



IDC and dodgy BEE deal



The sound of freedom is not silence



Freedom to loot: Inside the Madlanga Commission



KZN loses support for democracy




A stamp for Mama Winnie







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IN BRIEF



Fatal: Justin Fairfax allegedly shot his wife Cerina and then himself. Photo: Facebook

Domestic tragedy

A man who served as the former deputy governor of Virginia in the US, was found dead alongside his wife at their home in Virginia in a case that authorities believe was a murder-suicide, the BBC reports.

Police discovered the bodies of Justin and Cerina Fairfax, last Thursday after their son called emergency services and reported that his mother had been stabbed. Both their teenage children were in the house when their father reportedly shot their mother several times before turning the gun on himself.

County police chief Kevin Davis said the incident occurred amid marital problems and a hostile divorce. Justin had also faced sexual abuse allegations, which he denied, during his tenure as governor between 2018 and 2022.

Facing the past

An 86-year-old French man has apologised for his family's ties to the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, making him the first person in France to do so, Reuters reports.

Pierre Guillon de Prince issued the apology alongside Dieudonné Boutrin, 61, who works with Guillon de Prince at Coque Nomade-Fraternité, an organisation aimed at raising awareness around slavery. Guillon de Prince's family were shipowners in Nantes and were responsible for shipping 4 500 people as slaves.

He urged other French families to follow in his footsteps and apologise for past injustices, while calling for the state to address the slave trade through an apology and reparations.

"Faced with the rise of racism in our society, I felt a responsibility not to let this past be erased," Guillon de Prince said before the inauguration of an 18m replica ship mast that serves as a symbol of humanity.

His speech follows apologies and commitments to repair the damaging legacy of slavery from families in Britain and elsewhere. France has yet to issue an apology for its involvement in the slave trade and was one of many Western countries that abstained from an Africa-led resolution declaring slavery "the gravest crime against humanity" at the UN last month.

Robots in combat

Last summer, Russian soldiers surrendered to robots operated by a Ukrainian robotics unit, a commander of the unit told CNN.

Mykola "Makar" Zinkevych, the commander who led the mission, said the event marked the first time robots took in prisoners without the presence of human soldiers. Remotely controlled vehicles and ground robotic systems were initially used to rescue casualties but the

NUMBERS OF THE WEEK



1000

The number of employees dismissed by an outsourcing company contracted by Meta in Kenya, *The Guardian* reports. Meta contracted Sama, a Nairobi-based company for content moderation and AI training. Last month, Kenyan workers complained about having to view disturbing, private scenes filmed by Meta AI smart glass wearers. In 2024, 140 workers launched a civil lawsuit, alleging PTSD, anxiety and depression from having to watch unsettling content. Meta said it had terminated its relationship with Sama because it had failed to meet its standards.



\$906K

The amount of money that a life jacket worn by a person who survived the sinking of the Titanic was sold for last week Saturday. The item was sold by Henry Aldridge & Sons in Britain to the Titanic Museum and Attraction in Tennessee, US, *UPI* reports. First-class passenger, Laura Mabel Francatelli, wore the life jacket while her husband guided people into a lifeboat as the ship sank. Despite carrying space for 40 people, the boat ultimately only carried 12.



56

The number of bodies found dumped at a cemetery in the Caribbean nation of Trinidad and Tobago, *Al Jazeera* reports. The bodies, found in the town of Cumuto, 40 kilometres away from the capital, Port of Spain, included 50 infants, four adult males and two females. All of the adults corpses had identification tags typically used in morgues. Police suspect the incident may be a case of the unlawful disposal of unclaimed bodies, though investigations remain ongoing.



76

The age at which actor Cynthia Philisiwe Shange died in a KwaZulu-Natal hospital after an illness. Shange was born on 27 July 1949 in Lamontville, Durban. In 1972, she became the first black woman to represent South Africa in the prestigious Miss World beauty pageant, coming in fifth place. She was an actor known for *Isivumelwano*, *u'Deliwe*, *Inkedama*, *Shaka Zulu* and *Muvhango* amongst others.

\$150 

The amount of money it will cost World Cup fans for a round-trip train ride between New York and MetLife Stadium in New Jersey, where eight matches, including the final, will be hosted. The fee is typically \$12.90 (R211). New Jersey's governor, Mikie Sherrill, blamed FIFA and argued that the state had to cover the costs of security for commuting fans while FIFA profits billions. FIFA's response contended for free transportation for fans and cited the complimentary rides passengers received at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, *France24* reports.

Graphic: BUSI LETHOLE Compiled by: MAMAPUTLE BOIKANYO

progression of Russia's war with Ukraine has accelerated technological advancements for use in combat.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky highlighted his country's achievements in military technology during a speech last week, in which he boasted of 22 000 missions conducted by robots in the past three months.

"Lives were saved more than 22 000 times when a robot went into the most dangerous areas instead of a warrior," Zelensky said.

Ukraine's defence minister, Mykhailo Fedorov, hopes to increase developments and "force Russia into peace" by using technology and data in its defence and offensive tactics.

Death's recipe

Some of the murder charges against a Canadian chef, who is accused of selling poisonous substances to people intending to end their lives, will be dropped in exchange for a plea deal, Sky News reports.

Kenneth Law, 60, a chef at a five-star restaurant in Toronto, used multiple websites to sell lethal substances to people across the world.

He allegedly sent 1 200 packages to more than 40 countries, including the UK and Italy.

The chef agreed to plead guilty to counselling or aiding suicide and will, in turn, have 14 of his murder charges dropped. The National Crime Agency continues to investigate 109 deaths linked to his sales on the online platforms.

Although assisted death is legal for adults



Assisted death: Kenneth Law sold poison to people wanting to die. Photo: Regional Police

suffering from an illness, disease or disability in Canada, people seeking to die by suicide must ask for assistance from a physician.

Musical dead-end

Music producer and rapper Kanye West, aka Ye, was seen leaving the building of a prominent Jewish human rights organisations after several of his concerts were cancelled over the anti-Semitic remarks he made in the past.

Entertainment publication *Rolling Out* reports that he avoided answering questions from the media about his visit to the Simon Wiesenthal Centre in California.

Despite having apologised for his anti-Semitic comments, governments, promoters and concert organisers remained firm in their refusal to host concerts featuring West.

Among his setbacks is his removal from the Wireless Festival line-up after the UK banned him from entering the country, the cancellation of his June concert in Poland — backed by public officials who denounced his sales of merchandise bearing Nazi symbols — and the postponement of a concert in France by organisers with no rescheduled date. The Swiss football club FC Basel also cancelled a West concert, saying his views went against their values.

A win for women

A Nigerian scientist has been named the winner of the global Goldman Environmental Prize for her work leading community projects to prevent wildfires that endanger short-tailed roundlead bats in Nigeria, the BBC reports.

Iroko Tanshi spotted the endangered bat, found in the Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary in south-eastern Nigeria, almost 50 years after it had last been sighted. Tanshi identified human-induced wildfires as the main threat to the bats' survival and launched educational campaigns to inform people of the significance of the bat species to nature.

With a particular focus on children, Tanshi's

campaign focused on the bats' contribution to ecosystems, which involves pollinating plants and dispersing seeds such as those of the shea tree from which shea butter is made. She tapped into people's concerns about the danger and destruction of wildfires and galvanised community fire brigades to curb them.

Her initiative prevented wildfires in and around the 10 000 hectare Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary between 2022 and May 2025, according to the global Goldman Environmental Prize. For the first time, all six winners of the prize were women.

A father's folly

The father of the late singer Amy Winehouse has lost a high court claim against his daughter's friends, whom he accused of concealing items previously owned by the pop star and profiting from them through auctions, *The Guardian* reports.

Winehouse's stylist, Naomi Parry and her friend Catriona Gourlay, sold dozens of items at auctions in the US in 2021 and 2023. The catalogue had 834 items and raised \$1.4 million (about R23m), with 30% of the profits transferred to the Amy Winehouse Foundation.

Mitch Winehouse, who is the administrator of Amy's estate, said he thought the profits from the auction would be split between himself, Amy's mother and the foundation.

The deputy high court judge, Sarah Clarke KC, acknowledged the father's fears of people exploiting Amy's legacy but highlighted the mass of wealth Mitch acquired from her estate. Ruling in favour of the defendants, she found that Parry and Gourlay did not conceal items from Mitch and that he failed to verify whether he had any valid claim to the disputed items.

Tainted baby foods

SPAR supermarkets in Austria have removed the products of a brand of organic baby foods after investigations revealed the presence of rat poison, Reuters reports.

Police in Burgenland said a jar of carrot and potato baby food by the brand HiPP was reported by a customer and sent for testing, which showed that it had been contaminated.

On Saturday, the company confirmed that its HiPP Vegetable Carrot with Potato jars might have been tampered with. Affected products, police said, were marked with red stickers at the bottom of the jar, had damaged, opened or had lids missing a safety seal. They also had an unusual smell.

The risk also affected other countries like the Czech Republic and Slovakia. HiPP confirmed that both countries had products contaminated with rat poison. — *Mamaputle Boikanyo*

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The sound of freedom is not silence

Leaving the township can change your surroundings but unlearning the fear it taught your body is where the real work of freedom begins

Lesego Chepape

When we left Tembisa last year, we thought we were leaving more than just a place. We thought we were stepping into something lighter, something safer, something closer to what people call freedom.

But freedom, it turns out, is not always a clean break. Sometimes it follows you, sits beside you in the silence, asks you questions you are not ready to answer.

In Tembisa, silence did not exist. Life announced itself constantly. Our house stood on a main road, a thoroughfare of movement, survival, urgency. Just down the road, the tavern pulsed with music, laughter and sometimes violence. Up the road, Madelakufa stretched out, an informal settlement alive with its own rhythms, its own negotiations with dignity and survival.

To get anywhere, people had to pass our house. We lived inside the movement of others.

At 3am, the first taxi would arrive, a low rumble that signalled the beginning of the day for those chasing work before sunrise. That sound was as dependable as a clock. It was how the body learnt time.

Gunshots were less predictable. Sometimes distant, sometimes so close they tore through sleep and sent us to the floor, instinctively folding ourselves into safety.

There were nights when lovers fought their way past our gate, their arguments stretching down the road until their voices dissolved into the dark. Even in rest, there was no real rest. The body remained alert, coiled, listening.

This is what it means to grow up in many townships, not just to witness instability but to internalise it. To have your nervous system shaped by unpredictability. To understand,



Angst: ANC heavyweight Tokyo Sexwale visiting a township. For those who remain in the townships, freedom is imagined as elsewhere but leaving does not automatically translate to being free. Photo: Delwyn Verasamy

long before you have the language for it, that safety is temporary, negotiated, fragile.

And then, one day, you leave.

Leaving is often framed as success. It is spoken about in the language of escape — you made it out. You moved up. You found something better. In many ways, that is true.

The new neighbourhood offered things that once felt distant: space, stillness, the absence of constant threat. There were no taxis announcing the morning, no tavern spilling noise into the night, no gunshots puncturing sleep.

But what no one prepares you for is what happens when the noise disappears. The quiet was immediate, almost aggressive. It pressed in on us. For the first time, there was nothing to drown out our thoughts.

No external chaos to distract from the internal one. We could hear ourselves think deeply, painfully, without interruption. In the stillness, something began to surface. Not peace, not immediately. But memory. Tension. Questions about who we had become because of where we had been.

Freedom, in that moment, did not feel like relief. It felt like exposure.

There is a misconception that once you leave a place marked by hardship, you also leave the effects of that hardship. But trauma does not obey geography. It travels. It embeds itself

in the body, in the way you respond to sound, to silence, to sudden movement. It lives in the reflex that tells you to switch off the lights when you hear something unfamiliar at night. It lives in the instinct to gather everyone into one room, to make yourselves small, to wait.

That night, when we heard gunshots in the distance, everything we had carried with us rose to the surface. We moved without speaking, turning off lights, finding each other in the dark, hearts beating in sync with an old fear. For a moment, it was as if we had never left.

Then my father spoke, gently cutting through the panic: people in this area hunt at night. There is nothing to fear. Nothing to fear.

It is a simple sentence. But it landed with complexity. What does it mean to be told that there is nothing to fear when your body has been trained otherwise? When fear has been a form of protection, a necessary awareness that keeps you alive?

This is the paradox of freedom for many who leave the townships. You arrive in spaces that are objectively safer but your internal world has not yet caught up. Your body does not immediately trust this new reality. It takes time, sometimes years to unlearn the constant vigilance. And even then, it never disappears.

For those who remain in the townships, freedom is often imagined as elsewhere. It is the dream of leaving, of finding a place where sleep is uninterrupted, where mornings are not announced by urgency, where the soundscape is not dictated by survival. It is a valid dream, shaped by real conditions. What is often left out of the narrative is the cost of carrying the environment in yourself.

Leaving does not automatically translate to being free.

Freedom, in its truest sense, is not just about physical relocation. It is about the ability to exist without the constant anticipation of harm. It is about a nervous system that can rest. It is about feeling safe enough to be still. For many, that kind of freedom is not granted simply by moving to a different neighbourhood.

There is also a quiet grief that accompanies leaving. A recognition that the place you come from, with all its difficulty, also held community, familiarity and a shared understanding of how to navigate the world. In the new space, that understanding is not always present. The silence can feel isolating. The absence of noise can feel like the absence of life.

You find yourself in between worlds. No longer belonging to the chaos you left but not at ease in the calm you have entered. You carry both. The memory of sirens and taxis, of gunshots and late-night

arguments, sits alongside the unfamiliar quiet of suburban streets. Somewhere in the overlap, you try to define what freedom means for you.

Perhaps freedom is not a destination but a process.

It is the slow work of teaching your body that it is safe to rest. It is the conscious unlearning of hypervigilance, even as you acknowledge why it existed in the first place. It is allowing yourself to sit in silence without immediately filling it with fear. It is recognising that while your past has shaped you, it does not have to confine you.

It is also, importantly, a collective question. Because as long as townships remain spaces where rest is a luxury, where safety is inconsistent, the idea of freedom will continue to be unevenly distributed. The burden should not be on individuals to escape in order to experience peace. Freedom should not require departure.

For those who remain, freedom might look like small, daily acts of resilience — creating moments of joy within constrained circumstances, building community in the face of instability, finding ways to rest even when rest is interrupted. These are not insignificant. They are forms of resistance, of survival, of insisting on humanity despite the conditions.

For those who leave, freedom is often more complicated. It requires confronting the ways in which trauma lingers, the ways in which the body remembers even when the environment has changed. It asks for patience, for compassion towards oneself, for an understanding that healing is not immediate.

That night, after my father explained the sound of gunshots, we slowly returned to our rooms. The lights came back on. The house settled. But something had shifted. We had been reminded that while our surroundings had changed, we were in the process of changing with them.

Freedom, then, is not just about where you are. It is about what you carry and what you are willing to unpack. It is about learning, over time, that silence does not have to mean danger. That quiet can be a form of safety, not a prelude to harm. That rest is not something you have to earn through exhaustion or vigilance but something you deserve.

And maybe, one day, the sound of nothing will no longer feel like a confrontation. It will feel like peace.

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Nkateko Joseph Mabasa

The contrast between South Africa's high levels of poverty and unemployment, alongside persistent allegations of corruption and graft, raises renewed questions about whether this is the freedom that was fought for.

A Competition Commission report on the cost of living found that utilities, food and education, continues to rise faster than general inflation, placing significant strain on households.

While commissions of inquiry are often criticised for failing to result in prosecutions, the Madlanga commission has nevertheless exposed testimony, suggesting that as the majority struggle, a small number of officials have benefited from public sector corruption.

Although KwaZulu-Natal Police Commissioner Nhlanhla Mkhwanazi's 6 July explosive media briefing focused on the alleged unlawful disbandment of the political killings task team, the Madlanga commission has since heard further testimony pointing to irregular procurement processes in metropolitan police departments.

At the centre of the allegations are senior police officials and municipal employees accused of working with criminal cartels to manipulate tender bid applications and interfere with case dockets. In some cases, officials found to have misconducted themselves face lengthy suspensions with full pay.

This week, suspended Sedibeng deputy district police commissioner Mbangwa Nkhwashu denied protecting Johannesburg Central Police Station detective Pule Tau from arrest in the 17 April 2024 assassination of Vereeniging engineer and alleged whistleblower, Armand Swart.

Nkhwashu told the commission that he had not taken Swart's murder docket from investigating officers, Witness A and Witness B, and that while he had requested a wide-scale docket report, he had specifically refused Swart's docket.

"I immediately called witness B and informed her that I actually do not want that docket," said Nkhwashu.

Swart's murder investigation in a R1.2 million Transnet tender scandal led to the involvement of the KwaZulu-Natal-based political killings task team, which was subsequently disbanded on 31 December 2024 while closing in on criminal cartels.

The Sedibeng deputy district commissioner was further accused of relaying confidential police information to one of the accused in Swart's case, Katiso Molefe, who is allegedly a leader within the Big Five cartel and co-accused alongside Vusumuzi "Cat" Matlala.

It was at Molefe's residence on 21 July 2024, when the Gauteng Counter-Intelligence Operation clashed with the Hawks, during which a helicopter interrupted a search and seizure operation.

"I would never put my 39-year career and my freedom at risk for a man I had just met, who was married to my sister-in-law," he said.

Swart's docket eventually landed with the political killings task team, which jointly investigated the case with the Gauteng Counter-Intelligence Operation. The docket formed part of the 121 removed from the unit by Deputy National Police Commissioner Shadrack Sibiya.

This came after suspended Police Minister Senzo Mchunu sent a letter to "immediately disband" the task team to the National Police Commissioner Fannie Masemola via WhatsApp.

Explosive testimony before the Madlanga Commission has laid bare allegations of cartel-linked corruption involving senior police officials and municipal departments, raising fresh questions about procurement processes, criminal accountability and governance in South Africa's law enforcement system



Dubious family relations: Suspended Sedibeng Deputy District Police commissioner Mbangwa Nkhwashu. Photo: Screenshot

From freedom to looting

'I would never put my 39-year career and my freedom at risk for a man I had just met, who was married to my sister-in-law'

Sibiya has denied any involvement with cartels and said he had been implementing the directive to disband the task team as the commissioner in charge of detective services.

However, Mchunu has said his directive made no reference to case dockets and that it was based on a police research study recommending the task team's disbandment.

Mchunu has also argued that he was the first to alert Masemola to alleged irregularities in a R360 million Tshwane District contract awarded to Matlala's company, Medicare24.

Twelve police officials, three company directors and police commissioner Masemola have so far been implicated and charged for the irregular contract.

Parliament's police portfolio members have called on President Cyril Ramaphosa to suspend Masemola, while the police commissioner indicated his charges are part of a 'fight back campaign' by the cartels

and those implicated.

Tshwane's chief financial officer, Gareth Mnisi, evaded incriminating questions at the Madlanga commission this week and denied allegations that Sergeant Fannie Nkosi instructed him to prioritise certain companies for a R2.9 billion outsourced security contract.

Nkosi — previously Witness F — has been a key witness at the commission, accused of facilitating numerous meetings between Matlala and high-ranking police officials. He has told the commission that Sibiya and Matlala would regularly send each other messages via WhatsApp.

While on the stand, Mnisi was adamant that he maintained a close friendship with Nkosi and that the police sergeant had only sent him a list of security companies to check whether they were compliant with municipal bid specifications.

The commissioners were dubious about Mnisi's explanation that he never shared confidential documents with Nkosi, who is not an employee of the Tshwane municipality.

Of particular interest to Nkosi was a legal dispute in R2 million unpaid invoices to Gubis 85 security company, a competitor to Ngaphesheya Construction and Projects, a company owned by Nkosi's brother.

Mnisi said Nkosi overheard a call while they were together, in which a Gubis 85 director threatened legal action for unpaid services.

"Following the call, sergeant Nkosi

clearly, as I discovered subsequently, took it upon himself to assist as he knew Deputy Chief Mr Umashi Dlamini of the TMPD [Tshwane Metropolitan Police Department]," he said.

Gubis 85, a long-standing service provider to Tshwane's water and sanitation business unit, protected the city's water infrastructure. Its contract was contested upon renewal in a bid process involving Nkosi's brother's company, Ngaphesheya.

"While the matter was ongoing, it was subsequently confirmed that the outstanding invoices related to security services had been commissioned on an ad hoc basis by the city's group water and sanitation business unit.

"It was this action that gave rise to the confusion and explains why TMPD was unable to assume responsibility for the outstanding invoices. In fact, there was a standoff regarding who was responsible for payment of the invoices," said Tshwane CFO Mnisi.

Lebogang Phiri, a suspended TMPD inspector of the road policing division, told the commission that the water and sanitation unit specifically requested the use of Gubis 85 as they were already using their services.

Phiri said the city's water and sanitation unit "refused to engage different service providers" and cited budgetary and administrative concerns. Phiri noted that Gubis 85 rendered R2 million of security services to the municipal department.

"Furthermore, the water and sanitation department had already made promises to Gubis 85 that they would commence work on the night of 31 December 2024. Gubis 85 personnel were essentially working and deployed to sites prior to me issuing the official deployment letter."

Phiri was questioned about a R1.4 million Road Accident Fund (RAF) payment to his account in December 2024 and a subsequent transfer to multiple individuals. He said that after receiving the RAF settlement, he started a loan business for friends and acquaintances.

Alongside Tshwane, the Ekurhuleni metropolitan police department (EMPD) has also been implicated in the rampant graft.

Suspended EMPD deputy chief Julius Mkhwanazi, notorious for allowing the fitment of blue-lights on Matlala's private company vehicles, was arrested on fraud and corruption charges with suspended Ekurhuleni city manager Kagiso Lerutla.

Mkhwanazi denied allegations of running a "rogue unit", which is accused of kidnapping EMPD spokesperson Kalebogile Thepa and the disappearance of R14 million in precious lithium rocks confiscated at a Rosebank raid.

Testimony has highlighted alleged irregular tender procurement, interference in case dockets and prolonged suspensions, suggesting systemic weaknesses in policing and municipal governance.

How IDC breached own governance

Powerful executive and dismissed employee were central players in the funding of dodgy BEE consortium

Hasina Kathrada and Brian Sokutu

A senior executive alleged to wield significant authority at the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) and his colleague facing charges of financial misconduct played a key role in ensuring that Tinley Leisure Women (TLWI) Investments, a questionable black empowerment consortium got a slice of the R2.1 billion Tinley Leisure Club Med project.

Bongani Miya, the IDC Divisional Executive for Agro-Industries and Services Sectors and Ken Ogwang, a senior deal maker who has since been dismissed, allegedly played critical roles in ensuring that TLWI was parachuted late into the transaction.

An audit report commissioned by the IDC confirms that its R130 million financial support to TLWI to acquire a 14% BEE equity in the Tinley Leisure Club Med project was tabled before the board audit committee (BIC) for review, where questions regarding the composition of the empowerment consortia, potential conflict of interest and the inclusion of a domestic politically exposed person (DPEP) were flagged.

A project of the Tinley Club Med size creates opportunities for organisations like the IDC to identify and provide finance to rural based community trusts and Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) consortia yet the IDC allegedly parachuted TLWI which is a narrow based Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) group made of five individuals as its empowerment partners in this project.

Did the IDC flout its own governance processes to create room for TLWI? Pressed to explain how it



Linkman: Bongani Miya (inset) was allegedly instrumental in getting TLWI onboard but he now curiously defers specific questions to his employer. Photos: File/IDC

chose TLWI as its preferred empowerment partner, the IDC proffered vague explanations around the adequacy of its governance processes as a basis for its decisions.

Zibusiso Kganyago, the spouse of the Reserve Bank Governor, is the biggest shareholder in TLWI with a 75% stake with the remainder shared among Mpho Hlahla, Nomagugu Manci and Thobile Ngcobo.

According to findings of the audit report, the identity of the members of the TLWI consortium and aspects of the DPEP relationship were not fully disclosed to relevant approval committees at the IDC in the initial submission of the application for finance and required further clarification during subsequent committee deliberations.

Further to these concerns, compliance documentation classified this transaction as carrying an elevated

money-laundering, terrorism-financing and reputational risk to the IDC.

Despite the IDC's stone cold attempt to answer specific questions, serious questions remain unanswered.

How did they ignore concerns and warnings raised by their own internal audit department regarding Ogwang's role in this transaction and why did they disregard the risks and concerns flagged by relevant committees? Asked for comment on his role in the transaction, Miya deferred specific questions to his employer but confirmed that this matter was subject of a board inquiry.

"The matter was the subject of a board inquiry and the board has been provided with a report that addresses all the questions that have been raised," said Miya, who advised

us to engage him through the IDC's official communication channels.

Ogwang could not be reached for comment despite repeated calls to his phone. However, the revelations of a board-level enquiry continue to raise further governance concerns on how the state-owned financier chose TLWI as its empowerment partner in the R2.1 billion tourism development on KwaZulu-Natal's north coast, which is backed by the IDC alongside Absa and African Bank.

In response to our questions regarding several governance lapses identified in the transaction by its committees, the IDC did not respond to specific questions on the scope, timing or findings of any such inquiry, nor whether any review had been undertaken following concerns raised on the risks posed by TLWI which was selected as the empowerment partner.

As previously reported by the *Mail & Guardian*, internal documentation shows that the deal was considered by the IDC's Board Investment Committee and referred to the Board Social and Ethics Committee after concerns were raised about governance processes, due diligence and the structuring of the B-BBEE component.

These concerns included the timing of the introduction of the B-BBEE partner into the consortium and whether sufficient due diligence had been conducted prior to approval.

The IDC has maintained that its investment decisions are guided by established governance and compliance frameworks, but has not publicly addressed the specific issues recorded in its internal processes or explained how they were resolved.

There are also swirling questions around the IDC funding a music concert while the company is closing down companies in distress.

In 2024, the IDC provided R70 million to a concert promotions company involved in staging the Hello Neighbour concert. The investment in this transaction was written off without recovery. The deal team that led this transaction was left off the hook despite an Internal Audit report confirming serious lapses in the due diligence process of this transaction.

A former IDC employee who declined to be named told the *Mail & Guardian* that the services department was the source for most questionable transactions in the company. The Kivu boat is another example of transactions that fell outside of the IDC mandate but were allegedly pushed at the instigation of Miya.

