legacy and the spirit guiding what could be her final album

Lesego Chopape

I have experienced Simphiwe Dana’s compelling presence on stage many times. Not to say that was her entire personality — no, Dana is much more.

But there are only a few people we meet in life, from close or from a distance, and can instantly tell — they do not walk alone.

Their spirit is that of our forefathers. It carries weight and respect. It announces itself quietly, with humility, yet with a magnitude impossible to ignore.

Now imagine having those thoughts first thing on a Monday morning. My nerves were jittering so intensely, I forgot to have breakfast. It’s not every day that one gets to speak to a voice that has held us through joy, through protest, through heartbreak and healing.

At 10am sharp, as agreed with her PR person, I dialled her number. No answer. I stared at the phone. What now? Before I could decide my next move, the phone rang. Dana.

“I am so sorry I missed your call; I was just making breakfast,” she said, her voice as textured and calm as I had remembered it from countless interviews and performances.

“Do you want a few minutes to eat? I also haven’t had breakfast yet,” I offered.

“Perfect,” she responded. “Go make food and a cup of tea or coffee and I will call you back in a few,” she said.

I had to pause. Am I about to have a telephonic breakfast with Simphiwe Dana? Surely, I have lived a full life.

She called me back in 10 minutes. Coffee on her end. Rooibos on mine. What followed was an encounter with a soul who has been documenting the collective inner life of a nation for over two decades.

Dana’s debut album *Zandisile*, released in 2004, earned her instant acclaim and multiple South African Music Awards (Samas).

I was so young but I still remember how *Ndiredi* played on every radio station and on every music show on TV like an anthem. It was a moment — a feeling. Maybe I didn’t understand it fully then but I felt it. We all did.

Dana has released a string of powerful and genre-defying albums. From *One Love Movement on Bantu Biko Street* (2006), a bold and unapologetic celebration of black consciousness, to *Kulture Noir* (2010), which won her Best Female Artist and Best Contemporary Jazz Album at the Samas, Dana has always fused the traditional with the contemporary, the spiritual with the political.

Her 2014 album *Firebrand* further cemented her place as a torchbearer of artistic activism, and in 2021, she offered *Bamako*, an emotionally rich and musically layered project that she partly recorded in Mali.

Over 20 years since then. A number so large, even Dana herself marvels at it.

“I am really not good at celebrating myself,” she tells me. “I always feel quite awkward about it. But this one feels different. I am giving back to a community that has given me so much for two decades.

“The response from them is thankfulness — and actually, I am the one who is thankful.”

Dana will be celebrating her career at the Baxter Theatre Concert Hall, in Cape Town, on Friday 27 and Saturday 28 June.

This reciprocity between her and her listeners is sacred, almost spiritual. There is something in her tone that suggests gratitude but not in the usual platitudinal way. It’s embodied.

“Something that is rare in life is that someone can live off doing something that they love. I am one such person. That has been given to me by people who listen to my work.”

Reflecting on *Zandisile*, she tells me: “When I listen to *Zandisile* today I think to myself, ‘I was so young and wide-eyed.’ I feel like I have always been old — and I am not talking about age.

“In many ways, I feel like I have not changed much from that young girl. I am not as naive



Unknown place: Simphiwe Dana says that the album she is working on could be the final one she writes but that she will carry on performing and collaborating.

anymore but the old soul thing has made me remain the same.”

That old soul presence — it is something you feel when Dana walks into a room or when her voice travels through speakers and enters you. She is not tethered to the conventional measurement of age. She is measured in spirit.

“Now I am understanding why the likes of Bra Hugh Masekela were so youthful,” she says. “Because I think he carried the same spirit.”

Dana is working on a new album — one she feels might be her final one.

“This could possibly be my last album that I write,” she says. “It is treating me differently. Not musically, but it is pushing me into an unknown place.”

Not a statement of resignation, but of transformation: “There is nothing to be sad about. I will still be performing and collaborating. There is so much I still could do.

“The thing about writing is that you usually have to take time away — and with me, it happens to be at least three years. It is very taxing on the mind and spirit. I feel like it takes years off my life ... Writing is not for the weak.”

She says this not with despair, but with an honesty that has long been her signature. Writing, for Dana, is not just creative — it is ritual. It demands from her.

Dana’s work has always carried a sharp socio-political consciousness. Her lyrics live in the hearts of the people. They ask, they challenge, they comfort, they uplift.

“As artists, we are watchers and observers. I have gone through many phases and I felt every phase that we have gone through as a country. As they say, the personal is the political.”

The music is her lens.

“I try to understand why people do the things that they do in power. I try to understand if there is something that they are seeing that I am not seeing and I do that through the music.

“I am listening to the people and probing things that they care about. I literally have my ear on the ground.”

She pauses.

“I write about things that bother me. The state of the country right now is something that is always on my mind. Right now, I am trying to understand who we have become and who we will be in the future.”

And always, in true Dana fashion, she adds: “Even when things are dire, there is hope.”

Dana’s music is often described as spiritual. It is not just because of the sonic choices or the lyrical content. It is because she is a messenger.

“Music is from our ancestors. I am a conduit. And I must honour my gift. I have to be respon-

sible for my gift and take care of that gift by taking care of myself.”

Twenty years on, I ask her which songs from her rich discography still move her as much as they’ve moved us.

“Songs like *Nzinga* — singing that song live definitely moves me. It’s an adaptation of a Jonas Gwangwa song called *Flowers of the Nation*. I used to hear him perform it live. I would rush out and listen with my hands in the air. For me, that song is church. It is *Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika*.”

She also mentions *Lakutshon’ ilanga*, *Mayime* and *Inkwenkwezi*.

And then I ask what she would tell her younger self — Simphiwe at 24, wide-eyed, dropping *Zandisile* into the world.

“I would tell her to go to therapy and deal with your childhood trauma. Don’t use it as some kind of fact of your story season. Deal with your trauma as soon as possible.”

My rooibos has gone cold. I imagine her coffee has, too. But her voice still lingers — clear, intentional, present.

Simphiwe Dana is not just a singer. She is a witness. A question. A balm. A voice from the sacred hills. And if this next album is her last, we must receive it not with sorrow but reverence.

She is not done. Not by a long stretch.

Friday

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20 years of
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