"It's like all transactions from that department are structured to fail but deal makers are afraid to make independent decisions for fear of punishment from their bosses.

"There could be many but I know of two heads of department that were dismissed in the past two years for rejecting questionable business applications. "But the question you ought to ask is, how do these deals even end up at committee stage. Who approves them," said the source.

After two weeks of avoiding addressing questions on the Tinley Leisure/Club Med transaction, the IDC this week sent us responses through its spokesperson, Tshepo Ramodibe:

The Industrial Development Corporation recognises the public interest in this project. However, it is important to note that the IDC operates within strict legal, governance and confidentiality frameworks, which limit the extent to which individual roles, internal deliberations and commercially sensitive information can be disclosed publicly. Against that background, the corporation provides clarification:

1. Role in the transaction

The IDC's role in the Tinley Leisure/Club Med transaction is that of a funding partner and shareholder. The transaction was assessed and supported through the IDC's standard credit, legal and governance processes and approved funding instruments were implemented through executed legal agreements.

2. Introduction of the broad-based BEE partner

BEE participation formed part of the transaction structure assessed through the IDC's governance processes and reflected in the final approved and executed funding framework. The IDC does not comment publicly on who introduced specific partners or on private negotiations between consortium members, as these are commercially sensitive and involve third-party confidentiality.

3. Due diligence on the BEE partner

All investment decisions, including BEE participation, are subject to the IDC's standard due-diligence, credit, legal and governance approval processes, in line with applicable law and IDC policy. Counterparty-specific due-diligence findings are not dis-

closed publicly.

4. Board-level disclosure and sequencing

We do not provide public commentary on internal board deliberations, records or sequencing. In large project-finance transactions, transaction structures may evolve during negotiations and document finalisation. The IDC's governance processes are designed to ensure that final approvals and executed legal agreements reflect the definitive transaction structure.

5. Junior loan structure for the 14% BBEE shareholding

The junior loan structure was designed to facilitate transformation within a large project-financed development while appropriately managing risk through a defined cash-flow and security framework. This approach is a recognised mecha-

nism in large, capital-intensive infrastructure projects and was evaluated and approved as part of the overall transaction structure. The IDC has been a key funder of transformation through similar funding structures for decades.

6. Internal concerns and how they were addressed

As with many complex transactions, implementation matters may arise. Such matters are addressed through the IDC's established governance, risk and control processes. The IDC does not comment publicly on internal processes.

7. Claims of late partner introduction or procedural breaches

We do not accept the premise that consortium participation or transformation mechanisms were managed outside its governance processes. These aspects were assessed through the IDC's

formal approval and governance structures.

8. Alleged disputes within the consortium

The IDC does not comment on commercial arrangements or any disputes, if any, between private consortium partners. Such matters are governed by contractual agreements.

9. Role in addressing concerns raised by funders or partners

Where concerns arise that affect the IDC's rights or obligations as a funder or shareholder, they are addressed through established contractual and governance processes, consistent with the IDC's oversight role.

10. Governance and process

The IDC remains committed to strong governance, accountability and ethical conduct. Where concerns are raised, they are dealt with through established institutional processes, governed by policy and, where appropriate, supported by independent mechanisms. The IDC cannot disclose confidential or commercially sensitive information publicly.

The IDC responds

The death of Spokes Sithole at 108 exposes the broken promise of one of South Africa's largest land restitution settlements, where freedom and land ownership have not translated into lasting prosperity for many beneficiaries



Unresolved: Spokes Sithole, who was born in the same year as Nelson Mandela, 1918, is one of the original claimants in the R1 billion Mala Mala land claim. He died at 108. Photos: Lucas Ledwaba

Fruit of freedom withers under broken land deal

Lucas Ledwaba

Elder citizen Spokes Sithole, who was instrumental in securing the historic R1 billion Mala Mala land claim settlement, went to his grave with a broken heart last week. He was 108.

Tatana Spokes, who was born in 1918 – the same year as Nelson Mandela – was among the last remaining elders who helped the N'wandlamwahri community successfully claim their ancestral land through the land restitution process.

Well into his 80s, he defied old age, aching limbs and a fading memory to help the community through the stringent verification process of the Commission for Restitution of Land Rights.

Without any formal education, he relied on the power of memory, pointing out significant landmarks, including graves and sites where homesteads and cattle kraals once stood before the community was evicted from their land in the 1950s.

He also spent hours and days testifying and being cross-examined by hardened lawyers in the Land Claims Court as the community fought for the restoration of their land rights.

Sithole was born on land that forms parts of the luxury Mala Mala and Sabi Sands game reserves, where a night's stay can cost up to R35 000 a person.

In his lifetime, working as a chef and labourer at Londolozi Game Reserve, Sithole never saw that kind of money and spent much of his life living hand to mouth after the destruction of the community's self-sustaining agrarian economy.

On 9 January 2014, Sithole was among the throngs of people who gathered in a field in Lilydale village in Mpumalanga, to witness then-president Jacob Zuma preside over the ceremonial handover of land back to the N'wandlamhari Communal Property Association (NCPA).

"May you enjoy much prosperity and success from this powerful resource and may you ensure that it remains productive," Zuma told the community.

However, Sithole and many of the

claimants lamented that success and prosperity resulting from the deal remained a pipe dream. Although the land remains productive, operating as the Mala Mala Game Reserve, the settlement has been beset by mounting problems that has seen few reap the rewards of the deal.

This has resulted in endless court battles pitting different factions from the NCPA, which was elected as custodians of the land deal settlement, against one another.

Under the settlement, community members are set to benefit from a share scheme, education and empowerment bursaries. But squabbles about the veracity of beneficiaries and mismanagement of the NCPA have put paid to the dreams.

The NCPA, which is at the centre of a battle for control among various parties, is beset by accusations and allegations of corruption by the executive, amounting to millions of rand, nepotism, a lack of transparency and accountability to its members.

It is also accused of failing to hold annual general meetings and elections in line with legislation.

Communal property associations (CPAs) are entities set up to manage land on behalf of beneficiaries of land restitution and reform communities. They are required, under sections of the Communal Properties Act 28 of 1996, to hold at least one general meeting, compile annual financial statements, report on land transactions, update membership every year and submit their annual report to the director-general of the department of agriculture, land reform and rural development.

In its 2023/24 annual report, the department notes that there were 1 742 registered CPAs nationally. However, "during the 2022/23 reporting period, 75% of the registered CPAs were non-compliant with the provisions of Section 11 and Regulation 8 of the Act, even though some were functional during this period, 82% were non-compliant".

The NCPA, which has



Mala Mala land claimant Jonah Muhlava looks into the Sabi Sands Game Reserve from where his family was forcibly removed during apartheid.

1 439 members, has not held a general meeting since 2013 and has been flagged among the more than 1 300 non-compliant CPAs.

The Mala Mala land claim, with a settlement amount of R939 360 00, remains by far one of the most significant settlements since the passing of the Restitution of Land Rights Act 22 of 1994.

The community lodged claims against 21 properties, consisting of 63 portions, adding up to 65 000 hectares in total. Most of the land included the elite, internationally renowned, privately owned luxury Mala Mala Game Reserve, which lies in the Kruger National Park.

Five farms, consisting of nine portions and totalling 13 184ha were restored to the community. The claims were lodged by the Mavuraka and Mhlanganisweni communities. But these were later consolidated into a single claim, a newly constituted body, the N'wandlamwahri CPA.

This was done in the hope of uniting the two communities that were separated by a river before the land dispossession. But it has had the opposite effect.

The merging of the claims and creation of the NCPA has

been identified as one of the main sources of the disagreements, with members from both communities pointing accusing fingers of exclusion and favouritism at each other.

The promise of a better life brought by financial rewards from the share ownership scheme has remained a distant dream for beneficiaries like Sithole, who continued to live in poverty until his death.

When I last visited him for an interview at his home in Huntingdon, on the edges of the Mala Mala Game Reserve in November, he was sickly, depressed and losing hope.

He spoke of his doubts about ever seeing the dispute resolved in his lifetime, resigned to the fact that his time was running out.

His home lies on the boundary of the Sabi Sands and Mala Mala game reserves, where guests indulge in luxury. For Sithole, his family and many other beneficiaries of the land claim, that world remained a distant dream.

He lived in a derelict home with his wife, grandchildren and great-grandchildren who were all dependent on the couple's meagre state old age pensions.

He mentioned that he had received only a single cash payout from the share scheme, with nothing thereafter. Allegations persist that executives of the NCPA have channelled millions of rand – meant for beneficiaries – to their cronies and into

their own pockets.

Sithole had hoped the restoration of his and his community's land rights would restore their dignity and improve their standard of living. Instead, the deplorable conditions in which he lived told a bleak story of gnawing poverty and indignity.

In October last year, Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development Mzwanele Nyhontso convened a meeting of all stakeholders in the land claim in yet another bid to resolve the challenges afflicting the NCPA.

Two previous ministers, Gugile Nkwinti and Thoko Didiza, have also walked the same path but failed to make progress.

Sithole could not attend the meeting due to ill-health and the ravages of old age.

He spent his days sitting in the shade on a camping chair, nursing swollen feet and thinking of the dream deferred.

In January 2020, one of Sithole's comrades in the land claim, Ringanyiso Simon Marimane, died at his home in Ottawa village, also along the border with the Kruger National Park and Mala Mala.

He was 97. He, too, had played a key role in the verification of the land claim. One of his sons, Oscar Marimane, said his father had died heartbroken. The saga of the battles within the NCPA had weighed heavily on him.

Sithole and Marimane represent a generation that lived through the dark period of land dispossession and experienced the lasting effects of poverty and landlessness. They lived long enough to see the end of legislated apartheid and the restoration of their land rights under the democratic state.

But as South Africa celebrates Freedom Day on Monday, the fruit of freedom remains bitter for thousands like them.

It's turned out to be sour and unpalatable, courtesy of the politics of dysfunctional CPAs that have been hijacked by self-serving thugs, assisted by cunning and self-serving, politically connected crooks.

The crumbling CPAs, represent the shattered dreams of many, like the two elders.

If no drastic action, like a Madlanga commission-style inquiry into land claims is implemented soon, many more will go to their graves bitter and poor like Sithole and Marimane.

Rest in peace, Tatana Spokes.

Lucas Ledwaba is the author of *A Desire to Return to The Ruins* – a look at the contentious issues of land reform and restitution in post-apartheid South Africa.

He spent hours and days testifying and being cross-examined by hardened lawyers in the Land Claims Court as the community fought for the restoration of their land rights.

Democracy doubts deepen in KZN

Support for democracy in KwaZulu-Natal has fallen to its lowest levels in decades, with trust in government and institutions collapsing. Yet, most residents say they would vote if elections were held tomorrow

Lyse Comins

South Africa's democracy appears to be fighting for survival in KwaZulu-Natal. Recent research presented by the Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC) on Wednesday indicates a sharp decline in public support for democracy and trust in institutions.

However, despite their waning faith in democracy, most residents (76%) said they would vote if elections were held "tomorrow".

IEC chairperson Mosotho Moepya said the findings had prompted the commission to spend this week in the province to confront the "serious" and "worrying" developments in voter attitudes.

The findings form part of the Voter Participation Survey (VPS), conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council between October 2025 and February 2026.

The survey report, titled What is happening in KwaZulu-Natal? Electoral Integrity, Civic Duty and Disillusionment, is based on a nationally representative sample of people aged 16 and older, interviewed in private households across the country.

Support for democracy as the preferred system is no longer a majority view in KwaZulu-Natal, down to 43% from a high of 65% of provincial adults in 2015.

A fatalistic view that the type of political regime "does not matter" was expressed by 23% of adults; 6 percentage points higher than in 2015, which 33% believed "in some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable".

In addition, 92% of KwaZulu-Natal adults believe the country is heading in the wrong direction. Only 7% think it is going in the right direction.

Moepya said the findings raised concern about attitudes towards democratic governance.

"There are people who say: 'Even if we don't have elections, I'm happy to have someone going to public office by means that are non-democratic.' That's not okay.

"If you pause there for a moment, that should be a reason for worry. We take it seriously. That's why we're spending the week here. We are not looking the other way. It needs attention and must be resolved. We would rather fix democracy because that's what we need to do. We must have a functional democracy," he said.

IEC vice-chairperson Janet Love said the IEC had engaged stakeholders about the findings to work together to find solutions.

"It's a problem of the survival of our democracy. It's a problem of the survival of our country as a country that is not going to fall into all sorts of wrong hands," she said.

"This is something we have to work on together, whether we are from the IEC, whether we are from

different community organisations, because we can't let it happen under our watch."

IEC chief electoral officer Sy Mamabolo presented the survey findings, which revealed a significant decline in satisfaction with how democracy is working.

In 2004, 54% of respondents in KwaZulu-Natal said they were satisfied. By 2025, this had fallen to 6%, the lowest level among all provinces.

The national average stands at 17%. The commission noted that "even adults who generally support democratic values ... tended to state that their democracy was not working".

High levels of dissatisfaction with economic conditions was widespread, with 88% of adults in KwaZulu-Natal saying they were dissatisfied with the general economic situation. The number of respondents and key conditions they believe had worsened over the past five years:

- 92% said unemployment.
- 91% said the cost of living.
- 84% said corruption.
- 80% said crime and safety.
- 78% said service delivery.

Looking ahead, 92% of respondents said they believed the country was "heading in the wrong direction", while 88% said economic problems such as unemployment and inflation would probably worsen in the next five years.

Mamabolo said the survey revealed "a nexus between democratic functioning and satisfaction with the economic situation".

Decline in institutional trust

Trust in public institutions has also declined markedly in the province. Trust in national government has fallen from 65% in 2009 to 5% in 2025. Trust in parliament has declined from 51% to 7%, while trust in local government has decreased from 42% to 10%. Trust in political parties remains low at 5%, continuing a downward trend.

Trust in the IEC itself has also declined, from 74% in 2009 to 20% in 2025. This is below the national average of 32%.

However, the survey distinguishes between overall trust levels and the views of those who participated in elections. Among respondents who reported voting, 81% said they trusted the commission, compared with lower levels when all respondents are included.

Confidence in electoral processes

The survey also assessed confidence in the accuracy of vote counting and reporting during the 2024 national and provincial elections.

In KwaZulu-Natal, 38% of respondents said they were "very or somewhat confident" that counting and reporting was accurate, while 55% said they were "not at all" or "not very" confident. The national average for confidence stands at 45%.



Royal stamp: As part of its KwaZulu-Natal outreach before the local government elections, the Electoral Commission of South Africa official also engaged King Misuzulu kaZwelithini. Photos: IEC



Feedback: IEC chairperson Mosotho Moepya speaking during the week-long stakeholder engagement in KwaZulu-Natal.

The commission said that area would require additional public education, noting that understanding of the counting and results process had not previously been a specific focus.

High intention to vote

Despite the findings, the survey records a high stated intention to vote in KwaZulu-Natal.

"The question was asked: 'If local government elections were held tomorrow would you vote?' Seventy-six percent of voters in KwaZulu-Natal said they would," Mamabolo said. This is 14% points higher than in other provinces.

Mamabolo said the level of intended participation was recorded "despite all the negative assessment, despite the low trust levels".

Reasons for not voting

Among respondents who said they would not vote, the main reasons relate to political attitudes. Mamabolo said the central reason some respondents did not intend to vote was due to "political disinterest and disillusionment".

By contrast, fewer than 1% cited election management as a reason and 2% cited voter registration.

He said the findings indicated that non-participation was primarily linked to views about politics rather than the administration of elections. At the same time, 21% of respondents in KwaZulu-Natal said nothing would encourage them to vote.

Among those open to voting, the survey identified several factors that could increase participation.

Forty percent of respondents said greater accountability by politicians would encourage them to vote.

A further 32% said societal change and renewed hope would be a motivating factor.

Other responses included improvements in service delivery (9%), improvements in the labour market (8%) and better political candidates (6%).

Public knowledge of the IEC

The survey also examined public awareness of the IEC.

In KwaZulu-Natal, 28% of respondents said they knew nothing about

the commission and its work, while 52% said they knew a little. Only 19% said they knew a lot or a great deal.

TV was identified as the main source of information about the commission (59%), followed by radio (35%) and social media (24%).

The commission noted that while social media was growing as a source of information, it "is still an untrusted source of authentic information about the electoral process".

Moepya said the findings reflected challenges that must be addressed.

"There are some tough things that come out of it and they can cause you to cringe," he said. "Let's cringe together ... and fashion solutions."

The commission engaged in the research before elections to understand voter attitudes and improve the electoral process.

"We try to anticipate, to listen, to understand some of the challenges they face," he said.

Local government elections are due to be held between November 2026 and January 2027, in line with constitutional requirements.

The commission said the survey findings would inform its preparations and engagement with stakeholders in the province.

Mamabolo said the commission was implementing technical and operational improvements before the elections, particularly voter management devices (VMDs).

He said the commission had identified and addressed a "coding deficiency in the voters roll app", which had affected performance in the 2024 elections. An external audit, including stress and volume testing, was also planned to assess the system's functionality.

The commission was procuring extra equipment, including scanners to replace the use of inbuilt device cameras for ID verification, which were affected by lighting conditions. It was also acquiring an additional 16 000 VMDs to improve distribution at high-density voting stations.

Mamabolo said system functionality in offline mode has been adjusted so that devices continued operating without displaying connectivity interruptions, after instances where staff incorrectly halted voting processes during outages.

'It's a problem of the survival of our country as a country that is not going to fall into all sorts of wrong hands'

'There are tough things that come out of it and they can cause you to cringe. Let's cringe together ... and fashion solutions!'

No freedom without water



Unsafe supply: Qwa Qwa residents use river water to do their laundry. They also collect water from the river for their homes. Photo Delwyn Verasamy

Sheree Bega

For Asanda Magadla, there is little to celebrate this Freedom Day. In Mdantsane in the Eastern Cape, where she lives, taps frequently run dry — or deliver water so contaminated that it cannot be used.

At times, she said, it was laced with sewage, forcing households like hers to spend what little they have on buying water to survive.

“Instead of reducing inequalities in our society, the water crisis has made it even worse because we have to find alternative ways of accessing water,” said Magadla, an activist with the Uthando Lwendalo Environmental Movement and a coordinator for WaterCAN in the Eastern Cape.

More than three decades into democracy, the promise of dignity and basic services remains out of reach for many South Africans. Across provinces, communities describe a daily struggle for safe, reliable water — one that is deepening inequality, fuelling frustration and in some cases, sparking conflict.

In Magadla’s household of 15 people, water has become an additional monthly expense rather than a guaranteed service.

“We have to budget for water as an extra item, while already paying for municipal services.”

Similar experiences are reported in the Free State, where activists working with the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission say communities face persistent contamination and unreliable supply.

In February, more than 100 families in Marakong village in QwaQwa faced a serious public health emergency after live bloodworms were reported and confirmed in water flowing from household taps, water watchdog, WaterCAN, said.

Water activist Tabi Moloi, the coordinator for the Catholic Justice and Peace in QwaQwa, said

Across South Africa, communities are marking Freedom Day under the weight of an escalating water crisis, where unreliable supply, contamination and ageing infrastructure continue to undermine basic rights and deepen inequality

samples were taken but results had yet to be shared by authorities. “When water is not provided, we don’t enjoy the freedom of being citizens of that area.”

In the absence of reliable supply, many households rely on water tankers, which often arrive late or are forced to collect water from wells and mountain sources, some contaminated by sewage spillages.

Moloi said the issue was not always scarcity but delivery.

“There is plenty of water in our areas because we have three dams that are able to supply our area. The challenge is the infrastructure and the political interference.”

Both activists point to failing infrastructure, lack of technical capacity and corruption.

“Water treatment plants are being vandalised because of tender mafias,” Magadla said.

The consequences are glaring — from illness linked to contaminated water to disruptions in schooling.

In some cases, frustration has boiled over into protest. In the Free State, some communities have burnt JoJo tanks. In the Eastern Cape, activists are preparing for further demonstrations, including a

planned march in Makhanda, over the installation of prepaid smart water meters, next week.

Makhanda’s water crisis is a long-running failure of ageing infrastructure and repeated breakdowns that has left residents facing chronic shortages and unsafe supply.

Dr Henk Boshoff, a commissioner at the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), said the gains made since 1994 in expanding access to water could not be ignored.

He pointed to national data showing that access has improved over time. The General Household Survey of 2024 indicates that 87.7% of households now have access to piped or tap water, compared with 84.4% in 2002.

But the progress masked a worsening crisis in service delivery. “However, these gains are overshadowed by significant challenges the country faces regarding access to quality and reliable supply of water for many people in the country,” he said.

Boshoff added that the water crisis had reached such severity that the government had acknowledged it at the highest level, through President Cyril Ramaphosa’s establishment of a national water crisis committee.

He described water as central to the realisation of multiple constitutional rights.

“Water is the lifeblood of human existence and plays a crucial role in the attainment of several human rights, such as healthcare, children’s rights, human dignity and education.”

Yet the lived reality for many households told a different story.

According to the commission’s findings, access was often inadequate, unreliable or unsafe — a situation that was not confined to isolated areas. “The water crisis is not a localised phenomenon but is widespread, affecting and disrupting the lives of several households in the country,” he said.

“Hence, as the SAHRC, we have called for the water crisis to be declared a national disaster.”

Against this backdrop, Boshoff is unequivocal that the country’s water situation falls short of the democratic promise marked by Freedom Day.

“Access to water in South Africa currently does not reflect the promise of freedom,” he said.

“The dream of freedom remains an illusory one as a significant proportion of our population continues to lack access to clean, sufficient and reliable water.”

There could be no meaningful freedom where basic dignity was undermined. “There can be no freedom if people still must suffer the indignity of having to go for days or months without access to water.”

He also highlighted the gendered burden of water insecurity, particularly in rural and poor communities. “There can be no freedom if women and girls must be the ‘bearers of water’, saddled with the task of fetching water, often in precarious conditions exposing them to health hazards and risks of violence.”

The impact, he said, extended into education, public health and safety — and raised deeper questions about inequality in access.

“There can be no freedom if some households must drink unsafe water

We cannot talk about freedom where water — a public good — has been captured by the water mafias who have turned water into a profit-making scheme

which is contaminated because a municipality is failing to deliver on its constitutional and statutory obligations.”

Boshoff warned against the commodification of water, arguing that access should not depend on wealth.

“Where is freedom, where is the dignity where water now risks being commodified with access to clean water depending on the power of the purse?”

He further raised concern about corruption and illicit control within parts of the system.

“We cannot talk about freedom where water — a public good — has been captured by the water mafias who have turned water into a profit-making scheme.”

At what point, then, does water insecurity move beyond service delivery failure and become a systemic human rights violation?

For Boshoff, the answer lies in the Constitution.

“The starting point is to understand that the right to have access to sufficient water is a fundamental human right enshrined in the Bill of Rights in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996.”

When that right is not realised the consequences are immediate and severe. “When people are deprived of water for days on end, it is already a violation of the right to have access to sufficient water.”

“The lack of access to water imperils human dignity and punctures the constitutional vision of undoing the injustices of the past and forging a transformed society founded on human dignity and equality.”

He argued that service delivery failures could not be treated as administrative glitches.

“When municipalities fail to deliver ‘services’, such as water, it is not just another administrative mishap. It has real-life consequences. Municipalities are the vehicles through which human rights are realised and attained.”

What was required was a shift in thinking — away from viewing service delivery as technical administration and towards recognising it as a constitutional obligation.

“We need to inculcate that mindset-shift, to ensure that service delivery is not merely viewed as a tick-box process but as part of the advancement of the constitutional project of restoring dignity and transforming lives.”

Ultimately, he said, water insecurity struck at the core of human rights. “Water insecurity violates human rights in all aspects. It undermines human dignity and threatens the right to life as people cannot survive without access to water.”

For activists on the ground, the constitutional principles are experienced in daily routines shaped by scarcity and uncertainty.

“Many people are still struggling with access,” said Nomsa Daele, WaterCAN’s citizen science and training coordinator. “In Limpopo, people don’t have water; and where they do, it is often contaminated.”

The crisis was generational. In some areas of Limpopo, she said, young people had never experienced running water at home.

At rural schools in KwaZulu-Natal, pupils were asked to ferry water from home and walk long distances to school. “That is not the freedom our parents imagined,” she said.

For Magadla, Freedom Day feels increasingly hollow.

“We are still buying water, budgeting for water and fighting for it,” she said. “And it feels like that has become normal.”

She added that the crisis reflected deeper inequality.

“If you are poor, you are made to feel you deserve this. But water is life and no one should be left behind.”

Freedom Day

Brian Sokutu

Anti-apartheid icon Winnie Madikizela-Mandela is believed to have been the first South African to be honoured on a postage stamp while still alive.

Nine years after the fact, her former aides Lunga Williams and Trevor Tambo have, in an exclusive interview with the *Mail & Guardian*, recounted how the South African Post Office stamp came to be - and how it was delivered to her bedside in Milpark Hospital in 2017, a year before her death.

The stamp, designed against a bright orange background, features a radiant, smiling Madikizela-Mandela with a black afro hairstyle. In white lettering it reads: "Winnie Madikizela-Mandela. A story of struggle and courage."

A towering figure in South Africa's liberation history, Madikizela-Mandela played a pivotal role in sustaining resistance against apartheid for 27 years while her then-husband Nelson Mandela and fellow leaders were imprisoned on Robben Island.

Alongside ANC leader Oliver Tambo, who operated in exile, she became one of the movement's most visible and defiant symbols.

Known widely as the "Mother of the Nation," she endured detention, torture and forced banishment under apartheid, emerging as an enduring emblem of resistance against white minority rule.

Yet, when first approached with the idea of being honoured on a postage stamp while still alive, she was

A stamp for Mama Winnie



Thinkers: Trevor Tambo (left) and Lunga Williams. Photo: Brian Sokutu

uncertain.

Recounting the moment, Williams said they had gone to her Soweto home to present the proposal. "Nervous on whether she would like the idea, we sat with her at her Soweto home.

"Here was a woman who had sacrificed everything for this country. We presented the idea of the stamp - an innovative way to honour her while she was still alive."

At first, she was quiet. Then came her response: "Why me, I am alive. There are so many others deserving this - Oliver Tambo, Thabo Mbeki,

Sophie de Bruyn, Brigalia Bam, Richard Maponya and Gary Player."

Williams said they reassured her: "Mama, you are not taking anything away from them. You are opening a door."

"She thought for a long time, before giving us her blessings. We left her house that day with no stamp - just an idea."

Williams said the initiative was driven by conviction rather than institutional backing. "We were just two ordinary South Africans. No organisation, funding or connections, we simply believed that Mama



Winnie deserved to be honoured while she was still alive."

The proposal was submitted through the South African Post Office's Philatelic Services, the division responsible for stamp design, production and sales.

"They guided us. They told us that requests for stamp issues come through the Communications Minister's office. So our proposal went through Philatelic, via the Minister's office, to the Post Office," Williams said.

"They were the go-between, between us and Mama Winnie - between an idea and a stamp. We were lucky that they listened and believed in the concept. Nine months later, after rigorous engagement, the stamp was approved. We are still grateful that they did."

The stamp was designed in-house by Rachel-Mari Ackermann of Philatelic Services. "She worked with us. She went through thousands of photographs. She found the right image. She captured Mama Winnie's strength, her dignity, her humanity."

It was officially issued on 26 September 2017, Madikizela-Mandela's 81st birthday. "She was alive and happily held her stamp on the day she was born," said Williams.

Plans for a public launch, however, never materialised. Williams said the decision was guided by her deteriorating health.

"Mama's ill health was the main reason the stamp was never launched. She was in and out of hospital, fighting - not just for herself but for her dignity, her peace, her final years."

"A public launch while she was so unwell did not feel right. So we waited. The Post Office understood and respected her condition."

After her death, the stamp remained largely unseen in public circulation. "The stamp sat for nine years," Williams said.

He added that any future decision to formally launch it now rests with the Post Office, which is currently under business rescue.

"They are the custodian of the stamp. Whatever they decide to do is their decision. We do not presume to tell them what to do."

"But the truth is this: Mama's ill health was the main reason the stamp was never launched. Then she passed. The stamp sat for nine years."

Still, Williams said the gesture remains meaningful regardless of what happens next.

"If they do not, we will still be grateful that Mama Winnie held her stamp, smiled, and said: 'This is bigger than big.'"

"Our job was to conceive the idea, get her blessing and deliver the stamp to her while she was alive."

INVITATION

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SA marks 32 years of democracy amid

South Africa's 32nd Freedom Day highlights both democratic gains and ongoing struggles with inequality, unemployment and poverty

Mandisa Makgaka

South Africa's democracy will, on Monday, mark 32 years since the country's first democratic election, which ended apartheid rule and ushered in a constitutional order built on promises of equality, freedom and rights for marginalised communities, alongside the rule of law.

Since 1994, the Constitution has entrenched a wide-ranging set of civil, political and socio-economic rights. An independent judiciary and a free press have become defining features of public life.

Access to education has expanded significantly compared with the apartheid era, with far more young South Africans completing secondary schooling and entering tertiary institutions.

Millions of households have gained access to basic services such as electricity, clean water and formal housing.

At the same time, the social grant system has grown into one of the largest state-led welfare programmes in the developing world, providing

monthly income support to millions.

Yet despite these gains, South Africa remains one of the most unequal societies in the world. Income, opportunity and access to work continue to be shaped by structural inequalities that persist across geography, race and class.

Economists and policy researchers have repeatedly warned that while political rights expanded rapidly after 1994, economic transformation has been far slower and uneven.

The country's unemployment crisis remains central to this imbalance. In 2026, the official unemployment rate stands at about 32.9%, while the expanded definition, which includes discouraged work seekers who have stopped looking for employment, is estimated between 42% and 43%.

Among young people aged 15 to 34, unemployment remains significantly higher, in the mid-40% range.

These figures point to long-standing structural constraints in the economy, including slow growth, limited labour absorption and persistent mismatches between education outcomes and labour market demand.

Labour economists such as



In need of work opportunities: Job seekers gathered outside a store in Tswelopele, Tembisa, to apply for employment. Photo: Twitter / X

Haroon Bhorat of the University of Cape Town's Development Policy Research Unit and Miriam Altman have argued that South Africa's unemployment problem is deeply structural.

They point to the economy's limited ability to generate sufficient jobs in labour-intensive sectors, weak growth and historical patterns of exclusion that continue to shape

access to work.

For many young South Africans, these macroeconomic realities are experienced in deeply personal ways. In Alexandra, north of Johannesburg, 25-year-old Lesego Mokoena describes a daily routine defined by uncertainty and repeated job applications.

Despite completing a degree in agricultural science, she has strug-

gled to find employment since graduating three years ago.

"We were told go to school, do well and you'll become employable and to this day, I am a true testament that it is not a one-size-fits all, there is just nothing out there.

"I don't think people understand what it does to you. You start to feel like you are outside of life. Everyone else is moving but you are stuck wait-

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deep inequality and joblessness

ing for something that never comes," she said.

Her experience reflects a broader pattern among graduates who enter the labour market with expectations shaped by education and policy promises, only to encounter prolonged unemployment, informal survival work or long periods of dependency on family support.

In many communities, the transition from school or university into formal employment has effectively broken down.

Youth unemployment has become a defining feature of post-apartheid economic life, particularly in townships and peri-urban areas where opportunities are limited and transport costs further restrict access to jobs.

In Tembisa, east of Johannesburg, 28-year-old Sandile Dlamini now survives through informal trading, selling snacks and phone accessories near a busy taxi rank.

He studied logistics but was unable to find stable employment after graduating.

"Freedom Day does not look like freedom to us who have been born outside of apartheid because we live in the free world but how can I say I am free if my kids and my mother go to bed hungry daily because sales were slow today?" he said.

"What is frustrating is that I studied but there are no jobs and things are expensive. Even the R350 we get

from the government is not enough."

His experience reflects how many graduates depend on informal work, short-term contracts and gig-based income to survive. While these forms of work provide immediate income, they rarely offer stability, benefits or pathways into long-term economic security.

The broader economic environment reinforces these challenges. South Africa's growth rate has remained low for years, limiting the economy's capacity to absorb new entrants into the labour market. Infrastructure constraints and uneven industrial development have also contributed to weak job creation.

Civil society organisations such as Oxfam South Africa and the Institute for Economic Justice have repeatedly highlighted the link between unemployment, inequality and food insecurity. Millions of households experience some level of food insecurity, with rising living costs placing additional pressure on low-income families.

A recent report by FoodForward SA and the Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit at the University of Cape Town, titled the State of Household Food Insecurity in South Africa 2026, found that about 70% of surveyed households experience moderate to severe food insecurity, meaning that many fami-

lies regularly worry about running out of food, reducing portion sizes or skipping meals entirely.

"This study shows, with painful clarity, that the food insecurity many South Africans live with is not occasional – it is a daily reality, even for families already receiving food support," said Andy Du Plessis, the managing director of FoodForward SA.

"Behind every percentage is a household juggling impossible choices between food, transport, medication and debt."

These conditions extend beyond income alone. They influence educational outcomes, health status and long-term mobility and reinforcing cycles of disadvantage.

High levels of violent crime also shape how freedom is experienced in everyday life. South Africa continues to record one of the highest homicide rates globally and safety concerns affect how people move through public spaces, access work and participate in community life.

For many residents, freedom is not only about rights or employment but also about personal security and dignity.

President Cyril Ramaphosa is expected to use Freedom Day commemorations to highlight government interventions aimed at addressing unemployment, including public employment programmes, infrastructure investment and youth-focused initiatives such as intern-

ships and wage subsidies.

However, critics argue that while these programmes provide short-term relief, they have not fundamentally altered the structure of the labour market or significantly reduced unemployment at scale.

Opposition parties have proposed different approaches. The Democratic Alliance has argued that weak economic growth and regulatory constraints are key barriers to job creation, calling for labour market reforms and increased private sector participation.

The Economic Freedom Fighters has instead linked unemployment to structural inequality and has called for more aggressive redistribution policies and expanded state-led industrialisation.

Despite ideological differences, unemployment remains one of the most consistent issues across political debate, reflecting its centrality to the country's social and economic challenges.

Government interventions have included public works programmes, wage subsidies for young workers and various training initiatives. While these have provided temporary income support for some participants, analysts note that they have not yet resolved the underlying structural constraints limiting job creation.

Parliamentary research has warned that the long-term conse-

'You start to feel like you are outside of life. Everyone else is moving but you are stuck waiting for something that never comes'

quences of youth unemployment extend beyond economics, affecting democratic participation and social cohesion.

"When large sections of a generation remain excluded from formal work, it reshapes their relationship to democratic institutions and their sense of inclusion in the national project," the research said.

"Rights remain intact but lived experience becomes increasingly disconnected from political promise."

Altman has similarly argued that changes in employment structure have deepened inequality over time, widening the divide between formal and informal work.

"The nature of employment has been changing rapidly because the proportion of formal-sector workers to informal-sector workers has been declining dramatically," she said.

"Between 1994 and 2001, it fell from 69% to 49%. At the same time, those underemployed rose from 14% to 21% and unemployed from 17 to 30%."



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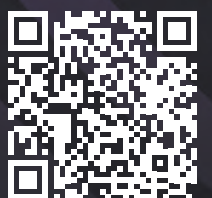
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A nugget of hope in the inner city

Remington House, a once-notorious hijacked building in Johannesburg, has been transformed into fully let student housing, illustrating what is possible when intervention is followed through



Ask Ash
Ash Müller

I tweeted something this week that stuck with a lot of people:

“An abandoned, hijacked CBD building turned into a fully let student housing success story.”

And honestly, that sentence alone tells you everything you need to know about both the problem and the opportunity sitting in Johannesburg’s inner city.

If you’ve spent any time in the city centre, especially around Nugget Street, you’ll know this isn’t just one building but rather, it’s a pattern.

The Johannesburg CBD has hundreds of hijacked buildings, broken systems and colossal properties that have lost most of their value.

Perhaps when I shared the news about this little nugget of hope on Nugget Street, many wished we could see more of this.

Remington House is a recovery story. The building was hijacked as early as 2012, along with dozens of others. Over time, it became exactly what we’ve come to expect in these situations: overcrowded, unsafe and cut off from basic services like water and electricity.

At one point, it was described as one of the most notorious hijacked buildings in the CBD. No proper sanitation, illegal electricity connections and people living in some of the most unhygienic conditions you could find.

Even with all this, the building’s bones were great. Structurally, the building was sound. This is important to note because it means not all hijacked buildings are beyond saving. Many are mismanaged,



Recovery story: Remington House was hijacked in 2012 and became overcrowded, unsafe and cut off from basic services. Political will, financial backing and execution helped turn it around. Photo: Supplied

neglected and captured by the wrong systems.

Fast forward to today and the same Remington house building is now a fully let student accommodation success story, with 133 bachelor flats, 14 parking bays, five ground-floor retail shops, a study centre, a gym, free laundry facilities, free uncapped wi-fi, a braai area and other shared amenities.

Rental starts from around R5 200 a month and it’s NSFAS-accredited, which means it’s aligned with real market demand.

Here’s where it gets better: the building is also green-certified. With measurable efficiencies to boast about, such as 28% energy savings, 22% water savings and 51% reduction in embodied carbon. Not only did the developer fix the building, they also factored in future-proofing.

But there is an uncomfortable middle for how we got here.

Before we celebrate too quickly,

we need to be honest about what “hijacked” means in practice. In many of the buildings, the original system breaks down slowly when rent stops being paid, owners lose control, informal “management” takes over and tenants (often vulnerable) are exploited.

In Remington’s case, some leaseholders reportedly sublet units and collected rent without maintaining anything. While people were living in terrible conditions, someone was making money.

To turn a project like this around successfully was no easy task. It required legal processes (including the eviction and relocation of more than 500 occupants), funding (around R25 million), capable developers and managers and crucially, institutions willing

to step in.

This is where TUHF, a commercial property finance company focused on urban regeneration, deserves real credit. It has built a track record of funding exactly these kinds of inner-city regeneration projects, where traditional banks often won’t go.

That’s the difference between theory and execution.

It reminds me of the Mashaba momentum and his impactful campaign a few years ago. During Herman Mashaba’s time as Joburg mayor, there was a visible push to reclaim hijacked buildings. We loved to see this.

Today, Mashaba certainly has unfinished business with his campaign. But here in 2026, it makes me wonder: Why did we stop doing

Perhaps the real opportunity isn’t building new cities on the outskirts; it’s fixing what we’ve built.

this at scale? Buildings were being identified and raids were conducted. The city signalled that lawlessness wouldn’t be tolerated indefinitely.

Now, Mashaba is back on X, saying: “Bring me back to complete the unfinished business. I am ready to serve.” Alongside that, there’s renewed talk of reclaiming hundreds of hijacked and abandoned buildings through initiatives like Operation Fix Joburg.

Was momentum lost or just paused? Remington shows what happens when intervention is followed through.

The sad reality of Nugget Street is that Remington House is one of many buildings on the street in distress. You can stand there and see the contrast: one functioning, fully let, managed building surrounded by others that are hijacked or deteriorating.

We know that it can be done. Now we need to ask why the hijacked building transformations aren’t happening faster.

I understand that there is urban policy, enforcement (or lack thereof), access to funding and whether cities can recover from decline.

Also, do we see inner cities as problems or opportunities?

The demand is clearly there. Students need housing, young people want to be close to opportunity and affordable units are scarce.

The demand over the next few years is going to be insane. Africa has the youngest population in the world — about 60% of Africa’s population is under the age of 25.

It also has the fastest-growing population, which means the number of young people keeps increasing. That’s a lot of students. Remington House didn’t create demand out of nowhere; it tapped into it.

Before you label the inner city as dead, perhaps we should label it as uneven. One building works, the one next door doesn’t.

One has structure, funding and management; the other chaos.

Perhaps the real opportunity isn’t building new cities on the outskirts; it’s fixing what we’ve built.

Do we have the political will, financial backing and execution capacity to do it again and again, building by building? Because if one “notorious” hijacked building can become a fully let success story ... How many more are we writing off too early?



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South Africa not free until all SADC is free

If we are to honour our freedom, we must also stand in sympathy with our neighbours, whose struggles remind us that democracy is never guaranteed. Their pain must be felt as our own and their hopes embraced as part of our shared destiny

Paledi Alfred Sathekge

On Monday, we come together in many places to celebrate Freedom Day, marking South Africa's first steps into democracy in 1994.

For the first time, all citizens, no matter their race, were equal at the ballot box. Apartheid ended and constitutional democracy began. We have a real reason to celebrate.

Yet, as we celebrate, we must confront the harsher realities that persist across our region. The state of democracy across Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries is highly uneven. While some nations, such as South Africa, Botswana, Mauritius, Namibia, Seychelles and Zambia, show relative stability and progress; others, including Zimbabwe, Eswatini, the DRC, Madagascar, Angola, Comoros and Mozambique, face serious democratic deficits marked by authoritarianism, weak institutions and repression.

Before I advance my own reflections, let me recall that the official SADC motto is 'Towards a Common Future'. Its objectives, enshrined in Article 5 of the SADC Treaty (1992), emphasise regional integration, sustainable economic growth, poverty reduction, peace and security and the consolidation of democratic governance.

While we celebrate, our neighbours continue to struggle: Zimbabwe with repression; Eswatini under an absolute monarchy; the DRC plagued by instability; Madagascar destabilised by a recent military coup; Angola dominated by one party; the Comoros trapped in cycles of political upheaval; and Mozambique with violent crackdowns, assassinations and internet shutdowns.

South Africa's Freedom Day must not only be a celebration but also serve as a benchmark. It shows what genuine liberation looks like but it also reminds us of the unfinished work across all SADC member states. The struggle for freedom in Southern Africa is collective and South Africa's experience serves as both an inspiration and a reminder of the unfinished work across the region.

Zimbabwe: Imagine young patriots standing in a long line to cast their vote, hopeful for change, only to face threats and intimidation. Their ballot becomes a symbol of fear rather than freedom. **Eswatini:** Picture students who dream of forming a politi-



Hope: Zimbabweans standing in line to cast their vote, hoping for change. Photo: ZEC

cal organisation at university, yet they know that even discussing that possibility is forbidden under the monarchy. Their voices are silenced before they can be heard.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC): Step into the shoes of a mother in Kinshasa who cannot trust the courts or the police because corruption and violence have hollowed out the institutions meant to protect her family.

Madagascar: Think of a shopkeeper in Antananarivo who wakes to yet another coup, uncertain whether tomorrow's leaders will bring stability or chaos. Their livelihood is caught in the middle of power struggles, where ordinary families pay the price for leaders' endless battles.

Angola: Consider a journalist who dares to question the ruling party. Their voice is silenced, their articles censored and their courage punished — voices of truth buried under the weight of tyranny.

Comoros: Recall a child growing up under the shadow of repeated coups, never knowing what democracy looks like, only instability passed down like an inheritance. **Mozambique:** Picture a protester demanding transparency in elections, only to face bullets, internet blackouts and assassinations. Their call for freedom is met not with dialogue but with lethal force.

If we are to honour our freedom, we must also stand in sympathy with our neighbours, whose struggles remind us that democracy is never guaranteed. Their pain must be felt as our own and their hopes embraced as part of our shared destiny. If we are to fulfil this responsibility, we must

insist on:

First, electoral integrity. All SADC members must have independent electoral commissions with transparent voter registration, fair constituency boundaries and, more importantly, clear frameworks. South Africa's Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) stands as a trusted example of how credibility can be built and maintained.

Second, external observers. Regional and international monitors, from the AU, SADC and beyond, must safeguard fairness. The recent Ghana elections (December 2024) were validated by observers, which shows the power of accountability when the world is watching.

Third, independent judiciaries. Courts must be free to resolve disputes without fear or favour. Malawi's Constitutional Court, which invalidated flawed elections in 2019, proved that justice can protect democracy when institutions are strong (*Chilima and Chakwera vs Mutharika and EC*).

Fourth, free media. A free press is the lifeblood of democracy. It ensures transparency, exposes corruption and empowers citizens. South Africa's vibrant media landscape demonstrates this truth. Yet in Zimbabwe, journalists such as Hopewell Chin'ono face arrest simply for speaking truth to power.

Fifth, civil society and citizen participation. NGOs, activists and ordinary citizens must hold leaders accountable. Malawi's civic groups, despite constitutional challenges, continue to push for transparency and remind us that democracy belongs to the people.

Sixth, political will and tolerance. Leaders must respect opposition and accept electoral outcomes. Botswana's

tradition of peaceful elections shows what is possible when tolerance prevails. But in Zimbabwe, Eswatini and Angola, opposition voices are silenced and results are contested, undermining the very essence of democracy.

Seventh, security and stability. Democracy cannot thrive where violence and intimidation prevail. For example, the DRC's constitutional provisions exist but instability continues to undermine elections and rob citizens of their democratic rights.

These are not abstract principles; they are the building blocks of freedom.

South Africa's own journey shows that democracy can be won, defended and deepened. But our responsibility does not end at our borders. South Africa's Freedom Day is a reminder that democracy must be defended and extended beyond borders. The region's future depends on strengthening institutions, protecting rights and ensuring political tolerance.

South Africa cannot remain a passive observer while our neighbours struggle; our own liberation carries with it a profound responsibility to stand with them, share our hard-won lessons and help strengthen democracy across the SADC region.

Our responsibility is not mere ideal; it demands tangible action and unwavering commitment:

- South Africa must use its voice in SADC, the AU and the UN to press for reforms and condemn repression. Silence is complicity.

- Our IEC, Constitutional Court and Chapter 9 institutions are models. We must offer training, technical support and exchange programmes

to strengthen institutions across the region.

- South Africa's vibrant press can partner with journalists across SADC, offering solidarity, platforms and protection for those silenced in their own countries.

- Our NGOs and civic movements must build regional networks, supporting activists in Eswatini, Zimbabwe and beyond.

- South Africa's economic power must be tied to democratic accountability. Trade and investment should encourage, not undermine, human rights.

- Our universities, artists and youth movements can foster a culture of democracy across borders, reminding the region that freedom is not only political but generational.

Our liberation is a debt that remains unpaid as long as our neighbours remain in chains. We must move beyond the rhetoric of 'non-interference' and embrace a doctrine of 'proactive solidarity'.

I call upon the South African government and the SADC Secretariat to move beyond symbolic gestures. It is time to establish a SADC Democratic Charter with real authority — one that shifts from mere observation to the active enforcement of human rights standards in Eswatini, Zimbabwe, the DRC and beyond.

Freedom Day must not be treated as a day of rest for our diplomats but as a day of renewed resolve — a day to intensify pressure on those who suffocate the ballot box and silence the will of the people.

To our scholars and activists, use your platforms not just to critique but to connect. We must build a trans-SADC coalition that shares resources, intelligence and advocacy strategies across borders. When an activist is silenced in Antananarivo, Harare, Luanda or Kinshasa, the echo of dissent must be heard in democratic member states in Pretoria, Port Louis or Gaborone. From that echo must follow intervention, solidarity and regional pressure that insists democracy is not optional, but essential.

Let our universities become hubs of regional dialogue, our NGOs become bridges of solidarity and our youth movements become the heartbeat of a new democratic generation. Let artists and writers carry the stories of repression across borders so that no struggle remains hidden and no voice is lost in isolation.

Let us commit ourselves beyond the celebration of our own history to the active advancement of democracy across the region. We must lead by example, lending the collective weight of our institutions, scholars and activists to those still caught in the struggle for self-determination.

Our pride as a SADC member is conditional; it is incomplete so long as Zimbabwe yearns for liberation, Eswatini seeks democracy, the DRC pursues stability and the nations of Angola, Madagascar and Comoros await genuine democratic reform.

For it is only when every SADC nation stands free that we can truly say: *Freedom has finally come to Africa. Aluta continua!*

Paledi Alfred Sathekge is a human rights proponent.

Thought Leader

Mail & Guardian

Freedom
in our
lifetime

On Monday we hand over our report card to those — too numerous to mention — who laid down their lives for the freedom we enjoy.

Hopefully, they will take no umbrage if we single out one Solomon Kalushi Mahlangu to paraphrase and assure the rest of them that indeed, their blood has watered the trees of freedom. That they paid the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom is not a matter we take lightly, especially given the flippancy among some of the Born-Frees — that no one but themselves freed them.

In the report card, we will confess upfront that South Africa is not where they would have wanted it to be — yet — but it is also not the country it was, the pariah of the world.

We will say South Africa punches above her weight, taking up cudgels on behalf of the downtrodden against bullies of the world.

We will cite the December 2023 genocide case against Israel that we brought to the International Court of Justice when every other nation that has the ability to do so chose to look the other way.

For this bold move, we will tell those who know Washington's warm ties with apartheid Pretoria too well, that we have attracted the ire of the ogre in the Oval Office.

No surprises there, they will surely assure us. America has always arrogated to itself the role of the policeman of the world.

We will tell them that our man in the Union Buildings is insisting on South Africa jealously guarding her sovereignty. Our Number One citizen is gaining more gumption to tell the West: "We will not be bullied."

We will tell our fallen heroes that when once they ran to the world in anguish, seeking help against the racist Nationalist regime, these days the world looks to us for help.

We have kept our friends, among them Cuba; and we have not forgotten the people of Palestine and the Saharawi Republic, contrary to calls for us to turn our backs on them.

The world marvels at our model Constitution and has even taken a leaf out of our reconciliation process to heal their own wretched past. Our Truth and Reconciliation Commission has become a textbook case of healing the wounds of the past.

In the report card we will say that a lot has improved. Our national electricity grid has been extended to serve every citizen, not just a select few. We have legislated changes to ensure that the history we choose to leave in the past dares not repeat itself. Our education budget is for every child; black, white, Indian or coloured.

Justice, we will say, is ideally meant to serve all, equally but we will readily admit there have been regrettable gaps where justice has been delayed, therefore denied.

Freedom has come at a cost. But it has been worth every step.

South Africa is becoming.



Criticism of Rand Water's Zanzibar investment is misguided

Malaika Mahlatsi

A week ago, AfriForum, an organisation that primarily focuses on protecting the rights of minorities, with a specific emphasis on Afrikaner interests, released a statement questioning the rationale for Rand Water establishing a footprint in the Tanzanian island of Zanzibar.

This follows the bulk water utility being selected as the preferred bidder to provide technical support, infrastructure management and operational improvement to the Zanzibar Water Authority (ZAWA) through a 10-year Management, Operations and Maintenance (MOM) contract.

The project involves a total investment of roughly R800 million on the part of Rand Water. The investment is focused on enhancing the sustainability, accessibility and reliability of Zanzibar's water services.

AfriForum is arguing that "the allocation of public resources to a foreign initiative while domestic infrastructure is under strain" poses a risk to the country and that Rand Water's focus should be to prioritise securing bulk water supply in Gauteng. These two issues demand reflection.

Firstly, Rand Water's primary commitment to provide reliable bulk water services is not and has never been compromised. The water utility's abstraction of raw water from the Integrated Vaal River System (IVRS) has historically been sufficient to meet the demands of the provinces that it supplies.

The amount of water that it abstracts is not determined by the water utility; it is legislated by law — specifically, the National Water Act. Unauthorised, excessive or unmeasured abstraction is illegal. This is



why, in cases where Rand Water has had to increase its abstraction level, it must apply for a temporary licence that permits the increased abstraction rate.

The water utility is currently operating under such a licence, which was granted to it by the national Department of Water and Sanitation a month ago, to aid in the stabilisation of water supply in Gauteng.

What AfriForum is not acknowledging is that the water crisis in Gauteng is not the result of insufficient abstraction on the part of Rand Water but that of high levels of consumption.

High consumption in this context does not refer to excessive utilisation by Gauteng residents but to the volume of water that is supplied to municipalities by Rand Water. The water crisis in Gauteng is driven by ageing water infrastructure, resulting in high levels of non-revenue water.

This is not raw water that is abstracted from the Vaal River but water that has been produced and treated and is safe for consumption.

Roughly half of it is lost to leaks, vandalism and theft, before it even reaches households and businesses. Consider that about 33% of the total water supply in Johannesburg alone is lost to physical leaks and ageing infrastructure.

The reality is that even as Rand Water is temporarily licensed to abstract more water from the IVRS, this does not resolve the root of the

water crisis in Gauteng, which is about poor water governance on the part of municipalities.

Secondly, AfriForum claims that Rand Water's R800 million investment in Zanzibar is a strain on domestic infrastructure. Let us consider the legal and financial facts

Legally, Rand Water is permitted to undertake secondary activities, such as technical consulting and training, that are designed to support its core mandate and to drive revenue. Financially, this revenue generation mechanism enables the water utility to augment its income, which is currently under strain due to non-payment by municipalities.

As of the third quarter of 2024/2025, municipalities owed Rand Water a staggering R8 billion — an amount that has been increasing exponentially over the years. If the water utility is to continue with its work of building the much-needed infrastructure in Gauteng, it has to have a revenue generation strategy that will enable this undertaking.

And revenue from secondary activities is proving impactful, having risen to R663 million in the first half of the 2025 financial year alone.

Rand Water has built and continues to build, major water infrastructure using its own balance sheet and generated revenue, rather than relying on government bailouts or funding.

This includes, but is not limited to, the Vlakfontein Reservoir—a multi-million rand investment that will increase storage capacity to handle increased demand in Gauteng.

It is unreasonable for AfriForum to argue against Rand Water expanding its footprint, which in turn increases

its balance sheet, enabling it to build long-term water infrastructure. The expected return on investment on the Zanzibar undertaking is significant, not only financially, but operationally as well.

It allows Rand Water to test new technologies and refine processes that will improve efficiency and reliability here at home. Additionally, exposure to complex projects such as these enhances human capital within the water utility, which benefits South Africa.

AfriForum cannot, on one hand, criticise state-owned entities for their perpetual reliance on bailouts and on the other hand, also criticise them when they engage in secondary activities that generate revenue.

Rand Water has had a strong record of clean or unqualified audits for over 20 years. In the recent past, the RW21 bond was successfully redeemed to the value of R1.6 billion and three new bonds linked to sustainability notes were issued to the value of R1.7 billion.

The new issues attracted over R4.5 billion in capital market bids, becoming the single largest sustainability-linked bond in Africa.

The financial health of Rand Water is no secret and the fact that the water utility has never received a bailout when most other state-owned entities have, tells a story on its own. It is a story that AfriForum must familiarise itself with.

Malaika Mahlatsi is a researcher and geographer who holds an MSc in Water Resource Science from the Institute for Water Research at Rhodes University. She is a PhD Geography candidate at the University of Bayreuth in Germany.

It is a story that AfriForum must familiarise itself with.

Three decades on, SA story still evolves

The democratic breakthrough of 1994 stands as one of the most significant political achievements of the modern era. Against the odds, South Africa chose negotiation over civil conflict, ballots over bullets, reconciliation over revenge



Cornelius Monama

On Monday, 27 April 2026, South Africa will mark thirty-two years since its first democratic elections.

Since that historic moment, the nation has travelled a remarkable and often demanding road. The journey has not been flawless. There have been setbacks, frustrations and painful contradictions that continue to test the resilience of our democracy.

But when viewed in its entirety, the post-1994 era tells a story of remarkable progress. It is a story of endurance, renewal and extraordinary national achievement that deserves to be told widely, with both honesty and pride.

The democratic breakthrough of 1994 stands as one of the most significant political achievements of the modern era. Against the odds, South Africa chose negotiation over civil conflict, ballots over bullets, reconciliation over revenge.

In doing so, we demonstrated a level of political maturity and moral courage that captured the imagination of the world. We did not simply dismantle apartheid but we also laid the foundation for a new nation built on shared citizenship and equal dignity.

At the heart of this transformation lies our Constitution. It is a living covenant between the state and its people. It affirms the inherent dignity of every individual, protects fundamental rights and anchors our democracy in the rule of law.

Over the past three decades, the institutions that uphold this constitutional order — our courts, chapter nine institutions, electoral system and a vibrant civil society — have proven resilient, including in moments of profound strain.

South Africa's democracy has matured in visible and subtle ways. Citizens continue to organise, speak out, protest and participate in shaping the direction of the country.

Elections remain competitive and credible. The media, with all their imperfection, continue to play a critical watchdog role. In a global context where democratic institutions are increasingly under threat, South Africa's ability to sustain a functioning and participatory democracy remains a notable achievement.

The promise of democracy was never confined to civil and political rights alone. It was always about transforming the material conditions of people. In this regard, the progress achieved since 1994 is both substantial and measurable.

Access to electricity has expanded from just over half of households in 1994 to nearly nine in 10 today. This transformation has altered the texture of daily life for millions, enabling children to study after dark, supporting small enterprises and improving overall quality of life.

Access to clean water has increased



Against the odds: South Africa's democracy has matured in visible and subtle ways, the Constitution enshrined gender equality, expanded access to education, healthcare and economic opportunities. Photo: ConCourt

dramatically, rising from around 60% of the population in 1994 to well over 90% today. Sanitation access has similarly expanded, bringing dignity and improved public health to communities that were historically neglected.

Housing delivery stands as one of the most visible expressions of democratic change. From a base of zero in 1994, more than 4.8 million houses have been delivered, providing shelter to between 12 and 13 million people.

Beyond the numbers, this represents the restoration of dignity, stability and a sense of belonging. Families that once lived in precarious conditions now have a place to call home and communities that were once marginalised are increasingly integrated into the broader social fabric.

Equally transformative has been the expansion of the social wage. Today, South Africa's social protection system reaches more than 18 million people, making it one of the most extensive in the developing world. At its centre is the Child Support Grant, which supports more than 13 million children and plays a critical role in reducing poverty and improving access to basic necessities.

The Old Age Grant provides income security to millions of elderly citizens, many of whom are the backbone of extended families. The Disability Grant ensures that

persons living with disabilities are afforded dignity and a measure of independence. The Foster Child and Care Dependency Grants provide targeted support to vulnerable children and their caregivers, reinforcing the principle that no one should be left behind.

The introduction of the Social Relief of Distress Grant during the COVID-19 pandemic further demonstrated the adaptability and responsiveness of the democratic state. By extending support to unemployed adults with no income, it provided a critical lifeline during a period of unprecedented hardship. Collectively, these social protection measures represent a sustained effort to break intergenerational cycles of poverty and to build a more inclusive society.

Healthcare has also undergone a profound transformation. In 1994, access to antiretroviral treatment for HIV/Aids was virtually non-existent. Today, South Africa operates the largest HIV treatment programme in the world, with more than 5.5 million people receiving life-saving medication. This achievement has not only saved lives but restored hope to millions of families.

The planned implementation of National Health Insurance (NHI) represents the next phase in this journey.

NHI is an effort to give full expres-

sion to the constitutional promise that everyone has the right to access healthcare services, regardless of their socio-economic status.

Education, once designed to entrench inequality, has been fundamentally reshaped. Today, school enrolment is near universal, with over 15 million learners in the system.

No-fee schools now serve the majority of learners, removing a critical barrier for poor households. The National School Nutrition Programme provides daily meals to more than nine million children, ensuring that hunger does not stand in the way of learning.

Higher education has expanded dramatically. Through NSFAS, more than a million students receive financial support annually, compared to only a fraction in 1994. Over time, more than seven million young South Africans have benefited from this support.

Completion rates have improved, adult illiteracy has declined and access to tertiary education has broadened significantly. While challenges of quality and inequality persist, the trajectory is towards inclusion, opportunity and human capital development.

The black middle class has grown significantly, reflecting increased

access to education, employment and economic participation. This expansion represents both the tangible gains of democracy and the emergence of new possibilities for future generations.

The economy itself has more than doubled in size since 1994. South Africa has integrated into the global economy and built diverse sectors across finance, industry, services and agriculture. While economic growth has not always been inclusive or sufficient to eliminate poverty and unemployment, the foundation for a modern and diversified economy has been firmly established.

Land reform remains one of the most complex and contested aspects of transformation. Progress has been made, with millions of hectares transferred and millions of beneficiaries aided through restitution and redistribution. Yet the pace has been uneven and much work remains to be done.

Democracy has also transformed the status of women in profound ways. The Constitution enshrined gender equality, supported by progressive legislation and expanded access to education, healthcare and economic opportunities. Today, women occupy leadership positions across government, business and civil society. While gender-based violence and inequality remain serious challenges, the trajectory is one of empowerment and increasing participation.

South Africa's global standing has undergone a dramatic transformation. From a pariah state under apartheid, the country has become an active and respected participant in international affairs.

Hosting the 2010 FIFA World Cup and the recent G20 Summit are some of the defining moments that showcased South Africa's organisational capacity and leadership while shifting global perceptions of the African continent. This international presence reflects a nation that has reasserted itself on the global stage with confidence and purpose.

Even as we celebrate these achievements, we must confront the reality that the work of transformation is far from complete. Unemployment, inequality and poverty remain deeply entrenched. Too many young people remain excluded from economic opportunity.

Corruption, governance failures and service delivery challenges have eroded public trust and slowed the pace of progress. To acknowledge these challenges is not to diminish what has been achieved. It is to affirm the seriousness of the task that lies ahead.

The long walk to freedom did not end in 1994. It entered a new and demanding phase. Our forebears did not sacrifice for a perfect South Africa.

They fought for a possible South Africa in which each generation would take responsibility for advancing the cause of freedom, justice and equality.

The story of South Africa is still being written. It is a story of struggle and hardship but also of hope and triumph.

Cornelius Monama is a government communicator who is part of the Government Communication and Information System.

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The great white farmer myth distorts black agrarian input

Gillian Schutte

The global right has built a sentimental story around the South African white farmer.

In that story, the farmer appears as a uniquely gifted agricultural figure who turned land into food through discipline, instinct and inherited ability.

The story removes conquest, slavery, land dispossession, cheap Black labour, state-backed infrastructure, irrigation, commercial credit, agro-chemical dependency, protected markets and generations of racialised advantage from the frame.

When foreign actors speak about offering South African farmers opportunities abroad, they usually mean white farm owners. They rarely mean African farm supervisors, farm managers, tractor operators, irrigation workers, animal handlers, seed keepers and small producers who have kept farms working while receiving none of the global sympathy attached to white ownership.

I know this history through research, politics and memory. As a child, I grew up on a farm in Zimbabwe, then Rhodesia, after my South African mother married a Rhodesian farmer in the early 1970s. I watched the racial economy of settler agriculture from close range. I saw who did the labour, who knew the land, who understood the animals, who handled the daily rhythms of production and who carried the farm when the white farmer went away for long holidays, army stints or business.

That early experience stripped the romance from the settler-farmer myth for me. The farm did not stop because the white owner left. Black labourers, foremen and supervisors kept the system alive because they held the working knowledge.

South Africa's own figures expose the same structure. Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) recorded 757 628 paid workers in commercial agriculture by June 2018, with 461 693 full-time employees and 295 934 part-time or seasonal employees.

Among full-time employees, Stats SA counted 407 399 ordinary farm workers, 15 963 farm managers and 23 175 farm foremen and supervisors. These figures describe an agricultural system that runs through labour, supervision, technical knowledge and hierarchy rather than individual white brilliance.

The public reputation of the farm owner depends on this layered workforce. Supervisors and foremen know when irrigation lines fail, when a crop carries disease, when livestock need attention, when machinery sounds wrong, when harvest timing changes and when a decision made from the office will damage production in the field.

Their knowledge comes through daily contact with soil, animals, workers, weather and machinery, while the owner often receives international recognition because property law places his name above the



Privilege: White farmer myth survives while African farmers face a different historical landscape. Photo Delwyn Verasamy

farm gate.

The wage structure tells its own story. South Africa's 2026 national minimum wage sets the farmworker floor at R30.23 for each ordinary hour worked. Commercial agriculture can present itself as efficient partly because the people who prune, spray, harvest, pack, drive, irrigate and supervise receive wages that keep the cost structure low.

Land completes the picture. The 2017 Land Audit found that white individual landowners held 26.66 million hectares or 72%, of farms and agricultural holdings owned by individuals, while Africans held 1.31 million hectares, or 4%, in that category.

The same audit records the major role of companies and trusts, which means racial advantage often sits behind corporate and legal forms as well as individual title.

White commercial farming grew inside that property regime. It gained scale through law, capital and state design. It then presented scale as merit. The farmer who inherited land, borrowed against it, mechanised it, hired cheap labour and accessed commercial seed and markets became the public face of agricultural competence, while the Black people who worked the system remained largely unnamed.

The seed question adds another layer. South Africa's commercial agricultural system does not rest on some pure natural genius passed through white bloodlines. It rests, in important commodity sectors, on corporate seed systems and input packages. BFAP and CropLife esti-

mate the 2021-22 GM maize area at 84.5%, with 65% of the maize area planted to stacked insect-resistant and herbicide-tolerant maize. Their assessment also places GM soybean adoption at a conservative 95%.

These figures do not make commercial farmers irrelevant. They make the racial mythology absurd. A commercial farmer working with proprietary seed, herbicides, fertiliser, irrigation, finance, insurance, storage, logistics and export channels operates inside a capital-intensive system. That system rewards access as much as ability and it rewards inherited position before it ever tests natural skill.

African farmers face a different historical landscape. Stats SA's 2024 General Household Survey counted 3.33 million South African households involved in one or more agricultural production activities.

Of these, 3.115 million were Black African households, compared with 130 000 white households. This means Black households participate in agriculture on a mass scale, although policy, media and finance rarely treat their production as central to national food sovereignty.

Most of these households farm because food insecurity presses directly on daily life. Stats SA reports that households involved in agriculture mostly did so to secure either an additional source of food, at 75.5%, or a main source of food, at 12.6%. Only 7.2% farmed to generate income. This production carries survival, care and household reproduction rather than the export glamour attached to commercial estates.

Smallholder and farmer-managed seed systems intensify this argu-

ment. Research on farmer-managed seed systems in the Eastern Cape describes systems in which smallholder farmers save, replant and exchange seed from previous harvests. These practices hold agrarian knowledge that corporate agriculture tries to displace through dependency on purchased seed and chemical packages.

Drought brings the comparison into focus because commercial farmers and small producers do not face climate stress with the same buffers. This brings us back to the international question.

When foreign governments, organisations or political networks speak about offering South African farmers land, visas or farming opportunities abroad, they should define farming skill through competence rather than ownership.

They should ask who can manage irrigation, machinery, livestock, pruning, planting, harvesting, storage and workers.

They should ask who can farm with technology and who can farm when technology fails.

They should ask who understands commercial systems and who also understands survival agriculture, saved seed and drought adaptation.

On that measure, many African farm supervisors and small farmers deserve the first invitation.

They know the commercial farm from within, while they also understand the conditions that shape African food production outside the protected world of white capital.

They have carried the practical

knowledge of South African agriculture while the global right converted white ownership into a morality tale.

A serious agricultural visa programme would recruit African farm supervisors, farm managers, skilled farm workers, women seed keepers and small producers. It would offer land access, co-operative ownership, credit, machinery, training exchanges and market access. It would treat agricultural knowledge as something produced through labour and history, rather than something conferred by a title deed.

South Africa's white farmer myth survives because the world keeps looking at the owner while ignoring the workforce.

The moment one counts the workers, studies the wage structure, reads the land audit, follows the seed systems and listens to African producers, the story changes.

The people who deserve global farming opportunities include those who have worked the land without owning it, managed production without receiving status and produced food without inheriting the state-backed privileges of settler agriculture.

Gillian Schutte is a South African writer, filmmaker and political analyst. She specialises in African politics, geopolitics, multipolarity, media power, Western imperialism and the unfinished question of African sovereignty in post-apartheid South Africa.

South Africa's white farmer myth survives because the world keeps looking at the owner while ignoring the workforce.

South Africa's 2026 national minimum wage sets the farmworker floor at R30.23 for each ordinary hour worked.

Every year on Freedom Day, we celebrate the arrival of political freedom in 1994.

But freedom, like memory, is selective. For some, it marks a rupture with the past. For others, it is a reminder that the past did not disappear; it changed form.

As we commemorate freedom, a familiar chorus returns: that South Africa has too many “race laws”, that redress has gone too far, that equality now demands forgetting.

It is a curious kind of freedom, one that asks us to remember 1994 but forget everything that made it necessary. There is a new kind of courage making the rounds in South Africa.

You can hear it on podcasts. You can read it in opinion columns. You can feel it in the confident tone of men who have suddenly discovered injustice.

Their grievance is simple. South Africa, they say, has “144 race laws”. The solution, they insist, is equally simple: abolish broad-based black economic empowerment (broad-based BEE).

One must admire the efficiency: three centuries of racial engineering reduced to a soundbite.

But what is most fascinating about this moral clarity is its timing. It arrives roughly 30 years after the end of apartheid, which raises a small, inconvenient question: Where exactly were these defenders of equality when race laws were doing their most enthusiastic work?

The part of the story we keep skipping

You cannot begin South Africa’s story wherever it is most comfortable. You cannot start in 2026 with a procurement policy and pretend the previous 300 years were incidental.

The story begins earlier.

It begins with land taken without consent in 1652 and with a system that hardened over time into law. By the early 20th century, legislation, such as the Natives Land Act of 1913 and the Native Trust and Land Act of 1936, had confined black South Africans to roughly 13% of the land, reserving the remaining 87% for white ownership.

This was not administration. It was design.

In 1948, apartheid formalised the design into a governing logic. By 1950, the state moved beyond separation to classification. Identity was fixed through the Population Registration Act, reduced to categories in a register. From the single act flowed an interlocking architecture of control.

The Group Areas Act determined where people could live. The Bantu Education Act of 1953 structured what they could learn and by extension, what they could become. The pass laws regulated movement, work and daily existence.

Race was not incidental to opportunity. It was its organising principle. When democracy arrived in 1994, it did not reset the system. It inherited it. Land, capital, networks and advantage had been accumulated, carefully, deliberately and over generations.

Some looked at the inheritance and said: We must change it. Others looked at the same reality and said: Can we not simply begin from here?

That second position is easier to hold when history has worked in your favour.

The luxury of forgetting

There is a privilege in being able to forget history. It belongs mostly to those whose lives were not fundamentally shaped by it.

If apartheid did not determine where you were born, which school you attended or whether your family accumulated wealth, it can begin to feel distant, almost abstract.



Selective memory: There is a privilege in being able to forget history. It belongs mostly to those whose lives were not shaped by it. Photo: GCIS

The curious outrage of comfortable men

As we commemorate freedom, a familiar chorus returns: that South Africa has too many ‘race laws’, that redress has gone too far, that equality now demands forgetting



Armand Bam

The comedy of selective outrage

What makes the debate interesting is not the argument but the performance.

There is a theatrical indignation in the sudden discovery of “race laws”, as though South Africa has only recently developed an interest in race-conscious policy.

For decades, race determined everything. During that time, the loudest defenders of merit were notably quiet. Now, as the country attempts, imperfectly, to address the imbalances, merit has become sacred.

Merit, it seems, becomes most visible when it begins to feel threatened.

Of course, simplification is not confined to one side of the debate.

There are also voices that speak in a different register — louder, more confrontational, often carried by the language of historical reckoning.

Here, justice is imagined as reversal. The past is not something to be understood but something to be settled. It is a powerful language. It draws on wounds that are real and unresolved.

But it too reduces. It flattens a complex society into opposing camps, where every tension must resolve in one direction. In doing so, it risks reproducing the logic it seeks to dismantle, with the roles rearranged.

A complicated country

None of this means that policies like broad-based BEE should escape scrutiny. They have, at times, been poorly implemented. They have, at times, benefited a narrow elite. They require constant refinement. But there is a difference between improving redress and denying its necessity.

South Africa remains one of the most unequal societies in the world. That inequality was not accidental. It was constructed. Systems that are constructed do not dismantle themselves politely.

A world that is beginning to wobble

What is striking is how quickly the language of stability shifts when uncertainty is no longer confined to the Global South.

As conflict reshapes parts of the Middle East and as global markets respond to the disruption of energy flows and trade routes, long-held assumptions about economic certainty begin to fracture. Supply chains strain. Markets wobble. Security, once taken for granted, becomes negotiable.

Suddenly, the world begins to feel a little more like South Africa has always felt: contested, unequal and unfinished. History, it turns out, is not something that happens elsewhere. It is something that structures everywhere.

A word to those returning

In recent months, another shift has

emerged. Some white South Africans who left years ago, many for the US, are returning. Some left in search of opportunity. Some left out of fear. Some left because the new South Africa felt unfamiliar.

As uncertainty grows elsewhere, home begins to look different.

To them we say: welcome home. You are South Africans. This country belongs to you too.

But home is not the place you left. It is the place we have been building while you were away — a country wrestling with its past, trying, imperfectly, to create something fairer. Returning home means joining that project, not pretending it was unnecessary.

The work of remembering

South Africa’s future will not be built on selective memory. It will be built by those willing to confront history honestly and act with responsibility. That includes those who suffered under the old system. It also includes those who benefited from it, whether intentionally or not.

A nation cannot move forward if some insist on forgetting how the road was built. Perhaps the real test is this: not whether we are comfortable with redress but whether we are courageous enough to face the history that made it necessary.

Freedom Day was never meant to be a day of selective remembrance. It was meant to mark a break from a past we are learning how to confront. Freedom is not the absence of responsibility. It is the obligation to reckon honestly with what came before and to build differently because of it.

To celebrate freedom while resisting redress is not principle. It is amnesia dressed as fairness.

Let us celebrate Freedom Day but let us do so with memory intact, with honesty about what freedom was meant to undo and with the courage to continue the work it began.

Welcome home. Now let’s get to work.

Professor Armand Bam is the head of social impact and the postgraduate diploma leadership development for NPOs at Stellenbosch Business School.

Thought Leader

Dearth of State briefing; death of black legal practice



Call for transformation: Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development, Mmamoloko Kubayi acknowledged that black legal practitioners continue to be sidelined and denied fair business opportunities with government. Photo: DOJ

Christine Qunta

The South African Constitution is hailed as one of the best in the world. Yet among those who praise it, fidelity is often limited to provisions that do not significantly alter the economic architecture inherited from an unjust, unequal past.

One of the most important provisions is the right to equality in the Bill of Rights. This right underpins the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act and related policies. Those who reject broad-based black economic empowerment (BEE) in effect reject the right to equality for black people, even if this is rarely stated explicitly.

Instead, the argument is framed as: “We support transformation but ...” — and what follows the “but” usually negates what came before it. This reflects a troubling comfort with economic and institutional discrimination and the inequality that continues to define South Africa. It is not simply a passive legacy; it is defended and reinforced by resistance to transformation.

The legal sector is no different. Recognition of this inequality led to the development of the BEE legal sector code of good practice, gazetted on 20 September 2024 by trade, industry and competition minister Parks Tau. The inaugural Legal Practice Council (LPC), chaired by Kathleen Dlepu, played a key role in facilitating the code.

Although there has been some progress, transformation in the legal profession remains insufficient. Black attorneys and advocates face two main challenges.

The first is the lack of a sustainable flow of quality legal work to enable them not only to survive but to flourish. This stems from discriminatory procurement practices in the private sector and inconsistent briefing practices by the state.

The irony is that black legal practi-



Stakeholder: Kathleen Dlepu chairperson of the Legal Practice Council. Photo: LPC

tioners study at the same universities as their white counterparts, obtain the same LLB degrees, complete the same candidate attorney training or pupillage and write the same LPC admission examinations. Once admitted, the only difference is race.

Discriminatory procurement practices keep black law firms small, while many black advocates are forced to leave the Bar. LPC statistics for 2024 show that the largest majority white-owned law firm has 396

partners, compared with 18 in the largest black-owned firm.

At the Bar, figures from the Johannesburg Society of Advocates show that, over the past five years, 406 advocates left, 66% of whom were black. More starkly, black junior advocates accounted for 85% of those who left within their first four years.

To address this, the legal sector code requires that 70% of legal work outsourced by the state be allocated to black attorneys and advocates in the first two years, rising to 80% by year five.

To curb high attrition among black advocates, the code also sets briefing targets for medium and large law firms: in the first two years, 40% of the total annual fee expenditure on advocates must go to black advocates, with 30% allocated to black women advocates.

The second challenge is the lack of representation of black attorneys in ownership structures of large, majority white-owned firms. LPC data shows that, on average, 72% of equity partners or directors in these firms are white, compared with 28% who are black.

These firms perform better at associate level, where 59% are black. The code sets targets of 30% black equity partners or directors in the first two years, including 15% black women, rising to 50% and 25% respectively by year five.

The Legal Sector Charter Council, established under the code, began operating in March 2025. Its role is to monitor compliance and guide stakeholders. In its first year, it conducted outreach and issued guidance and clarification notices. Its engagements indicate broad support for the code and a willingness among most stakeholders to comply. The council is also finalising memorandums of understanding with several organs of state.

South Africa faces a clear choice: retain the economic and institutional architecture inherited from apartheid or pursue the path towards a more equal society as required by the Constitution.

For the legal profession, the legal sector code provides a roadmap for that journey.

Christine Qunta is the chairperson of the Legal Sector Charter Council.

25 YEARS AGO

The legal profession, particularly its upper echelons, continues to be dominated by white men, says a recent report by the influential Johannesburg-based think-tank, the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS). The report critically evaluates several areas within the justice sector in need of reform — with particular focus on obstacles facing the implementation of the government’s “Justice for All” maxim. It forms part of a European Union-funded research project entitled “Closing the gap between policy and implementation in South Africa.” One of its more striking findings is that representivity within the profession, in terms of race and gender, is “still a long way off.” The “pale male” domination of the legal profession has changed little since South Africa’s transition to democracy. Describing the need for representivity of the judiciary, especially, as “all the more important in the light of its new political role in giving effect to the Constitution”, the report found that white men continue to dominate the magistracy, lower courts, high courts and Supreme Court of Appeal. - *Mail & Guardian April 26 to May 3 2001*

VERBATIM

● **“The deeds registry has been directed to place caveats on the properties, while the Road Traffic Management Corporation has been instructed to ensure the vehicles cannot be sold or transferred.”** — Selby Makgotho, spokesperson for SIU explaining the purpose of the preservation order for Siyabonga Nkosi, who is accused of overcharging Eskom for relays with a market price of R450 that ballooned to R50 000 per unit and who lived a life of opulence.

● **“Explanations by the applicant lack detail and collaboration. He has remained silent and offered no explanation on the issue of the cash amounting to R52 700 that was found in his possession, some of it stuffed under a mattress. He offered no explanation at all ... A stun grenade was also found in contravention of the provisions of section 6 of the Explosives Act 26 of 1956. Possession of docketts and SAPS equipment is admitted.”** — The magistrate rejected Sergeant Fannie Nkosi’s bail application after he was found in possession of a prohibited explosive, case docketts and for failing to properly store firearms and live ammunition.

● **“The President has noted the charges and the court appearance of the National Commissioner.”** — The presidency said in a statement after chairperson of the portfolio committee on police, Ian Cameron called on President Cyril Ramaphosa to suspend national police commissioner Fannie Masemola, who appeared in court on Tuesday on charges related to alleged irregularities in a R360-million South African Police Service (SAPS) procurement contract.

● **“The Senqu Bridge is an example of what Africa can achieve when it believes in itself. It is in this spirit of friendship, cooperation and solidarity that I express sincere appreciation to Your Majesty, the Government and people of this remarkable Kingdom for your hospitality today.”** — President Cyril Ramaphosa at the launch of Senqu bridge, Mokhotlong, Kingdom of Lesotho.

Andile Lungisa

Oliver Reginald Tambo stands in the moral imagination of South Africa like a figure carved from both scripture and reason, at once prophetic and precise, a man who moved through history with the quiet authority of conviction rather than the noise of spectacle.

To liken him to Moses is not mere rhetorical flourish; it is to recognise in him a leader who did not simply resist oppression but carried a people through the long wilderness of exile, sustaining hope when the promised land seemed impossibly distant.

Like Moses, Tambo's greatness was not in dramatic conquest but in endurance, an austere, disciplined fidelity to a vision larger than himself. He led not from the immediacy of the homeland but from the dislocation of exile, where the struggle risked becoming abstract, where distance could dull urgency.

Yet under his stewardship, the ANC did not dissipate into nostalgia or factionalism. It matured into a formidable moral and political force, its cause translated into a language the world could not ignore.

Tambo understood, perhaps more deeply than many of his contemporaries, that liberation in the 20th century required not only courage but legitimacy, an appeal to universal principles that could bind disparate nations into solidarity.

His intellectual formation was as rare as it was generative. As a trained lawyer, he possessed the discipline of argument and the instinct for justice. As a theologian, he carried within him a metaphysical commitment to the dignity of all human beings. As a mathematician, he cultivated a mind attuned to structure, proportion and the elegant complexity of systems.

These were not discrete identities but interwoven strands that shaped his method. Where others might have seen only the crude binaries of oppressor and oppressed, Tambo perceived the layered intricacies of the human condition and consequently, human society: the interplay of power, fear, ideology and history. He resisted the seduction of simplification. His politics was not built on slogans but on synthesis.

This intellectual temperament gave him little patience for emotionalism untethered from strategy. He understood that indignation, however justified, was not a sufficient instrument of liberation. It had to be disciplined, translated into institutions, alliances and long-term planning. His leadership style reflected this — measured, deliberate and often understated.

Yet beneath the restraint lay an unyielding moral core, shaped profoundly by his Christian faith.

For Tambo, the struggle against apartheid was not merely political; it was ethical in the deepest sense, a confrontation with a system that denied the *imago Dei*, the inherent worth placed in every human being.

His belief in dignity was not selective; it extended even to those who upheld the system he opposed. His refusal to dehumanise his adversaries would later prove foundational to the possibility of reconciliation.

Perhaps nowhere was his strategic acumen more rigorously tested than in navigating the geopolitical realities of the Cold War.

The Soviet Union emerged as the principal source of material, financial and military support for the ANC and its armed wing, uMkhonto weSizwe, particularly from the 1960s onwards, when the movement was forced into exile.

This support included military training, logistical assistance and

Oliver Tambo: The Moses of nation in exile

The ANC president was the quiet architect of liberation, carrying a people through the long wilderness of exile, sustaining hope when the promised land seemed impossibly distant



Figure of unity: Former ANC president Oliver Tambo knew liberation required courage and legitimacy, an appeal to universal principles that could bind disparate nations into solidarity. Photo: The Presidency

diplomatic backing within international forums. Tambo thus operated within a global matrix in which alignment — or the perception of alignment — with the Eastern Bloc was both a practical necessity and a political liability.

It is within this context that one might reasonably argue that he held an implicit sympathy for certain aspects of the socialist and communist systems that sustained the liberation movement in its most vulnerable years.

Yet Tambo's political imagination resisted reduction to Cold War binaries. While he maintained close relations with the Soviet Union and other socialist states, he was equally attentive to preserving the ANC's broad ideological character as a national liberation movement.

In other words, it was a united front. The distinction was not merely semantic; it was strategic. In Western capitals, particularly in the US and the UK, the ANC was frequently depicted as a proxy of

Soviet expansionism. Tambo understood that such perceptions, if left unchallenged, would constrain the movement's ability to mobilise global support.

Accordingly, he undertook a sustained diplomatic effort to reframe the struggle against apartheid in terms that transcended ideological divisions. Engaging with a wide spectrum of political actors, including those in conservative establishments, he emphasised that apartheid constituted a violation of human

rights and democratic principles rather than an extension of Cold War rivalry.

His engagement with the US during the Reagan era is particularly illustrative. Despite the administration's initial policy of "constructive engagement" with the apartheid regime, Tambo and his colleagues worked assiduously to influence public opinion, congressional leaders and civil society, thereby contributing to the eventual shift towards sanctions and increased pressure on Pretoria.

Through persistent diplomacy, careful messaging and the cultivation of relationships across political divides, Tambo and his colleagues managed to shift the discourse. They engaged not only with liberal and progressive activists but also with policymakers and opinion-makers in conservative circles, emphasising that apartheid was not merely a domestic policy of a sovereign state but a moral aberration that destabilised the global order.

The eventual imposition of sanctions by the US, despite initial resistance from the Reagan administration, was not a sudden moral awakening but the culmination of sustained pressure, much of it orchestrated under Tambo's guidance. He understood that power yields not only to protest but to persuasion, not only to outrage but to argument.

In this, Tambo revealed himself as an heir to the finest traditions of the Enlightenment, even as he remained deeply rooted in his African identity. He embodied the Enlightenment's faith in reason, its commitment to universal human rights and its belief in the capacity of dialogue to transform political realities. Yet he did not adopt the values as a form of mimicry or assimilation. Rather, he inhabited them, reinterpreting them through the lived experience of colonial dispossession and racial oppression. He demonstrated that the ideals of liberty, equality and dignity were not the exclusive inheritance of Europe but belonged to humanity as a whole.

His Africanness was not diminished by this inheritance; it was enriched. He stood as a bridge between intellectual traditions, showing that one could be fully African and fully engaged with the philosophical currents that shaped the modern world. In him, the Enlightenment found not a disciple but a renewal, a reminder that its highest aspirations are realised not in abstraction but in the concrete struggles of oppressed peoples.

Oliver Tambo remains a figure of profound paradox and unity: a revolutionary who distrusted rhetoric, a theologian who embraced reason, a mathematician who navigated the immeasurable terrain of human suffering and hope. Like Moses, he did not live to see the full realisation of the freedom he helped secure. But he carried his people to the threshold, sustained by a vision that transcended the contingencies of his time.

In the end, his legacy is not only in the institutions he helped build or the victories he helped secure. It is in the example he set, which insists that leadership, at its highest, is an act of moral and visionary imagination disciplined by intellect; that justice requires both passion and patience; and that even in the darkest wilderness, it is possible to walk with quiet certainty towards a horizon shaped by dignity, reason and the enduring possibility of human freedom.

Andile Lungisa is an ANC national executive committee member and former ANC Youth League deputy president.

The protests insisted that what we are seeing is the expansion of a single logic: imperial in character, colonial in structure, even when it speaks the language of democracy, security and humanitarian concern

Nigel Branken

The 17 April protests showed that solidarity with Cuba and Palestine is widening into something more serious: a recognition that Africa faces a historic choice between anti-imperialist internationalism and a deepening colonial order backed by Western power.

Some protests are little more than rituals. They register outrage, mark a date and disappear into the churn of the next crisis. The 17 April mobilisation was not that. What happened outside the US consulate in Sandton and in parallel actions in Durban, Cape Town and eThekweni, was more than a gesture of support for Cuba or Palestine. It was a public argument about the world we are living in and the choice confronting Africa in a moment of widening imperial war.

The demonstrations were called for 17 April, the 65th anniversary of revolutionary Cuba's defeat of the CIA-sponsored Bay of Pigs invasion. It is a lesson President Donald Trump needs to be reminded of, given his threats about dealing with Cuba once he has finished with Iran. Six decades of the US blockade have intensified under Trump, including the closure of oil supplies Cuba needs to function.

Several hundred activists representing a wide range of organisations gathered in Johannesburg despite the rain. The breadth of the coalition mattered. The Cuba Solidarity Now mobilisation brought together political, trade union, faith-based and community formations, including the ANC, SACP, EFF, PAC, Friends of Cuba (Focus), Palestine solidarity organisations such as PSC and South African Jews for a Free Palestine, the Evangelical Alliance of South Africa (TEASA), Cosatu and affiliates including Nehawu and Sactwu. Durban and Cape Town rallies reflected a similarly broad front.

The visual language of the protests made the politics unmistakable: "Pasop Trump, remember Bay of Pigs", "Down with US imperialism, break the blockade, stand by Cuba", "Stop the genocide. Stop bombing Gaza, Iran, Lebanon", "No SA coal for genocidal Israel", "Free Maduro! Free Cilia!" and calls to free Palestinian political prisoners. Cuban, Palestinian, Venezuelan and Iranian flags flew outside the venues.

Too much commentary still treats each new war, siege or intervention as an exceptional case — the prod-



Affirmation: Solidarity with Cuba, marking 65 years since the failed Bay of Pigs invasion by the imperialist US regime, which sought to destroy the Cuban Revolution. Photo: SACP

We stand with Cuba, our friend

uct of local irrationality or complexity. The protests rejected this. They insisted that what we are seeing is the expansion of a single logic: imperial in character, colonial in structure, even when it speaks the language of democracy, security and humanitarian concern. It is increasingly fascistic in its contempt for civilian life, sovereignty and law.

Gaza has become the clearest and most horrifying expression of this. What has happened there is not simply war in the ordinary sense. It is a systematic demonstration of what becomes possible once an entire people is stripped of moral standing: siege, starvation, bombardment, the destruction of hospitals, schools and homes, mass displacement and the re-coding of victims as threats.

Exterminatory violence is recast as self-defence. This is the grammar of a world in which empire no longer feels compelled to hide its methods. Once that threshold is crossed in Palestine, the same logic appears elsewhere with growing confidence.

We have seen it in Lebanon, Yemen, Syria and now Iran. The script is familiar. A state or movement that resists imperial alignment is marked as irrational, fanatical or terrorist.

Its government is presented as ille-

gitimate. Economic punishment is framed as moral discipline. Military aggression is presented as rescue. Destabilisation becomes "democracy promotion".

The same pattern is visible beyond West Asia. Cuba remains under a siege designed not only to punish a government but to suffocate an alternative political imagination.

On 18 April, Brazil, Mexico and Spain issued a joint declaration at a defence of democracy summit in Barcelona, expressing concern about the humanitarian crisis facing the Cuban people and calling for measures to alleviate it. South Africa was represented by President Cyril Ramaphosa, who defended the country's ICJ genocide case against Israel but remained silent on Cuba — an omission Ronnie Kasrils has questioned.

That silence matters because Cuba is not peripheral to South Africa's history. Cuba did not merely issue statements during southern Africa's liberation struggles.

It committed lives, resources and military support in Angola and elsewhere, helping to weaken apartheid's regional power and open the way to Namibian independence and South African democracy.

To stand aside while Cuba is strangled would not be realism. It would be moral failure and historical amnesia.

This is what gave Kasrils's inter-

vention its importance on 17 April. His speech located Cuba's present crisis within a longer history of imperial aggression and resistance.

More importantly, he has called on South Africa to follow the lead of Brazil, Mexico and Spain. He has urged South Africa and Namibia to act together and extended that appeal to Angola, Mozambique, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the continent.

This call should not be treated as diplomatic ornament but as strategic direction. If South Africa's liberation inheritance means anything, it cannot survive only in speeches or symbolic language.

It must be reflected in present choices, at a time when the world is again being shaped by siege, militarism and racial hierarchy.

South Africa should not applaud from the sidelines. It should align. Namibia should move with it. Angola and Mozambique should not hesitate. SADC should act with political memory and purpose.

The success of 17 April should not be measured only by turnout or slogans, though these mattered. It should be measured by whether it sharpens political consequence. The demonstrations expressed a growing internationalism: anti-imperialist, anti-genocide and rooted in the con-

viction that the suffering of one people is inseparable from the freedom of another.

The protests also insisted that solidarity must be practical. Alongside the political message was a clear appeal for food, medicine and solar energy equipment for Cuba. Supporters are being asked to fund emergency aid in liaison with the Cuban embassy. The effort is already under way and generating a strong response.

This matters politically as much as morally. It shows that solidarity is not only a slogan but organisation, sacrifice and material commitment. This moment demands more than sentiment. It demands alignment.

South Africa and Namibia should join the initiative led by Brazil, Mexico and Spain. Angola, Mozambique, SADC and Africa more broadly should do the same.

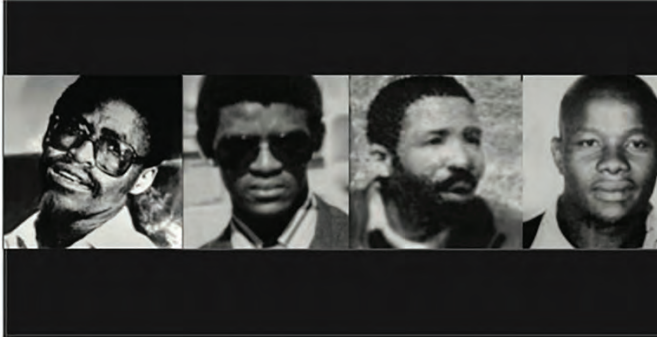
This would not be a departure from history but fidelity to it.

Anything less would mean recognising the danger and refusing the responsibility that comes with that clarity.

Nigel Branken is a South African pastor, social worker and activist and a member of the South African Communist Party.

Six decades of the US blockade have intensified under Trump, including the closure of oil supplies Cuba needs to function.

To stand aside while Cuba is strangled would not be realism. It would be moral failure and historical amnesia.



WHERE IS BOIKI TLHAPI?



PROTEST SERVICE: FREE MAJESTY
TRANSPORT: Trek Garage -10h00
VENUE: Klerksdorp

Issued by: N/CAPE & W/TRANSVAAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

Victims of apartheid: The TRC Cases Inquiry, chaired by Judge Sisi Khampepe, will assist in bringing closure to the families of slain activists like The Cradock Four who, like Zandisile Musi and Neil Aggett, among others, never disappeared but were physically erased by the previous political order. Photos: Foundation for Human Rights/ South African History Online

A nation still waiting to come home

Sello Hatang

As we approach Freedom Day, we are invited, once again, to celebrate the triumph of a nation that chose the ballot over the bullet, reconciliation over revenge and hope over despair. It is a day that reminds us of what is possible when a people refuse to be defined by their past.

Yet, beneath the symbolism and ceremony, there remains a quieter, more unsettling question: What does freedom mean for those who are searching? For families who do not know where their loved ones lie? For a country where the disappeared have not all been returned home?

Freedom, in such a context, feels incomplete. Not absent but unfinished.

Recently, on my show, *Power Week*, I had the privilege of hosting Madeleine Fullard, the head of the Missing Persons Task Team in the National Prosecuting Authority.

It was a conversation that did not simply inform; it unsettled. It opened wounds I had convinced myself had long been dealt with. Wounds buried under time, under progress, under the narrative of a nation that struggles with "moving on".

Fullard's work sits at the intersection of memory and justice. It is the painstaking labour of locating the remains of those who disappeared during apartheid, identifying them and returning them to their families.

She spoke of more than 2 000 people who vanished into the machinery of the state and the chaos of resistance. People who disappeared in exile. People who were executed through the death penalty and buried in unmarked graves, their bodies claimed by the state even in death. People whose names exist in fragments, whose stories remain incomplete.

Listening to her, I realised that disappearance is not just about physical

Freedom is not just about liberation from oppression. It is about the work of restoration. Of dignity. Of truth. It is about ensuring that no one remains missing, not in body, not in memory, not in the story of our nation

absence. It is about suspended grief. About families unable to mourn fully because there is no body to bury, no grave to visit, no ritual to complete. It is about a nation carrying ghosts it has not fully acknowledged.

As I reflected with Fullard, I came to the conclusion that the pain of the disappeared is not that they are gone but that they have not been returned.

The interview transported me back to stories I grew up with, stories that were not history lessons but lived realities in my township of Khuma.

One such story is that of Boiki Tlhapi, a young man from Ikageng whose body was dumped in a mine shaft in Stilfontein. His disappearance was not just an act of violence; it was an attempt to erase him entirely.

His name, however, was never erased. It lived in whispered conversations, in the quiet anger of a community that knew but could not prove. It lived in the unresolved grief of a family carrying that loss decades later.

Then there is George Mbatha, a man whose story reflects the cost of truth-telling in a society not always ready to hear it.

A former South African Police Service officer from Stilfontein, Mbatha became a whistleblower, exposing apartheid-era police crimes, including the killing of Boiki Tlhapi. For this, he paid dearly. He was framed, imprisoned for 18 months without a valid case or even a prison number in 1991. Suspended, denied work and left to fight for recognition for more than three decades. Thirty-six years later, he is still seeking justice, waiting for acknowledgment, haunted by what he knows.

What does it do to a man to carry such knowledge? To know where

bodies were disposed of, to know the truth and yet to live in a society that has not fully confronted it? Mbatha is haunted not only by the crimes he exposed but by the failure to bring closure. By the knowledge that families are still waiting. Haunted by ghosts that refuse to be buried.

Fullard spoke of moments of breakthrough, when remains are found, when DNA matches, when a family is finally able to say: "He is home." But she also spoke of the many cases where that closure remains elusive. Where hope rises, only to be dashed again.

I was reminded of a ceremony I once attended in Mamelodi. It was a graveside process led by Fullard and her team. Families of members of Poqo, the armed wing of the PAC, had gathered.

I do not remember the speeches. What remains etched in my memory are the faces. Faces carrying decades of waiting. Faces searching for something beyond words. Faces that held hope and fear in equal measure.

There was something almost sacred in that space. A quiet acknowledgment that this was not just a procedural exercise but a deeply human moment. A moment where history, grief and dignity converged.

Among the many stories of loss is that of Tsotetsi Seakgwa. His elderly mother is waiting for closure through the reparations process. She knows where he is buried. And yet, knowing has not brought peace.

When his coffin was being carried, it fell and cracked as apartheid police chased those carrying it. That image, of a cracked coffin, is more than a moment in time. It is a metaphor for our society. A coffin that could not

hold its dignity. A burial interrupted. A final act of violence even in death.

Today, that crack remains. It exists in our institutions, in our conversations, in our silences. It is the visible fracture of a nation that has not fully healed. We have buried, yes. But have we truly laid to rest?

As I have often said, a nation that buries without restoring dignity is a nation still carrying its dead on its soul.

Fullard left me with more questions than answers. Are we truly ready to face the full truth of our past? Not just the convenient truths but the uncomfortable ones? Are we ready to confront the actions of the state but also those within the liberation movement?

Are we prepared to acknowledge that history is not a simple narrative of heroes and villains but a complex tapestry of human actions, some noble, some deeply troubling? Do we have the courage to face the monster, even when it wears familiar faces?

One of the most unsettling reflections from our conversation was this: we prefer neat history. We want clear lines, defined roles, a narrative that reassures rather than disturbs. We want to celebrate the heroics of the liberators and condemn the brutality of the oppressors in clean, uncomplicated terms.

But history resists such simplicity. It is messy. It is layered. It refuses to be folded neatly into categories that make us comfortable.

As we consider the role of history in our curriculum, we must ask ourselves: Are we telling the full story? Or are we shaping a version of history that affirms certain narratives while silencing others? There is a danger in over-simplification. In

creating a past that is too clean, too certain, too resolved. A history that does not allow for complexity does not prepare us for truth. And without truth, reconciliation becomes fragile.

I left the conversation emotionally challenged. There was hope, yes. Hope in the work being done. Hope in the families who, after decades, finally find closure. Hope in the idea that even the most buried truths can surface.

But there was also a heaviness. A recognition that freedom, as we celebrate it, is not equally experienced. That for some, Freedom Day is a reminder not only of what was gained but of what remains unresolved.

My own experiences of trauma have made the reflections even more personal. When you have faced violence, when you have felt the fragility of life, the questions of reconciliation take on a different weight.

How do you forgive when there has been no acknowledgment? How do you move forward when the past remains present? How do you reconcile with absence?

Freedom, I am beginning to understand, is not just about liberation from oppression. It is about the ongoing work of restoration. Of dignity. Of truth. It is about ensuring that no one remains missing, not in body, not in memory, not in the story of our nation.

As we approach Freedom Day, perhaps the most honest thing we can do is to hold both truths at once: to celebrate how far we have come and to confront how far we have to go.

Freedom, if it is to mean anything, must include the return of the missing. It must include the restoration of dignity. It must include the courage to face our past in all its complexity.

Only then can we begin to speak, not just of freedom but of wholeness.

Sello Hatang is the executive director of Re Hata Mmoho

Thought Leader



Anxiety: In the TV series *American Primeval*, fear is cited as what fuelled the systematic elimination of everything the settler could not master.

Faizal Dawjee

The foundational myths of the modern West are inscribed in the chronicles of inexorable progress. Yet in truth, for any colonial entity to root itself on Indigenous soil and thrive, the natives must be exterminated, physically liquidated and culturally pulverised, their very breath an existential affront to the invader's dominion.

President Donald Trump's latest snarling dehumanisation of Iranians as "animals" exposes the supremacist rhetoric, where the racial Other is reduced to vermin fit for slaughter, thereby licensing the eternal erasure of the "lesser" world.

His chilling declaration that "a whole civilisation will die tonight", in reference to Iran's ancient heartlands, lays bare his unambiguous genocidal intent, shredding millennia of heritage to embers under the Star-Spangled Banner.

America's continental hegemony demanded precisely this Indigenous genocide, its Manifest Destiny doctrine providing a pious fig leaf, draping Christian supremacy and racial entitlement over the deliberate destruction, bodily and spiritual, of those who rightfully held the soil.

The same grim architectural logic defines Israel, where the establishment of a sovereign ethno-state required the genocidal efficiency of the Nakba to "disappear" the Palestinian population.

In both instances, the birth of the nation-state remains inseparable from the death of the Indigenous Other, revealing a shared imperial DNA where the "civilising mission" serves as a thin veneer for the calculated mechanics of extermination.

In *Neither Settler nor Native: The Making and Unmaking of Permanent Minorities*, Prof Mahmood Mamdani identifies the US as creating the violent template for modern settler colonialism, a framework later mirrored by regimes in apartheid South Africa and Israel.

He argues that through the 19th century the model emerged in North America, where genocide and internment on reservations created a native underclass and the physical and ideological spaces in which new immigrant identities crystallised as a settler nation.

Cormac McCarthy's novel *Blood Meridian* sees the sadistic protagonist Judge Holden intone that "Men of God and men of war have strange affinities". The observation fuses religious zeal with the violent Westward Expansion, indicting a nation built on conquest, where violence obliterates distinctions between civilisation and savagery, with Holden incarnating war as the ultimate validation of existence.

Across West Asia, Israel and America's religiously sanctioned military campaigns against Palestinians, Lebanese and Iranians mirror the supremacist pattern, infusing ethnocide and genocide with an ideology that dehumanises the "Other" as an existential threat, unleashing Armageddon on Iran and Palestine.

To understand the shared trajectory, one must look to the legal architecture established by Raphael Lemkin, a Polish-Jewish lawyer who lost 49 relatives in the Holocaust.

Lemkin's 1944 definition of genocide — "the destruction of a nation or of an ethnic group" — transcends mere physical slaughter, identifying it as a "coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups". The mission finds its insidious twin in ethnocide, which destroys the cultural spirit by erasing language and memory.

Together, they function as a war against the soul, targeting political institutions, religious identity, memory and dignity to render a people spiritually extinct. By demolishing the historical essence of a nation, survivors are converted into hollowed shells, ensuring that annihilation is as absolute as it is eternal.

From its blood-soaked founding to its current stature, America embodies an arrogance laced with what Said termed "Orientalist contempt". Said identifies the pathology: "Part of the main plan of imperialism ... is that we will give you your history, we will write it for you, we will re-order the past." This erases Indigenous memory in favour of empire.

In the TV series *American Primeval*, an Indigenous woman asks a white settler: "Why do your people have so much hunger to kill?" She answers: "Fear."

The primal anxiety fuelled the systematic elimination of everything the settler could not master. The Westward Expansion was a crusade

From US's carnage to Israel's apocalypse

Across West Asia, they have sanctioned military campaigns, infusing ethnocide and genocide with an ideology that dehumanises the "Other" as an existential threat, unleashing Armageddon on Iran and Palestine



Thirst for blood: Vietnamese affected by pesticide during the Vietnam War. From Agent Orange to My Lai, the US executed a "kill anything that moves" doctrine. Photo: Credit Jorge Lascar

of paranoia, where religious zeal and the hunger for land justified exterminatory raids on Indigenous men, women and children.

The conquest of the Indigenous Indians was a blueprint for erasure, as populations plummeted from 15 million to a mere quarter-million by 1900. Manifest Destiny cloaked the purge, sanctifying bloodbaths from Sand Creek to Wounded Knee. In California, the state industrialised killings through scalp bounties, while the boarding school system perfected ethnocide by stealing 100 000 children in what Captain Richard Henry Pratt described as his philosophy of assimilation: "Kill the Indian in him, and save the man."

In perhaps the greatest single act of ecological warfare, a frenzied US army systematically slaughtered 40 million buffalo, a scorched-earth strike designed to starve Indigenous peoples. By turning the Great Plains into a charnel house and proving that species extinction is the prerequisite for human erasure, the American nation was born from deliberate genocide.

In the 21st century, the playbook has been adopted and adapted by Israel. Said's Orientalist lens extends seamlessly here, as Palestinians and Iranians are cast as the "reviled Other", primitive, fanatical Semites whose erasure affirms a self-constructed supremacy.

Sven Lindqvist's *A History of Bombing* finds its modern parallel in Israel's aerial doctrine, where "precision strikes" rationalise mass civilian death as "mowing the lawn".

The 1948 Plan Dalet provided the strategic template for the Nakba, authorising the torching of 400 villages and the massacre of thousands of Palestinians.

Even right-wing historian Benny Morris identifies the mandate as the ideological anchor for the Nakba, which culminates today in Gaza, where 70 000 tons of explosives — triple the tonnage dropped on Dresden — have extinguished at least 75 000 Palestinian lives.

By invoking "Amalek", Netanyahu mirrors the theological bloodlust of American frontiersmen, providing divine cover for war.

This is a systematic erasure of the Palestinian soul, where the destruction of 80% of cultural landmarks and every centre of learning obliterates memory and future alike. From the ruins of Al-Shifa to settler-led pogroms in the West Bank, the "Other" is hunted as a demographic threat.

In Vietnam, imperial racism rebranded peasants as "gooks" to justify butchery. From Agent Orange to My Lai, the US executed a "kill anything that moves" doctrine.

The inherited path of expansionism has led to escalation against Iran, where American troops are being rallied with apocalyptic fervour that reconstructs modern warfare into a divinely sanctioned crusade. Commanders have framed the conflict as "God's divine plan", in which Donald Trump is "anointed" to ignite the "signal fire" in Iran.

The American and Israeli jets hammering Iran's cities of poets and philosophers signals a staggering ethnocide. By cratering cities that

have stood for seven millennia, they are attempting to fracture an ethnic mosaic and obliterate heritage that predates the West. The bombing of more than 120 museums and cultural sites in Iran serves no strategic value except cultural vandalism.

From its inception to the present day, the US has functioned as a relentless engine of global intervention. The addiction to kinetic force reveals a state that views the world as a theatre for violent assertion of primacy. Each military deployment constitutes a repudiation of diplomacy.

The "scarlet thread" binding the horrors is impunity. From medals for Indigenous mass murderers to US vetoes shielding Israel, to International Criminal Court warrants treated as suggestions, accountability is absent. Both powers weaponise Orientalism, framing destruction as self-defence.

The genocidal mentality of the US and Israel is a supremacist nexus of settler colonialism and endless wars. With Trump and Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu presiding, the logic replicates with renewed force.

From the 15 000 Indigenous souls who perished on the Trail of Tears to the 10 000 Gaza children starved into oblivion, the patterns signify an unbroken continuum of extermination proclaimed as destiny. Lindqvist's verdict endures: "Exterminate all the Brutes" remains the civilising mission's core logic.

Faizal Dawjee is a former director of media services at GCIS and a former journalist.

Thought Leader

Busisipho Siyobi

Escalating tension between the United States (US) and Israel, on one hand, and Iran, on the other, amid unproductive negotiations on Iran's nuclear programme in February this year, has shifted geopolitical dynamics.

An organised, large-scale military offensive by the US and Israel targeted Iran's leadership, military forces and intelligence networks, including missile and nuclear infrastructure.

This was purportedly to force regime change and weaken Iran's nuclear capabilities after failed indirect negotiations hosted in Geneva and mediated by the US in February.

In the Geneva talks, US President Donald Trump set out a deal to constrain Iran's nuclear programme, though Iran was determined to continue the use of uranium, insisting on what it sees as its right to enrich uranium and, therefore, was not prepared to meet Trump's terms.

After the collapse of talks in Geneva, joint US-Israel threats to attack Iran materialised on 28 February, when Operation Epic Fury (US) and Operation Roaring Lion (Israel) launched widespread airstrikes across Iran that killed Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Subsequently, civilian infrastructure, including schools, hospitals and heritage sites, was severely damaged. A death toll of more than 2 000 civilians continues to mount.

Iran reacted with missile and drone strikes targeting US military facilities in the region, Israel, energy and civilian infrastructure in the Gulf states. It launched hundreds of drones and ballistic missiles in Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Where African economies stand

Consequently, the conflict resulted in Iran closing the Strait of Hormuz, a critical export route for global oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) shipping.

The strait is a 55km-wide, 16km-long commodity corridor between Iran and Oman, separating the Persian Gulf from the Arabian Sea. It is the most strategically significant shipping route in the world; an important part of the global economy.

This blocked waterway has restricted exports of approximately 20% to 30% of the world's oil and gas and, in turn, fuelled a significant increase in global fuel prices. This is proving to be a severe exogenous shock to multiple countries and several global commodity markets.

Specifically, the war raises questions of energy accessibility and security for African countries.

This is a priority pillar for African nations: securing energy for their people and economies and being critical players in global energy markets.

The closure of the strait has exposed systemic and operational limitations in African oil and gas industries.

On the one hand, countries such as Nigeria and Ghana have experienced short-term revenue gains because of increased crude prices. However, these gains are challenged by structural difficulties.

Ongoing constraints in domestic refining capacity highlight that oil-rich countries remain dependent on imported refined fuels. Additionally, limited domestic production capacity and old infrastructure have prevented African oil-producing countries from quickly scaling production to suit current energy market conditions.

Closure of Strait of Hormuz can be used as a strategic opportunity to enhance regional cooperation in Africa without further complicating its already strained relationship with the US



Global disruption: A Navy destroyer in the US Central Command area of operations transits the Strait of Hormuz on April 11. Photo: US Central Command

Iran war a reset moment for Africa

On the other hand, many African countries rely heavily on imported fuel, and rising oil prices have resulted in higher transportation costs, increased food prices and broader inflation. Evidently, the disruption of global energy supplies has had immediate negative effects on many African economies.

For instance, South Africa continues to face rising fuel import costs, shipping delays and increased insurance premiums as vessels are rerouted around the Cape of Good Hope. These rerouted vessels, in turn, pose a potential long-term benefit by shifting global trade towards Southern Africa's waters.

Key economic sectors, including mining, agriculture and manufacturing, have suffered because of associated logistical challenges. Beyond South Africa, other African countries have also witnessed drastic effects of rising fuel costs and remain in a vulnerable state.

An opportunity for African countries

The closure of the strait has demonstrated the importance of the Middle East region and the significant role it plays in the global economy. It is effectively at the centre of energy production, financial networks, logistics infrastructure and trade routes, particularly with the African continent.

Middle East-Africa relations

have continued through investment, finance, labour migration and trade logistics. Shipping routes linking the Gulf to the Red Sea and the Mediterranean are critical for African trade.

With this background, Africa should push for enhanced regional coordination and take this chance to strengthen ties with the Near East without further complicating its already strained relationship with the US.

Continently, West and Central African oil producers such as Nigeria and Angola have an opportunity to strengthen intra-African crude and refined product trade through pipeline networks and shared refining hubs.

Given that these countries, including Libya, export crude and re-import refined fuels at higher prices, regional blocs should coordinate investments in refineries that serve multiple countries.

This would reduce exposure to the volatility of global oil prices and build interdependence among African economies, in the same way that regional energy grids operate in more coordinated markets such as the EU.

The crisis should also create momentum for strengthening regional trade frameworks, particularly under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

As indicated, disruptions to global shipping routes have shown the vul-

nerability of Africa's overreliance on imported fuel through now costly trade corridors. This should encourage African governments to work on developing an intra-African supply chain.

For instance, landlocked countries such as Zambia and Zimbabwe could benefit from coordinated transport agreements that streamline the movement of fuel and essential goods from coastal hubs such as South Africa and Mozambique.

Coordinating customs procedures, reducing border delays and investing in regional transport corridors would mitigate current disruptions and build long-term resilience against future global shocks.

In the logistics sector, the disruption illustrates an opportunity for collaborative innovation among African freight and transport players.

Organisations such as the Southern African Association of Freight Forwarders are already positioned

Ports in Durban, Walvis Bay and Maputo can function as a coordinated network and improve efficiency by reducing congestion.

to lead efforts in coordinating alternative shipping routes and transport systems.

For instance, rerouting cargo around the Cape of Good Hope requires highly strategic port operations, rail connectivity and inland distribution networks across multiple countries.

Ports in Durban, Walvis Bay and Maputo can function as a coordinated network and improve efficiency by reducing congestion. This collaborative effort would enable a more integrated continental logistics ecosystem.

Importantly, the crisis creates a strategic opening for regional cooperation in energy diversification and industrial development across the continent.

Countries across Southern and East Africa should jointly invest in renewable energy projects, regional gas pipelines and shared storage facilities to reduce dependence on volatile global oil markets. Gas development between Mozambique and neighbouring countries could supply cleaner energy to the region while supporting industrialisation.

Further to this, joint procurement mechanisms for fuel are a strong starting point to enhance bargaining power and stabilise prices.

For African countries, the global disruption of the Iran war should be viewed as a reset moment.

African nations should take this chance to move towards more deliberate and deliverable regional cooperation that is less susceptible to external shocks and better positioned for secure energy supply.

Africa's response will require stronger collective political will and the ability to act decisively, despite competing national interests that often work against incentives for regional cooperation.

Busisipho Siyobi is the head of the Natural Resource Governance & Climate Change Programme at Good Governance Africa.

67 Blankets marks a brand-new chapter

Creativity and community are taking centre stage as the movement looks to involve embassies and more schools in the knitting initiative

Marion Smith

On World Creativity and Innovation Day, 67 Blankets for Nelson Mandela Day did what it has done so powerfully for more than a decade: it brought people together through a shared act of care.

Across South Africa on 18 April, the movement marked the occasion with public gatherings that celebrated knitting, crocheting and the deeper values that have come to define 67 Blankets: community, generosity, dignity and human connection.

From Johannesburg to Cape Town, Durban, White River and Gqeberha, supporters gathered in colourful displays of solidarity, turning handmade blankets into symbols of warmth in every sense of the word.

In Johannesburg, the focal point of the celebrations was a Family Day Out hosted at Steyn City.

The event attracted 635 visitors and participants, drawing families, volunteers and supporters into a lively community space shaped by blanket displays, creative activity and a spirit of open-hearted participation.

Among the guests was Japan's ambassador to South Africa, His Excellency Fumio Shimizu, a presence that reflected the growing international interest in a movement that has become one of South Africa's most recognisable expressions of civic compassion.

Participants were invited to bring along wool, knitting needles and crochet hooks, joining fellow volunteers in creating blankets that will



International flavour: Japan's ambassador Fumio Shimizu and movement founder Carolyn Steyn.

be distributed to vulnerable South Africans. But as with so much of what 67 Blankets does, the day was about more than the making itself. It was about belonging. It was about creating a space where first-time contributors stood alongside long-time ambassadors and where families and communities could take part in a simple but meaningful act of service.

This year's celebrations also marked an important moment in the organisation's story. Annie Robinson Grealy is stepping into a key operational leadership role, while founder Carolyn Steyn remains involved at executive level, continuing to guide the movement's vision and growth.

Steyn described the transition as a natural next step in the organisation's evolution.

"67 Blankets has always been about



Collective action: Participants were invited to bring wool, knitting needles and crochet hooks, joining fellow volunteers in creating blankets that will be distributed to vulnerable South Africans. Photos: Marion Smith

community and shared purpose. Annie's passion, organisational skills and deep commitment to the movement make her the perfect person to help guide our operations as we continue to expand our impact across South Africa," she said.

For Robinson Grealy, the task ahead is both practical and personal.

"This movement has touched thousands of lives and continues to grow because of the unwavering generosity of ordinary South Africans. My focus is to support and strengthen the incredible network of ambassadors and volunteers," she said.

That next phase appears set to place greater emphasis on youth participation and international

collaboration. The organisation is looking to involve more schools, inviting younger South Africans to engage in acts of service while learning creative skills that connect hand, heart and community.

It is also deepening its engagement with the diplomatic community by inviting embassies to take part through blankets that reflect their national identities. The initiative offers an imaginative form of cultural exchange while reinforcing a universal language of compassion.

Since its founding in 2013, 67 Blankets for Nelson Mandela Day has grown from an idea into a national movement. Thousands of volunteers have contributed their

time, skill and care to produce blankets for hospitals, shelters, schools and communities in need. In the process, the organisation has created a visible, enduring symbol of solidarity — one that links South Africans across geography, age and background through a common purpose.

In a country often marked by division and hardship, 67 Blankets offers a quieter but no less powerful reminder of what collective action can look like.

As the organisation enters this new chapter, its central message remains intact: when creativity and compassion come together, they do more than offer comfort. They help stitch communities closer together.

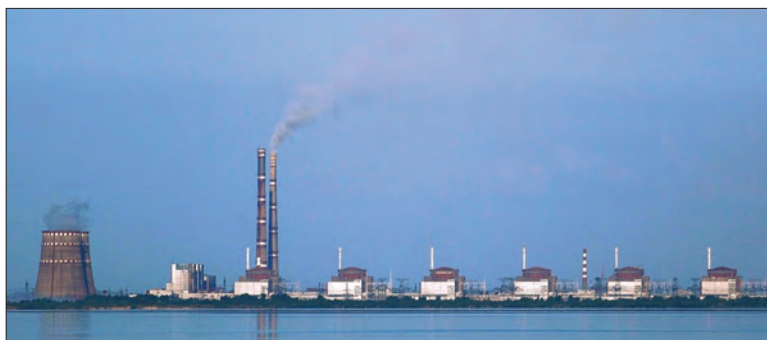
Dzvinka Kachur

Earth Day was born of two ideals: respect for the planet and a belief in peace. Since the 1970s, it has grown into a global moment of reflection on humanity's relationship with the natural world. But in 2026, Earth Day arrives under a darker cloud. It is no longer only a celebration of environmental consciousness. It is also a warning.

The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists has set the Doomsday Clock at 85 seconds to midnight — the closest it has been to catastrophe. This reflects mounting concern over nuclear weapons, the absence of clear global rules around emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and the failure of multilateral systems to respond decisively to biological and geopolitical threats. Armed conflicts are intensifying and becoming more entangled with questions of energy security, infrastructure and state power.

In South Africa, this year's Earth Day will also be marked by civic action. A coalition of non-governmental organisations — including the Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute, Fossil Free SA, Project 90 by 2030, The Green Connection, African Climate Alliance, South Durban Community Environmental Alliance, Extinction Rebellion, Earthlife Africa, Green Anglicans, Masifundise and SCAT — plans to

Earth Day in a time of war: Nuclear risk can no longer be ignored



Russian-occupied: The Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant in Ukraine has been exposed to the dangers of active warfare. Photo: Wikipedia

submit a joint memorandum calling for accountability and people-centred renewable energy solutions.

Their intervention speaks to a broader global reality. Energy is no longer only an economic issue or a development question. It is at the centre of geopolitical instability. Nowhere is this more evident than in the growing vulnerability of nuclear power infrastructure during armed conflict.

In March 2022, Russia occupied

the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant in Ukraine, one of the 10 largest nuclear power plants in the world. Since then, the facility has existed in conditions that should alarm the international community. It has been exposed to drone attacks, disruptions to external power supply, threats to water access and the wider dangers of warfare. The occupation has also placed pressure on the people operating it, with reports of intimidation, fear, coercion and uncertainty for

staff and their families.

These raise the risk of a nuclear accident in circumstances where even basic principles of safety and security cannot be guaranteed. The International Atomic Energy Agency limitations have been exposed by the war. In Zaporizhzhia, monitors have not had unfettered access to all parts of the plant. Nuclear facilities in Ukraine face military threats, yet there is no effective international enforcement mechanism capable of preventing attacks on them.

The failure sends a dangerous signal to the world: nuclear infrastructure can become part of the battlefield without meaningful accountability. Once the threshold is crossed, the risk becomes a global governance problem.

For Africa, this matters. South Africa's Koeberg nuclear power plant, located about 40km outside Cape Town, remains the continent's only operational nuclear power station. Egypt is advancing construction of its own nuclear facility. The developments make the African nuclear conversation urgent.

The question is no longer whether nuclear energy can support development or energy security. It is whether the international system has done enough to regulate and protect nuclear infrastructure in a world shaped by war, fragmentation and rising geopolitical volatility.

The protection of life on Earth also requires confronting the risks created when fragile international norms meet military power. A world in which nuclear facilities can be threatened during conflict is a world in which environmental stewardship, human security and peace can no longer be treated as separate conversations.

Earth Day should remind us that the planet is protected by political courage, international accountability and the choices states make about the systems they build and defend.

As Africa weighs its energy future, it must do so with clear eyes. The continent should not be asked to choose between development and safety or between energy ambition and environmental responsibility.

On this Earth Day, the more pressing question is whether the world is prepared to learn from present dangers before it stumbles into a preventable disaster.

Dzvinka Kachur is a research fellow at the Centre for Sustainability Transitions, Stellenbosch University.

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Jobs

The Department of Transport (DOT), supported by National Treasury (NT) and the Development Bank of Southern Africa Limited (DBSA) have established the Rail and Logistics PSP Unit for the specific purpose of implementing the PSP Programmes for port and logistics, as mandated by the Minister of Transport. The PSP Unit is governed in terms of a tripartite Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) between DOT, NT and DBSA. An Oversight Committee (OC), made up of these parties, provides governance oversight of the PSP Programme.



Head: Rail and Logistics Private Sector Participation (PSP) Unit

The Head: PSP Unit will report to the DBSA Group Executive: Programmes and the PSP Oversight Committee.

The Role: Responsible for providing strategic leadership and oversight for the PSP Unit, driving the planning, structuring, compilation, and monitoring of PSP initiatives. The role is responsible for the development and implementation of strategies, policies and frameworks that enable meaningful private sector participation for the infrastructure development. This includes managing the end-to-end transaction advisory process, coordinating stakeholder engagement, and ensuring alignment with national development objectives and legal/regulatory requirements. The job role plays a critical function in building a bankable project pipeline, attracting private investment and driving innovation through sustainable partnerships.

Key Performance Areas Strategic Direction: Strategic Direction:

- Develop and implement a 3–5-year strategic plan and sustainable operating model for the PSP Unit, ensuring alignment with national and institutional priorities and achieving financial self-sufficiency and operational viability (including revenue generation, cost recovery, and approved governance structures).

Minimum Requirements

A postgraduate degree in Engineering, Finance, MBA or other related fields. A minimum of 12 years' experience, 5 years of which must be in management, in a large enterprise in the transport sector, infrastructure development or a related field. A strong career track record of achievement in the medium/large enterprise, with evidence of achievement in transport projects.. Deep understanding of the South African transport sector, including the rail and port systems and networks, regulatory frameworks, and market dynamics.

***NB: refer to the Head: PSP Unit profile on the DBSA Careers website for the expanded requirements.** This is a fixed term contract position, based at the DBSA in Midrand.

Project Identification and Preparation

- Develop and assess a pipeline of viable PSP infrastructure projects (freight and passenger rail) aligned to the transport strategic priorities.

Financial Management

- Maintain cost-effective use of resources and compliance with all financial and procurement regulations.

Stakeholder Management

- Develop a stakeholder engagement strategy that maps out key players and decision-makers and forms strategic partnerships with key rail and logistics sector players.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

- Define key performance targets for each PSP initiative and monitor performance against milestones.

Risk Management and Governance

- Maintain a comprehensive risk register to ensure all project risks are identified, assessed, monitored and mitigated effectively.

Operations Management

- Develop and maintain operational plans, task tracking systems, and SOPs for the PSP Unit.

People Management

- Provide direction and management to the direct reports to enable the execution of the strategy and manage their portfolios effectively.
- Proactively support the bank's diversity strategies and initiatives.
- Contribute to building synergies and cooperation across functions internally and externally.

Suitable candidates must submit their application through the DBSA Careers site: www.dbsa.org/careers
Applications must be submitted by 30 April 2026 no later than 16:30. Regrettably, late applications will not be considered.

University of Zululand

The University of Zululand subscribes to the principles embedded in the Employment Equity Act

DIRECTOR: OFFICE OF THE VICE CHANCELLOR OFFICE OF THE VICE CHANCELLOR

REFERENCE NUMBER: 2026/05/VC15 • GRADE 5

The University of Zululand invites applications for the position of Director: Office of the Vice Chancellor and Principal. The purpose of this position is to manage, coordinate and promote strategic operations in and through the office of the Vice Chancellor and Principal. These will include institutional advancement, public engagement, and partnership with business and industry within the region, nationally and abroad. Collating Institutional data for the Office of the Vice Chancellor and Principal as well as dealing with any strategic projects within the office of the Vice Chancellor and Principal deem appropriate to delegate.

The position calls for an individual of impeccable integrity and an understanding of the Higher Education Sector in South Africa, an individual who can also work with statutory and institutional structures internally and externally. Strategic projects would equally include interpretation and analysis of information from the Department of Higher Education and Training, CHE, HESA, and HEQC reports.

KEY ACTIVITIES: (including but not limited to): • Provide support to the Office of the Vice Chancellor and Principal • Monitor the implementation of agreements between the Office of the Vice Chancellor and Principal • Provide oversight into the timely submission and endorsement by the Vice Chancellor and Principal of Council-mandated reports that pass through the Office of the Vice Chancellor and Principal • Provide Institutional Support on Governance, Leadership, and Policy Development • People Management and Development • Communicate with key stakeholders and bodies nationally and internationally • Support the Vice-Chancellor in identifying and leveraging opportunities that advance the interests of the University, staff, and students • Strategic Partnerships, Fundraising and Advancement • Strategy Compliance • Institutional Management and Administration.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: • A Doctoral degree in Law or any other relevant qualification • A minimum of eight years' experience in Higher Education, of which five years' must be at a senior academic, senior support, or senior leadership level.

SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES: • Strong legal, project management, and institutional development experience • Demonstrated track record in managing a complex academic and administrative services portfolio division or unit • Strong understanding of government policies and regulations on Higher Education • Extensive experience in business administration, risk, and corporate governance frameworks at the institutional or business level • Demonstrated ability to lead and collaborate effectively, both within the organisation and with external stakeholders • Demonstrated experience in visionary strategic thinking, planning, and operational execution at an institutional or divisional level • Strong interpersonal and people management skills • Demonstrates the ability to operate confidently in diverse organisational environments and engage sensitively across a range of cultural contexts • Strong strategic, financial, negotiation, and operational management capabilities • Extensive knowledge of the University's strategic intent, operational dynamics, internal and external environments.

For the University of Zululand Application Form, please log on to the University website and click on vacancies (<http://www.unizulu.ac.za/vacancies>). To apply for these positions, please e-mail the application form and all required documentation to **Ms. NN Mdlletshe**, e-mail: MdlletsheNN@unizulu.ac.za OR log on to PNET (www.pnet.co.za) to submit your application by no later than 12h00 on the closing date stated above.

DIRECTOR: OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENT PHYSICAL PLANNING AND OPERATIONS

REFERENCE NUMBER: PPO2026/04/PP35 • GRADE 5

Lead, direct and coordinate the overall management, development, implementation and maintenance of a comprehensive occupational health and safety management system that will ensure compliance with the occupational safety and health laws, regulations and industry best-practices.

Develop a high-level strategy for and the roll out of occupational health and safety environmental governance, plans and control mechanisms required to ensure legal compliance and best OHS best practice through implementing a strict set of guidelines. Preparing and supporting the implementation of resources and establishing a culture of health and safety.

KEY ACTIVITIES: • Develop and review an OSH policy framework to ensure compliance with legislation for the effective control of occupational safety and health risks • Lead OSH strategic objectives, serve as an expert technical resource for the management executives and provide executive reports on the implementation of OSH management systems • Manage a team of occupational safety and health professionals and associated resources to ensure the effective functioning of the OSH Unit • Develop OSH management systems inclusive of plans, procedures, safe systems of work and review to monitor their effectiveness • Oversee the establishment and maintenance of OSH related documentation and records • Establish annual/quarterly work plans for the OSH Unit, establish key performance indicators and evaluate the overall performance of the OSH management system • Represent the University on all OSH matters with external professionals and regulatory agencies/bodies • Identify OSH training needs and develop and execute an OSH training programme and evaluate its delivery and impact • Develop and implement an OSH Audit Plan in accordance with the OSH Act and Regulations • Develop project proposals for inclusion in the University's development programme and provide oversight and management for OSH project activities • Provide strong directional support and guidance with the implementation of OSH operational policies, programmes, procedures, etc. • Undertake major investigations such as incidents resulting in fatalities, occupational diseases, or major property damage • Model, promote and influence behavioural and cultural changes through effective leadership and engagement • Manage and prepare annual budgetary allocation for functioning of the Occupational Safety and Health Unit • Develop and maintain technical competence for the OSH team and provide leadership, coaching and direction for team members • Ensure that the strategic establishment of project and/or contractor health, safety and environmental compliance takes place in line with OHS Act requirements • Maintain project reporting dashboard for review by directors, vice chancellor and council • Develop safety management systems that fulfill the strategy for the implementation of the statutory, moral and ethical requirements for duty of care of employees, students and contractors • Meet with the Deans and Managers on a fortnightly basis to ensure the OHS&E Strategy is met • Maintain registration with the South African Institute of Safety and Health (SAIOSH) and the South African Council for the Project and Construction Management Professions (SACPCMP) registration is a mandatory requirement as a Construction Health and Safety professional • Meet the appointment requirements as an Employer's Health and Safety Agent: the person appointed as agent by the Employer in terms of Regulation 4(5) of the Construction regulations as the being the employer's agent responsible for health and safety matters • Perform other related duties as required.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: • A Master's degree in a relevant qualification • Relevant experience in risk management in project management and operational environment • Experience within the corporate and major infrastructure safety management environment • 8 to 10 years' relevant experience in developing strategic safety management implementation diverse management environments. With experience in major in infrastructure health, safety and environment monitoring and reporting • Experience in the preparation and presentation of health, safety and environment reporting leading and lagging indicators • Experience in understanding, interpretation and preparation of planned health, safety and environment strategies and compliance in both business and project environment • Extensive knowledge of health, safety and environment in all corporate, building and engineering services and how they are integrated with health, safety and environment processes and controls • Knowledge of OHS Act and regulations • Knowledge of NEMA • Knowledge of Compensation Claims and Administration • Basic knowledge of the COIDA, National Building Regulations and Environmental Legislation • Basic knowledge of all other Labour Legislation.

MANDATORY PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION: Registration with a recognised professional body, such as:

1. SACPCMP (South African Council for the Project and Construction Management Professions) Registration as:
 - a. Construction Health and Safety Officer (CHSO)
 - b. Construction Health and Safety Manager (CHSM)
2. SAIOSH (South African Institute of Occupational Safety and Health)
 - a. GradIOSH / TechIOSH / MIOSH / PrIOSH

Occupational Health & Environmental Competence (Added Advantage)

Knowledge: • Knowledge of occupational hygiene (noise, lighting, air quality, ergonomics) • Environmental Health & Safety (EHS) training • Experience with ISO standards: • ISO 45001 (Occupational Health & Safety Management Systems) • ISO 14001 (Environmental Management Systems) • Construction Regulations compliance • Contractor safety management • Permit-to-work systems • Working at heights, confined spaces, electrical safety • Safety file audits and site inspections.

SKILLS: • Strong leadership, coaching and mentoring skills • Honesty and integrity • Interpersonal skills and communication • Strategic planning and implementation • Conflict Resolution and Management • Comprehensive understanding of risk management hierarchy of controls • Risk management processes • Ability to streamline processes.

For the University of Zululand Application Form, please log on to the University website and click on vacancies (<http://www.unizulu.ac.za/vacancies>). To apply for these positions, please e-mail the application form and all required documentation to **Ms. P Nhlengethwa**, e-mail: NhlengethwaP@unizulu.ac.za OR log on to PNET (www.pnet.co.za) to submit your application by no later than 12h00 on the closing date stated above.

All applications must include the following, which are critical in evaluating each application received: • A Self-Evaluation by the applicant of his/her ability for the appointment • University of Zululand Application Form • A detailed Curriculum Vitae • Certified copies of all academic qualifications • Copy of Identity Document • Names and contact details of at least three contactable work-related referees (one must be a current or recent superior).

CLOSING DATE: 8 MAY 2026.

No hand-delivered or postal applications will be accepted. The University reserves the right not to make an appointment. Communication will be entered into with the shortlisted candidates only.

By applying for these vacancies, you accept the recruitment and selection process of UNIZULU. By applying for these positions, you hereby give consent to the University of Zululand, that your personal information like your name and surname, Identity number, banking details, address, resume' etc., may be used, distributed, handled or processed and/or stored for purposes of the Recruitment and Selection process of the University.

Please note that in terms of the University's recruitment policy, preference will be given to South African citizens, particularly females and people with disabilities, in terms of the University's employment equity policy. UNIZULU is committed to employment equity and equal opportunity.



SA-EU STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP
THE DIALOGUE FACILITY

Call for Proposals 2 (2026)

Opening date: 22/04/2026

Closing deadline: 15/07/2026 13h00 (GMT+2)

This mechanism, established in 2009, aims to foster and deepen cooperation on areas of mutual interest in a variety of sectors and strengthen diplomatic, economic, social and political ties. Like its predecessors, the SA-EU Dialogue Facility will support and contribute towards activities directly associated with the process of consolidating a resilient policy dialogue culture between South Africa, the European Union, and its Member States.

This call aims to support 5 dialogue projects. Please note that these are NOT grants but the provision of financial support in kind (expertise, logistics, events, travel) for a maximum of € 100 000 per project.

The focus is on the three following priority sectors:

- PRIORITY 1: JUST ENERGY TRANSITION (JET)
- PRIORITY 2: CONNECTIVITY & DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE
- PRIORITY 3: PHARMACEUTICAL & HEALTH VALUE CHAIN

Eligible applicants:

1. Public institutions (including but not limited to national, provincial and local government, Chapter 9 & 10 institutions, public agencies and entities, SoEs);
2. Non-state actors such as academia, think tanks and research centres, the media, trade unions and labour-service organisations, not-for-profit private sector organisations (chambers and professional associations) and civil society organisations.

Applicants may be from South Africa or from the European Union and its member states. However, non-state actors or applicants from the European Union **MUST** apply in partnership with at least one South African government department.

The deadline for submissions is **15 July 2026 at 13h00 (GMT+2)**. An online information session is scheduled for **27 May 2026 from 09h00 to 13h00**. The funding decision is expected by 15 August 2026.

Find more information on priorities and sub-themes, call conditions, proposal templates, and how to apply, request the Call for Proposal Guidelines on information@dialoguefacility.org.za or download documents on: <https://downloads.dialoguefacility.org.za> or scan:



This publication is funded by the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

15289M&G



NOMINATION OF CANDIDATES TO SERVE ON THE COUNCIL OF THE PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE OF THE FREE STATE (PACOFs).

In terms of the Cultural Institutions Act, 1998 (Act 119 of 1998), the Minister of Sport, Arts and Culture, Mr G. McKenzie invites members of the performing arts (Playhouse/Theatres) fraternity and the public to nominate persons to serve as members of Council for the following Performing Arts Institution (Cultural Institution):

Performing Arts Centre of the Free State (Bloemfontein, Free State)

Nominated candidates should possess a broad understanding and experience in the field of performing arts; managerial; financial expertise; legal; marketing and liaison; fundraising; education and cultural/social research; corporate governance, as well as a willingness to render community service. The remuneration of the appointed nominees is in line with the remuneration scheme of the National Treasury guidelines as prescribed in the Cultural Institutions Act as amended.

Anyone wishing to nominate persons to serve as members of Council of the aforementioned Performing Arts Institution (Cultural Institution) should submit the following:

- a) A letter containing full names, address, and telephone numbers of the nominee, giving reasons for nomination.
- b) Recently updated Curriculum Vitae of the nominee, including three contactable references.
- c) A brief statement signed by the nominee accepting the nomination and explaining his/her suitability for appointment.
- d) Certified copies of qualifications and ID document.

No nomination will be considered unless all of the above are included. Correspondence will only be entered into with shortlisted candidates. Should you not be contacted within three months from the closing date, consider your nomination unsuccessful. Suitability and background checks might be conducted prior to the appointment of recommended candidates.

Nominations are to reach the office of the Director-General of the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture by **01 May 2026** through the following contact:

Email: CouncilsD@dsac.gov.za

Enquiries: Mr B Dlamini; 066 139 3571/ 012 441 3265

156351 www.ayandambanga.co.za

Jobs, Tenders & Notices

WESTERN CAPE GAMBLING AND RACING BOARD

The Western Cape Gambling and Racing Board (hereafter referred to as the Board) – an Equal Opportunity Employer - is a statutory body established in terms of section 2 of the Western Cape Gambling and Racing Act, 1996. The Board is responsible for the regulation, monitoring and control of the gambling, horseracing (Totalisator), and betting industry in the Western Cape. The Board invites applications for the following vacant position:

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

FIVE (5) YEAR FIXED-TERM EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT
(subject to renewal, at the Board's discretion, based on excellent performance review)

The purpose of this position is to provide executive leadership, strategic management, and excellent financial performance across all aspects of the organisation, as well as implement a clearly defined growth strategy to ensure effective and efficient functionality and sustainability of the Office of the Western Cape Gambling and Racing Board per the objectives and mandate of the Board.

Minimum requirements are: • An appropriate postgraduate qualification (NQF level 8 or higher) such as Public Administration, Business, Finance, Commerce, Economics, or Law • A minimum of ten (10) years' experience in an executive or senior management position • Proven leadership skills at the executive management and strategic levels • An in-depth knowledge and understanding of good corporate governance • Knowledge and experience in performance monitoring and evaluation against strategy and budget.

In addition, this senior role calls for excellent communication skills and a high level of leadership intelligence. People management, team building, and strong motivational skills are essential, as are advanced computer skills and the ability to network with stakeholders.

The following qualifications and experience will be a distinct advantage: • Management Qualification such as an MBA / MBL or similar • Knowledge and experience of legislation relating to gambling regulation, labour practices, finance management, Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment and mergers and acquisitions • Knowledge and experience in Governance, Compliance, Systems / IT Audits, Risk Mitigation, Legal and Corporate Services • Working knowledge of legislation impacting organs of state • Knowledge of legislation regulating all facets of the gambling and horseracing industries in South Africa.

The key performance areas of this position will include, inter alia: • Provide oversight in the management of the entity's resources in terms of the PFMA and approved entity strategy and budget • Ensure resource development for improvement in competency and knowledge of developments in the gambling industry • Ensure the development and full implementation of a retention strategy to foster employee engagement • Drive the transformation agenda in the gambling industry in line with Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment • Ensure effective and efficient execution of regulatory gambling operations in the province • Ensure the development, implementation and maintenance of infrastructure, policies, and procedures relating to employee safety, health, quality, and environmental legislation and standards that adhere to and comply with applicable legislation • Ensure collection of Taxes and Revenue as per the Act • Ensure full implementation of the Board's Strategic Plan and Annual Performance Plans within the approved budget and in compliance with the laws of the province and country • Ensure that the gambling industry is effectively and efficiently regulated and implement strategies for the protection of the Western Cape population against the socio-economic impact of gambling • Ensure that only fit and proper applicants are issued a licence • Ensure that the Board complies with all legislative directives and that the gambling legislation complies with national norms and standards • Ensure good corporate governance and best practices in respect of IT systems for regulatory audit, office records and reporting.

The Board offers a total cost-to-company remuneration package of R 2 012 352 per annum (inclusive of 13th cheque).

To apply, please forward your comprehensive CV and motivation letter to hr@wcgrb.co.za by **15 May 2026**.

Direct inquiries to Mr P Abrahams at primo@wcgrb.co.za

Correspondence will be limited to shortlisted candidates only. If you have not been contacted within four (4) weeks of the closing date, please accept that your application has been unsuccessful. The Board reserves the right not to make an appointment.

All shortlisted candidates will be subjected to a practical assessment that intends to test relevant elements necessary to succeed in the job. The logistics of which will be communicated by the Board.

Following the interview and practical assessment, the selection committee will recommend shortlisted candidates to undergo a competency assessment, in line with the Board's Recruitment and Selection Policy.

Please note that the shortlisted candidates will be required to be available for assessments and in-person interviews at a date and time as determined by the Board. The successful candidate must be prepared to be subjected to a probity investigation.

The Board supports both employment equity and affirmative action as contained in its employment equity plan and affirmative action policies and targets, and the position will be filled per the relevant plan and policies.

To consider any employment application, we will have to process your personal information.

A law known as the Protection of Personal Information Act, 4 of 2013 (POPIA) provides that when one processes another's personal information, such collection, retention, dissemination, and use of that person's personal information must be done lawfully and transparently.

To give effect to this right, we are under a duty to provide you with a number of details pertaining to the processing of your personal information. These details are housed under the HR Processing Notice, which can be accessed and viewed on the WCGRB website, <https://www.wcgrb.co.za/notices/>, which HR Processing Notice we request that you kindly download and read.

www.ayandmbanga.co.za 156554

NOTICE

NOTICE OF SURRENDER OF DEBTOR'S ESTATE IN TERMS OF SECTION 4(1)

Notice of Surrender of a debtor's estate in terms of Section 4(1) of the Insolvency Act No. 24 of 1936 as amended.

Notice is hereby given that application will be made at the Free State Division (Bloemfontein) of the High Court of South Africa on **21 MAY 2026** of the acceptance of the surrender of the estate of:

NAME: JOHANNES HENDRIK JACOBUS DU RAAN
OCCUPATION: ALARM TECHNICIAN WITH SHEPHERD ALARMS

NAME: MARIE-LOUISE DU RAAN
OCCUPATION: GERNERAL WORKER WITH WELKOM SWITCHBOARD MANUFACTURING (PTY) LTD

ADDRESS: 8 CAMELIA, RIEBEECKSTAD, WELKOM, FREE STATE PROVINCE

MARRIED IN COMMUNITY OF PROPERTY and that the Statement of Debtor's Affairs will lay for inspection at the office of the Master of the High Court at Bloemfontein as well as the Magistrate's Court Welkom for a period of fourteen (14) days from 24 APRIL 2026

SIGNED AT PRETORIA ON THIS 17TH DAY OF APRIL 2026

Attorneys / Agents:
SCHOONRAAD ATTORNEYS
PO Box 8329 Pretoria 0001

Tel: 012 3422805
REF: D878/24

NOTICE



LAND NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that Ngqushwa Local Municipality, in terms of the Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act 16 of 2013 read with the Ngqushwa Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Bylaw of 2016, has received an application for the simultaneous Subdivision of the Remaining Extent of Farm 252, Division of Peddie, Province of the Eastern Cape into one portion and a remainder, and Rezoning of the subdivided Portion of the Remaining Extent of Farm 252, Division of Peddie, Province of the Eastern Cape from "Open Space Zone 3" to "Agricultural Zone 1".

Details for the above-mentioned proposal may be inspected at Ngqushwa Local Municipality, Erf 313 Main Road, Peddie and technical inquiries may be directed to Spatial Planning Office on 040 673 3095 during weekdays from 08H00 to 13H00.

Written objections to the above-mentioned proposals may be lodged with The Municipal Manager: Ngqushwa Local Municipality, P.O. Box 539, Peddie, 5640; within 30 days from the publication of this

notice.

ISAZISO SOMHLABA

Isaziso siyanikezelwa ukuba uMasipala waseNgqushwa, ngokoMthetho we-Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act we-16 ka-2013 ofundwe kunye noMthetho kaMasipala waseNgqushwa woCwangciso loMhlaba noLawulo lokuSetyenziswa koMhlaba ka-2016, ufumene isicelo sokwahlulwa-hlulwa kweFama engu-252, iCandelo elinye leMpuma Koloni, iCandelo leMpuma Koloni, iCandelo leMpuma Koloni kunye neMpuma Koloni. iSahlulo esahluliweyo seNk-alenye eSeleyo yeFama 252, iCandelo lePeddie, kwiPhondo laseMpuma Koloni ukusuka "kwiNdawo eVulekileyo yesi-3" ukuya "kuMmandla wezoLimo woku-1".

linkcukacha zesi sindululo sikhankanywe ngasentla zinokujongwa kuMasipala weNgingqi waseNgqushwa, iSiza 313 Main Road, ePeddie kwaye nemibuzo yobuchule inokubhekiswa kwi-Ofisi yoCwangciso loMhlaba kwa-040 673 3095 phakathi evekini ukususela ngo-08H00 ukuya ku-13H00.

Izichaso ezibhaliweyo kwezi zindululo zingentla zingangeniswa kuMphathi kaMasipala: kuMasipala waseNgqushwa, P.O. Ibhokisi 539, Peddie, 5640; kwisithuba seentsuku ez-ingama-30 ukususela ekupapashweni kwesi-saziso.

Mr N. Mgengo – Municipal Manager



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CPUT RECONSTITUTION OF THE CPUT COUNCIL

INVITATION TO MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC TO SERVE ON THE CPUT COUNCIL AND COUNCIL COMMITTEES

The Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) is the second largest University of Technology (UoT) in South Africa, and the largest higher education institution (HEI) in the Western Cape province, operating as a leader on the African continent, as well as within a global context.

In accordance with the Higher Education Act, 1997 (the Act) and the CPUT Statute, as revised (Statute), the Council of the University, as the highest decision-making body of the University, governs the University, and exercises general oversight over the institutional activities.

The CPUT Council seeks to appoint suitably qualified, ethically experienced, and competent individuals to serve as external members on Council; and therefore invites organisations, interest groups, and individuals to nominate independent, suitably qualified, and interested persons with the necessary stature and standing in the community to serve on the CPUT Council and/or Council committees.

In terms of Section 27(6) of the Act, the applicant/nominee must not be an employee or a student at the University. The applicant/nominee must be a person with knowledge and experience relevant to the objects and governance of the University, and must have demonstrable experience of not less than ten (10) years' at a senior management level, or as member of a governance board or a council.

The applicant/nominee must not have previously been removed from an office of trust, and must fulfil the requirements.

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS: MONDAY, 25 MAY 2026

For a full list of requirements, details on the role, and the application process, please visit www.cput.ac.za or scan the QR code below.

The appointment of any member to Council and Council committees is subject to verification processes, such as checks on criminal record, financial records, reference checks, and qualifications verification. All recommended candidates for Council and Council Committee positions shall be required to complete a verification consent form.

The Cape Peninsula University of Technology is committed to equity objectives, and therefore, applications from the designated groups, including people with disabilities, will be given preference. CPUT reserves the right not to make an appointment.

DR P MASALA, REGISTRAR

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INVITATION TO BID

GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES PENSION FUND

BID GEPF 05/2026

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

GEPF BUSINESS CONTINUITY MANAGEMENT SERVICES

The Government Employees Pension Fund (GEPF) herewith invites bids/requests for proposal from competent service providers to render business continuity management services for the Government Employees Pension Fund (GEPF) for a period of three years.

Bid documents will be available from **22 April 2026** on the following website: www.gepf.co.za

A virtual compulsory briefing session will take place on **30 April 2026 at 10:00am**. MS Teams link will be available in the RFP document to access the meeting for the briefing session.

Closing date: 12:00pm (midday) on 15 May 2026.
Late bids will not be permitted.

All bids must be deposited in the bid box at the GPAA's offices at 34 Hamilton Street, Arcadia, Pretoria.

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TENDER NOTICE

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Iziko is an equal opportunity employer and is committed to developing a diverse workforce. Preference will be given to candidates who promote representivity within Iziko in terms of the Employment Equity Act.

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Iziko Museums of South Africa are African museums of excellence that empower and inspire all people to celebrate and respect our diverse heritage

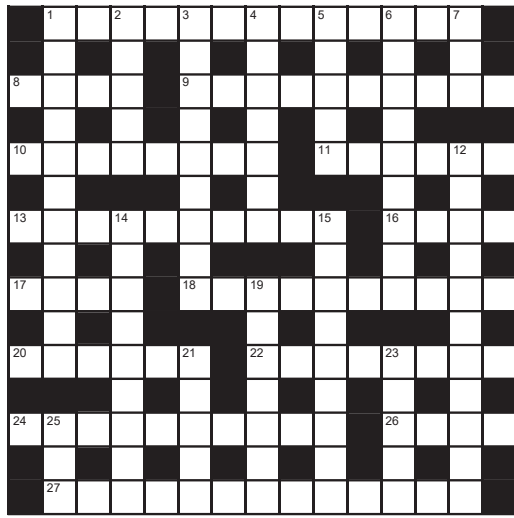
Puzzles

THE ORIGINAL SOUTH AFRICAN CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

JDE 527
by George Euvrard

- 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*

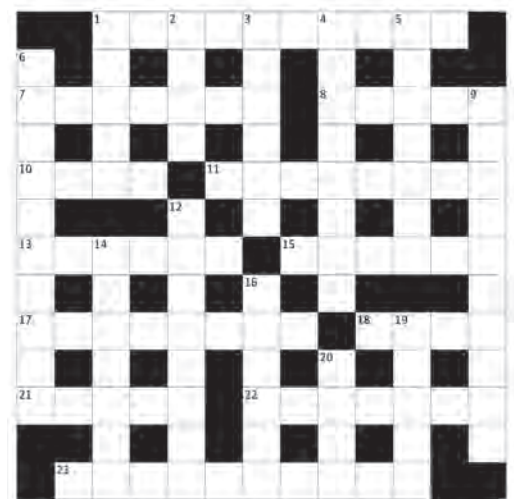
- Across**
- 1 Be in a precarious position and desperately beg any hard hat (4,2,1,6)
- 8 Small present of cocaine (4)
- 9 Right, one-way laps at last on Grand Prix circuits (10)
- 10 Extend scandal about Musk (8)
- 11 Relation gets around set-back with exercises ... (3-3)
- 13 ... without knowing about art, no lying (10)
- 16 Continent with no training for money (4)
- 17 Wave with a foot (4)
- 18 Duty? Free to exalt ban on work (10)
- 20 Photo of encrypted e-files (6)
- 22 Cheered stupid dupe entertaining elevator (8)
- 24 Died awfully, cold and beheading
- people with commitment ... (10)
- 26 ... in mad heartless attack (4)
- 27 Choose Morris, caught nervously in thunder and lightning (8,5)
- Down**
- 1 What you carry, give, pull, initially grab at ... and almost get (4,7)
- 2 Being aware without limits is futile (2-3)
- 3 Converted gold in a bang! (4-5)
- 4 Old party that's not losing heart (7)
- 5 Loathes heartless odd characters (5)
- 6 Rash and confused then in test? Gets an A! (9)
- 7A Drink now and then to get sated (3)
- 12 Consistent forms are normal — everything is in bedlam now and



- again (11)
- 14 A bit off where Nile comes from? (3,2,4)
- 15 Yes, noble gins sprinkled over young animals (9)
- 19 O Ely, pick up these delicate icons of creation
- (7)
- 21 Pass drug — can't move (5)
- 23 Pro at golf has nothing to sacrifice (5)
- 25X Yes — yes, two — yes, peeled (3)

QUICK CROSSWORD

- Across**
- 1 Reaches adulthood (5,2,3)
- 7 Behaved badly (5,2)
- 8 Kind of writing paper with feint rules (5)
- 10 Hindu spiritual teacher (4)
- 11 Fetters (8)
- 13 Worked hard (6)
- 15 Affix (6)
- 17 Costs incurred in doing one's job (8)
- 18 Den (4)
- 21 Buy and sell (5)
- 22 System of writing for the blind (7)
- 23 Something very easy to do (6,4)
- Down**
- 1 Provision (5)
- 2 1960s' youth subculture involving motor scooters (4)
- 3 Sixth century BC Greek poetess (6)
- 4 Intense joy (8)
- 5 Swellings on a nerve fibre — gala gin (anag) (7)
- 6 Most mischievous (10)
- 9 Fired (10)
- 12 Have good intentions (4,4)
- 14 Level a charge against — pace him (anag) (7)
- 16 Greek island — home of 3 (6)
- 19 Narrow lane (5)
- 20 Autumn in Vermont? (4)



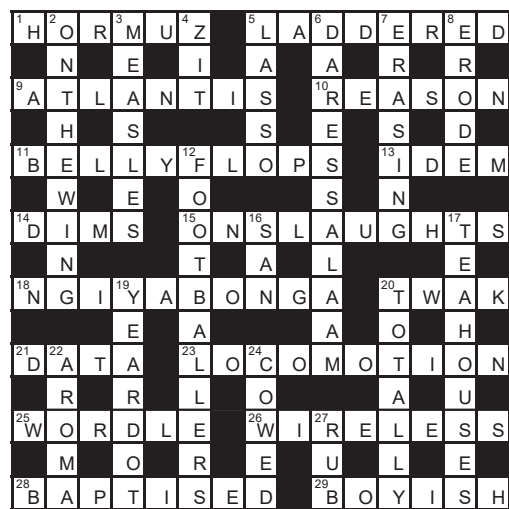
Quick Crossword courtesy of ©The Guardian 15 008

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS

Quick Crossword 15 007



Cryptic Crossword JDE 526



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.

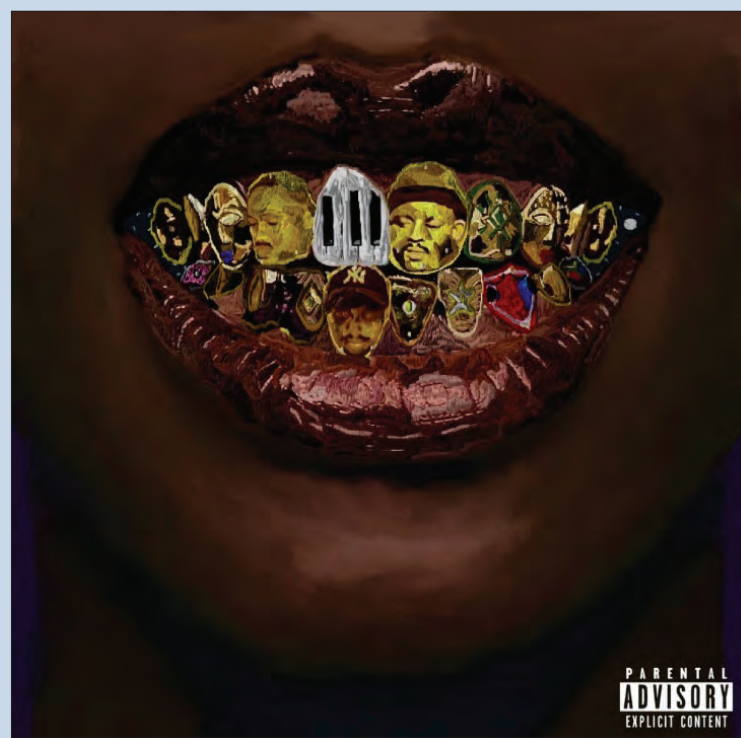
LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION

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

SUDOKU

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

What's Up



An experience: The album leans into a laid-back, cohesive mood that stretches beyond genre. Photo: Supplied

'Love Is A Star' drops on May 8

A new cross-genre moment is on the horizon as Kabza De Small, Sly and The Big Hash prepare to release their collaborative album *Love Is A Star* on May 8, 2026.

The pre-order single, *Company*, drops this Friday, April 24, offering a first glimpse into the project.

Blending The Big Hash's introspective lyricism with Kabza and Sly's groove-led amapiano

sound, the album leans into a laid-back, cohesive mood that stretches beyond genre without losing its grounding.

Expect standout features from Kelvin Momo, Blxckie and Lia Butler.

More than just a release, *Love Is A Star* unfolds as an experience complete with immersive activations, fan-led milestones and cultural moments that bridge music, space and community.

Joya Mooi releases 'All The Things'

Dutch-South African artist Joya Mooi returns with *All The Things*, a quietly powerful EP that gathers a year of emotional shifts into one intimate listening experience.

Moving inward from her previous project, *Open Hearts*, Mooi explores jealousy, grief, security and motherhood not as fixed states, but as layered, evolving feelings. Led by the focus track *All The Things*, the EP leans into warm basslines, gentle guitar and close, conversational

vocals, music designed for slow and attentive listening. Standouts like

Technicolour and *Pay Day* reframe envy and stability with nuance,

while *Lookalike* sits tenderly with grief. *Only Water*, featuring Lady Donli, adds a collaborative moment of vulnerability inspired by Greg Louganis.

Nominated for the Edison Prize, Mooi continues to shape a distinct indie R&B voice, subtle, expansive and deeply felt.



Countdown to ULTRA South Africa

The countdown is on as ULTRA South Africa returns for a two-city takeover this Freedom Day weekend. The 11th edition lands at Expo Centre Nasrec on Saturday, 25 April before heading to The Ostrich on Sunday, 26 April. Doors open from 2pm until 2am.

This year's line-up is stacked, featuring global heavyweights John Summit, DJ Snake and Axwell,

alongside a special b2b set from Afrojack and R3hab.

Powerhouses like Shimza and DBN Gogo hold it down across multiple stages.

From Main Stage spectacle to underground cuts on RESISTANCE, plus African sounds in The Groove Room, ULTRA promises a full-spectrum electronic experience.

Limited tickets remain so plan smart, arrive early and pace yourself.



Full spectrum: From spectacle to underground cuts and African sounds, ULTRA promises an electronic experience. Photo: Supplied

Friday

Kibo Ngowi

Michael is the highly anticipated biopic of Michael Jackson. Finally arriving in theatres this week, the film had a dramatic six-year journey to the big screen.

Before we get into the film, it's important to go through some of the drama to put the film we eventually got into context.

The first thing you need to know is that the project is the brainchild of film producer Graham King, best known for producing the hit 2018 Freddie Mercury biopic *Bohemian Rhapsody*, which made \$910 million and won four Academy Awards. *Michael* was made with the full cooperation of the Michael Jackson estate and most of the Jackson family members (more on that later).

Production kicked off in 2019 but hit major snags along the way, including the 2023 Sag-Afra strike. But the biggest snag came about because the film was originally intended to include some of the child abuse allegations against Michael.

But a legal agreement tied to the 1993 Jordan Chandler case meant that they had to remove this part of the story. Chandler was an alleged abuse victim of Michael's. He was 13 years old when the abuse is said to have occurred. The lawsuit his family brought against Michael was settled out of court in 1994.

The result was costly script rewrites and reshoots and a decision to end the story in the late '80s, before the allegations surfaced. Ultimately, *Michael* cost somewhere between \$155m and \$200m to make. There's some speculation that not all the extra footage will go to waste and that the producers intend to start production on a sequel. The fact that *Michael* ends with the words "His story continues" lends some credence to this theory.

As for the film itself, is it any good? Well, that depends on what you want out of a music biopic. The film covers Michael's life for roughly 22 years, from 1966 when he was eight years old and performing with his elder brothers as part of the Jackson 5 to 1988 when he was deep into his solo career and on tour promoting his *Bad* album. For me, that's the main problem.

I've always preferred a biopic that focuses on one period of anywhere from a few weeks to a year of the person's life rather than a cradle-to-the-grave approach to storytelling.

More than two decades of life is a lot to cover in a two-hour film and as a result, *Michael* ends up feeling more like a highlight reel than an

'Michael' plays the hits but avoids the hard questions

After a turbulent six-year journey, 'Michael' delivers spectacle and nostalgia, yet sidesteps deeper truths about one of music's most complex figures

exploration of the man behind the myth.

Watching it, I couldn't shake the feeling that they wrote the script by compiling several iconic moments of Michael either recording in studio, shooting music videos or performing his most recognisable songs from this period.

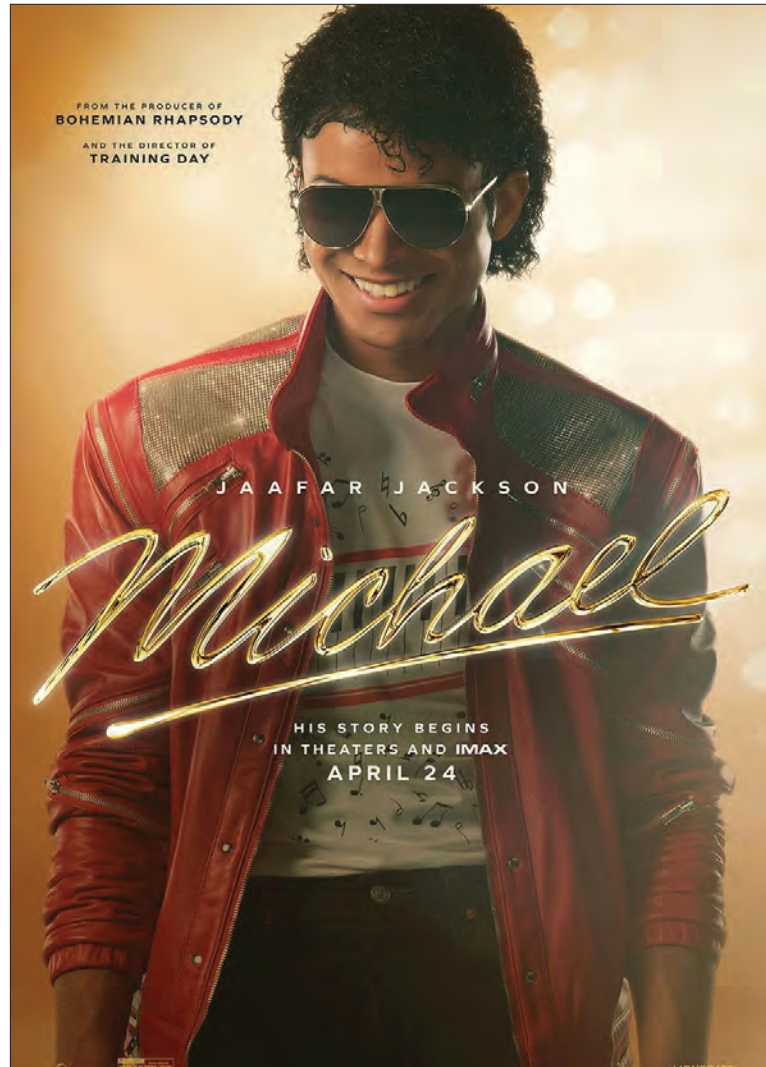
The narrative of Michael interacting with the people in his orbit seems to have been written to bridge us from one iconic moment to the next.

Michael recording *Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough* with Quincy Jones producing. Tick. Michael shooting the music video for *Thriller* with John Landis directing. Tick. Michael performing *Billie Jean* at the Motown 25 special and moon-walking on stage for the first time. Tick. All the moments we know and love are there as if cycling through a checklist of events.

Don't get me wrong, I loved seeing all these moments in the theatre. For multiple generations of people, including my own, the moments are etched into our hearts and minds, so there was definitely a feeling of joy that came from seeing them recreated for the IMAX screen. But, at the risk of sounding like a curmudgeon, after a while it all started to feel repetitive and I wondered if what the film was doing would be better achieved with a solid documentary containing real footage.

That's no disrespect to what director Antoine Fuqua and his team managed to achieve with this film, though. I have to acknowledge that the casting choice of Jaafar Jackson, Michael's nephew, was inspired. The son of Jermaine Jackson captures his uncle's speech patterns, mannerisms, singing and dancing with remarkable accuracy. I wouldn't be surprised if the young man earns a Best Leading Actor Oscar nomination for his performance, which is his first in any film by the way.

Colman Domingo also does solid work as Joe Jackson, Michael's ambitious yet tyrannical father and manager.



King of Pop: The highly anticipated Michael Jackson biopic, *Michael*, arrives in theatres this week covering roughly 22 years of his life from performing as part of the Jackson 5 to touring to promote the album *Bad*.

Nia Long is criminally underused as Katherine Jackson. As are Kendrick Sampson as Quincy Jones and Larenz Tate as Berry Gordy. Interestingly, every member of the Jackson family is portrayed in the film except for Janet. As the second most popular breakout star of the clan and the sibling closest to Michael, both in terms of age and connection, her absence is felt.

There's no official word on why she

isn't in the film but it is interesting to note that she's close to Michael's daughter Paris who is pursuing legal action against the co-executors of the Michael Jackson estate who also happen to be two of the producers of the *Michael* film (more on that soon).

Also absent is Diana Ross who was a critical mentor and mother figure for young Michael as he navigated the music industry.

In a rather self-serving move, the

role of John Branca is played by Miles Teller who, apart from Joe Jackson, probably shares the most screentime with Michael.

Branca took over as Michael's manager after Michael fired his father, Joe, from the position. Today he is one of the two co-executors of the Michael Jackson estate and chairperson of The Michael Jackson Company.

He's also one of the three producers of *Michael*. Paris Jackson is in a legal dispute with Branca and his co-executor John McClain, alleging financial mismanagement, high fees and improper investments.

She challenges their handling of funds and oversight of the estate, while Branca and McClain claim they turned a debt-ridden estate into a \$2 billion entity. But we're getting caught up in the drama again. Back to the film.

If I had to sum up the core conflict of *Michael* it would be this: A young Michael Jackson is determined to become the greatest musician of all time but his domineering father insists that he continue making music and performing as part of a group with his brothers.

There's potential for an interesting dramatic story there but the film doesn't spend much time on the father-son dynamic.

What's more, the film also doesn't spend time exploring what drove Michael to want to become the greatest musician of all time in the first place.

It treats this ambition as an obvious and self-evident part of the man's trajectory, ignoring the opportunity to spend time exploring Michael's psyche.

It gestures at Michael's insecurities about his appearance which lead to cosmetic surgeries but only briefly. It hints at race through a scene in which he pushes for the *Thriller* music video to be played on MTV despite the station rarely playing videos by black artists but doesn't go further.

There are any number of deep themes from the life of Michael Jackson that the film can't slow down long enough to investigate with real curiosity and nuance.

It's a sprint to the finish that left me wondering what, if anything, I had learnt about Michael as a human being.

Many people will certainly be satisfied to relive some of the King of Pop's most memorable moments in a cinema and if the success of *Bohemian Rhapsody* is any indication, *Michael* seems poised to make more than a billion dollars.

But I can't help but feel that there could have been more.

BILLY MONAMA & JOBURG THEATRE

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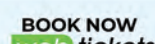
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Winning streak: A still from *Sierra's Gold*. The thrilling comedy film has been on an impressive run of international film festival appearances and award wins. Photos: Supplied

Storyteller, scholar, star

Sihle-isipho Nontshokweni wins Best Actress for 'Sierra's Gold', marking a powerful return to acting with a fearless, eccentric performance rooted in vulnerability and truth

Zingisa Mase

Award-winning storyteller, actress and author Sihle-isipho Bikitsha Nontshokweni has won Best Actress at the Moondust Helsinki Film Awards 2026 for her role in the film *Sierra's Gold*.

"Going onto set, I was quite nervous," admits Nontshokweni. "I had not acted in a long time and wondered if I still had the acting bone in me. Acting has always been where I find my breath."

The thrilling comedy film, written and directed by Adze Ugah, also won Best Low Budget Film at the festival in Finland, out of 427 projects considered from across the world.

Sierra's Gold has been on an impressive run of international film festival appearances and award wins which have also included recognition at the Durban International Film Festival, New York Film & Cinematography Awards, Los Angeles Film & Documentary Awards, London Director Awards and the Melbourne Independent Film Festival.

Nontshokweni enjoyed her collaboration with the film's writer-director: "Working with the great Adze Ugah was extraordinary. He is sharp, witty and clear about the world of the story."

"He doesn't have airs about himself, so it gave the work precision and excellence without the pressure."

Ugah has also worked as a director on television shows such as *Genesis*, *Shaka iLembe* and *Isibaya*. His other films as writer-director include *High Infidelity*, *Jewel* and *The Vow*.

The organic excitement over Nontshokweni's second win on social media felt rare in an oversaturated, manufactured market.

In the film, the award-winning, Mthatha-born actress plays Sierra, a fervent, eccentric young black

visual artist in Johannesburg who discovers she is pregnant. She has an intense relationship with Tiro, played by Tiisetso Thoka, the father of the unborn child. He convinces her to drink an abortion-inducing concoction.

"I remember my first scene with Tiisetso Thoka, who plays Tiro, the co-lead," says Nontshokweni. "He quickly entered into character with such seriousness, I blurted out laughing in disbelief that we were now really doing it."

Instead of ending the pregnancy, Sierra is inexplicably bestowed with the ability to excrete gold coins.

An uproarious and darkly comedic chain of events follows as a pawnshop owner invades Sierra's home in the hope of extracting the coins for profit.

"It was thrilling, fun and raw. I poured all of me into this eccentric character, Sierra. I was her, in style, in her feelings, her flaws, her indifference and naivety. She carried the gold in her but peered everywhere else trying to find it. I understood that flaw intimately."

The film was also nominated across multiple categories including best picture, best feature film, best director, best DOP (Director of Photography Phumlani Mdlalose) and best score.

Nontshokweni thanked Ugah for writing a fearless, lively film that refuses to be ignored, saying that they had created something extraordinary.

"*Sierra's Gold* is a story about desperation, choice and value — about what we think is worth something and what truly is," says Nontshokweni.

"Being part of it reminded me that storytelling, at its best, asks everything of you and gives you back a hundredfold, like this Moondust win. The joy came with the co-actors. The film lives across

languages — English, Afrikaans, isiZulu, isiXhosa — and that created a rich, textured environment to work in. Veteran actor Justin Strydom brought generosity to the process. He would help us navigate Afrikaans lines. Thabo Gwadiiso and Kennedy Stab brought humour and a nuanced masculinity to the story.

"And then there were those small, unforgettable moments. For instance, we were shooting a scene outside with Zakhele Mabasa who acts as the hobo in the story. His look was so compelling that a real hobo walked past him and commented: '*Sidontsa kanzima mfwethu* [We are struggling, my brother].'"

"Everyone on that set, cast and crew, were deeply committed to the truth of their roles. The entire experience was intimate, raw and alive."

Nontshokweni holds two master's degrees from the University of Cape Town and Peking University, Beijing and is a doctoral candidate at KU Leuven in Belgium.

She balances her artistic work through storytelling. She writes children's literature in an attempt to curb the scourge of the dwindling literacy rates affecting our country. She has written three books: *Wanda* (with Mathabo Tlali); *Fly, Everyone, Fly*; and *The Day Mandela Came to Class*.

The multihyphenate of note believes that focusing learning and creativity on the next big generation could help create a better society.

Nontshokweni also notes that when we leave this world, we want to know we have made an impact on others and that it is the same with her. For someone who has been able to elegantly merge the two elegant domains, there is little doubt that her work in both arenas is poised to create a legacy.

She added: "For a long time I thought I had to finish my PhD and only then could I give myself permission to act and do the work



Recognition: From left, *Sierra's Gold* director Adze Ugah, lead actress Sihle-isipho Bikitsha Nontshokweni and actor Tiisetso Thoka.



I truly longed for. So, I put acting aside for years and lay conditions to accessing it. Winning this award says to me: 'I am who I am. And I am all of it, always.' It reminds me that

there's no other life on the other side of another achievement.

"It tells me my gifts have waited with eager longing to be revealed. It says to me: 'Live your truth. Now.'"



Gathering of talent: Expect tunes by Thandiswa Mazwai, left, DJ Kenzhero, above and Nomisupasta, right, among a host of other artists. Photos: Supplied

A Freedom Day weekend gathering at Soweto Theatre, where families are invited to experience music, food and wellness, fully present and fully sober



Lesego Chopape

A different kind of gathering is beginning to take shape. It is less about excess and more about intention.

Less about escape and more about presence. And into that shift walks Nomsa Mazwai with something that feels both timely and necessary: Sober Fest.

Set to take place on April 26, 2026 at Soweto Theatre in Johannesburg, Sober Fest positions itself not just as an event but as a recalibration. A rethinking of what it means to celebrate freedom, to gather as family, to experience music and joy without the crutch of intoxication.

The timing is deliberate. Freedom Day weekend in South Africa has always carried the weight of reflection and release, a moment to remember the cost of liberation while indulging in the fullness of being alive.

For Mazwai, that context matters. “Freedom, for me, is not just about what we can do but how we choose to do it,” she says. “We’ve inherited ways of celebrating that don’t always serve us. Sober Fest is about offering an alternative — not taking anything away but adding something new.”

Mazwai has never been one to follow the script. Across her career, she has occupied the intersections of music, activism and cultural critique with a kind of grounded conviction.

Whether through her work as a musician or her involvement in socio-economic development initiatives, her voice has consistently leaned toward accountability, personal and collective.

Sober Fest feels like a natural extension of that ethos.

But this is not a moral sermon disguised as a festival. It is not about prohibition or policing joy. Instead, it is about expanding it.

“I’m not interested in telling people what not to do,” Mazwai explains. “I’m interested in creating spaces where people can experience themselves differently. Where you don’t need anything external to feel connected, to feel joy, to feel free.”

At its core, Sober Fest is a family-friendly, health-conscious lifestyle event that centres music, food and wellness. Three pillars that, when stripped of the haze of alcohol-

Sober Fest reimagines how we celebrate

centric culture, reveal something more intimate.

Music becomes something you feel with your whole body, not just something that carries you through the night. Food becomes nourishment and connection, not just a late-night afterthought. Wellness shifts from a buzzword into a lived, communal practice.

“There’s something powerful about being fully present,” she says. “About remembering the conversations you had, the music you felt, the people you connected with. That’s what we’re trying to bring back.”

For many, the idea of a “sober festival” might initially feel unfamiliar, even limiting.

South Africa’s social fabric, particularly in urban centres, has long been intertwined with alcohol.

Mazwai sees it differently.

“We’ve normalised numbing ourselves in social spaces,” she says. “And I think it’s worth asking why. What are we avoiding? What would it look like to actually be there, fully, with ourselves and with each other?”

Sober Fest leans into that question by creating a space where presence is the main currency.

“This is a space for everyone,” Mazwai says. “For parents, for young people, for people who are sober, for people who are just curious. It’s about inclusivity. It’s about saying: you belong here, as you are.”

And then there is the music.

While the full line-up signals a

carefully curated blend of artists who align with the festival’s ethos, the emphasis is less on spectacle and more on experience. This is not about chasing viral moments. It is about sonic grounding. About allowing music to do what it has always done in African contexts: hold memory, carry healing and create community.

“Music doesn’t need alcohol to hit,” Mazwai says, almost laughing.

“If anything, you feel it more when you’re clear. You hear the layers, you connect deeper. That’s the experience we’re creating.”

Expect tunes by Thandiswa Mazwai, Maleh and Nomisupasta. On the decks will be DJ Kenzhero and Vester Sdizo, with the host being Ntsiki Mazwai.

Food, too, plays a central role. Not just as sustenance but as a site of culture and care. Attendees can expect offerings that reflect a conscious approach to eating meals that are nourishing and rooted in local contexts.

“Food is part of wellness,” she says. “It’s part of how we care for ourselves and each other. We want people to eat well, to feel good, to leave the space feeling nourished and not depleted.”

The wellness component extends beyond the surface-level aesthetics often associated with the term. Here, wellness is framed as accessibility rather than luxury. Think guided practices, conversations around mental health, spaces for rest and opportunities for reflection.

“Wellness has been made to feel exclusive,” Mazwai notes. “Like it’s something only certain people can access. We’re challenging that.

Wellness is for all of us. It’s in how we breathe, how we move, how we show up for ourselves.”

There is also something particularly resonant about hosting Sober Fest in Soweto. The township has long been a site of political resistance, cultural production and community resilience.

To bring a wellness-centred, family-oriented festival into this context is to honour that legacy while imagining new possibilities for how communities gather and heal.

Mazwai is intentional about this.

“Soweto is not just a location,” she says. “It’s history, it’s culture, it’s community. Hosting Sober Fest here is about grounding the festival in a space that already understands resilience and connection.”

Soweto Theatre itself stands as a cultural landmark, a space that has housed countless performances, dialogues and artistic expressions. To reframe it as a site for sober celebration is to extend its narrative.

Rather than importing a wellness narrative that feels detached or elitist, Mazwai situates Sober Fest within the realities of the communities it seeks to serve. It acknowledges the socio-economic pressures, the cultural nuances and the historical contexts that shape how people relate to celebration and escape.

“There’s no judgment here,” she says. “People are on different journeys. This is just an invitation. Come and experience something different.”

There is also something deeply maternal about the structure of Sober Fest. Not in a limiting or gendered sense but in its emphasis on care, protection and inclusivity.

It feels like a space designed with consideration, for the child who needs room to play, for the parent who needs a moment to breathe, for the individual who wants to feel held without being overwhelmed.

For Mazwai, that is the point.

“We deserve spaces that hold us,” she says. “Spaces that don’t require us to escape in order to enjoy ourselves.”

As Freedom Day approaches, the symbolism becomes even more layered.

In a country grappling with the legacies of its past and the complexities of its present, the question of what freedom looks like remains open-ended.



'We are all complicit': Inside 'The Blue Album'



Blending performance and storytelling, Vuyelwa Maluleke interrogates belonging, language and lived experience in a work that is as intimate as it is unsettling

One-woman show: Vuyelwa Maluleke delivers a compelling performance in *The Blue Album* directed by Ernest "Ginger" Baleni. Photo: Supplied

Lesego Chopape

English arrives loaded, carrying histories that were never meant to hold black life without distortion. Many artists step away from it for that reason.

Vuyelwa Maluleke does something else entirely. She stays. She insists. She writes into it, against it, through it until it begins to carry the texture of her world.

Maluleke is an award-winning writer, performer and lecturer, recently nominated for Best Performance in a Fringe production at the 2026 Naledi Theatre Awards.

But the markers, neat as they are, struggle to contain the breadth of her work.

Her practice slips between writing, performance and lecturing but its origins are less formal than that. It begins, as many things do, in a kind of quiet.

"I was painfully shy," she says. "But I could do poetry."

Poetry, especially spoken word, offered a loophole. "No one was really examining it. I wasn't getting

graded on it. I was getting to author my own things."

In that space, Maluleke began to shape stories, not just as narrative but as enquiry. What does it mean to exist in a world that is constantly trying to name you? To fix you?

The question sharpened over time, particularly as she became more aware of the dissonance between her schooling and home. Like many who moved through Model C and private school systems while living in the township, she describes a kind of suspended belonging.

"Your parents are really just doing their best to buy you out of the township," she says, "but you really don't belong in the private school with its people."

That in-betweenness does not resolve itself neatly in adulthood. If anything, it becomes more pronounced. University brings language to what was previously felt but unnamed: Blackness as a social condition, queerness as both identity and risk, class as a fragile scaffolding.

"You wake up to the fact that you're black and you're in this precarious middle-class position," Maluleke

says. "And then you wake up to being queer and you ask: What is my place in the world?"

The Blue Album, her current one-woman theatre work directed by Ernest "Ginger" Baleni, sits inside that question. It stages the return of Khumo, a black lesbian woman, to the township she once left. But returning here is not nostalgic. It is uneasy and charged. It is a confrontation with memory, personal and collective and with a violence that is both intimate and structural.

At its core, the work engages with corrective rape, not as spectacle but as a point of reckoning. Maluleke is careful about how she approaches it. "I was quite intentional not reproducing that violence on the page," she says. "That's not the kind of conversation that I'm trying to have."

Instead, she is interested in the conditions that make such violence possible. The small gestures. The offhand comments. The quiet corrections that accumulate over time.

"We are all complicit," she says.

"In the small things we say, in the small ways we try to correct each other and then in the big physical

violence of it."

The insistence on complicity shifts the work away from a simple victim-perpetrator binary. It implicates community. Family. Even the self. Khumo's story is not only her own; it is built from observation, research and fragments of lived experience.

"I'm also writing from multiple experiences of what it means to be in a township and lesbian."

The township is rendered with specificity, the women at the corners, the rhythms of daily life, the fatigue of commuting, the textures of gossip and care. But it is also unsettled. Not romanticised. Not reduced.

"The township is a space that essentially cannot hold the complexities of identity and not want to correct," she says.

It is this precarity that gives *The Blue Album* its urgency.

And yet, the work refuses to collapse into despair.

Visually and emotionally, it is structured around blue, not as a singular mood but as a spectrum.

"Multiple shades of blue," Maluleke

says. "To house the sense of lamentation that runs all the way through."

But lamentation is only one register. There is also joy. Movement. Rhythm.

"We are not offering you black paint," she says, echoing the language developed with Baleni.

"We are offering you a story about township life. Its joy, its colour, its rhythms."

The performance moves quickly, almost restlessly, through different characters and temporalities. A single body becomes many: a mother, a group of women at the corner, boys in the neighbourhood who are at once friends and threats. Memory loops and fractures. The past refuses to stay contained.

"To sit too long in the pain is also to indulge it," she says. The work keeps moving.

At the centre of the stage is a ladder and a line of laundry — a simple but loaded image. It gestures toward the domestic, the everyday and towards exposure.

"The dirty laundry that is essentially going to be unveiled," she says.

Working with Baleni has sharpened the approach. She describes him as exacting, almost to the point of exhaustion.

"He's so specific. He will want to sit there until you arrive at a resolve of something." Every movement must be intentional. Every gesture must carry weight.

There is also a resistance, in their collaboration, to default representations of blackness.

"How do we not sit in default actions of blackness?" she asks. "How do we complicate them?"

Part of the complication lies in how the work treats memory. It is not linear. It does not arrive fully formed.

"We are moving through memory," Maluleke says. "We're looping memory and we're also in the present at the same time."

The constant shifting has implications for her as a performer. Entering Khumo is not immediate. It requires a kind of slow immersion.

Exiting, she admits, is even harder. "I'm not very great at de-rolling," she says. "It takes me quite a while."

Each performance leaves a residue. The boundaries between self and character blur, not in a romantic sense but in a practical one.

"I can never fully arrive at Khumo," she says. "Each performance teaches me a different limit, a different point at which I can extend."

There is no clean break at the end of the night, only small rituals.

"A bath, a good bath and some sleep," she says. "And I can re-enter the next day and try again."

What, then, does she hope the audience takes from it?

The answer is cautious. She resists the idea that art can simply transform people, that a performance can undo the structures it critiques.

"Language is an insufficient space," Maluleke says. "For what is happening in the world."

But in the space of theatre, something else becomes possible.

"I want them to see Khumo as a full and embodied person in the world," she says. "A person who is in love, a person making her way through trauma."

Beyond that, she wants a shift in attention. A turning inward.

"In what ways am I trying to discipline those around me?" she asks. "In what ways am I trying to manage them?"

The questions are not rhetorical. They are pointed. They ask the audience to locate themselves within the continuum of harm, not only in its most visible forms but in its quieter iterations.

● *The Blue Album* runs from 30 April to 3 May 2026 at AFDA Red Roof Theatre.

Friday

The next stage of a rising R&B star

With a deluxe edition of her latest album on the way and a milestone performance only days away, Nanette is ready to step into the next stage of her ascendancy

Kibo Ngowi

Nanette is at a salon in Joburg's Braamfontein neighbourhood when she and I get on a call to discuss her music and upcoming plans on a Tuesday morning.

With a new single out, a deluxe edition of her last album due for release and a career milestone performance only a few days away, the 24-year-old R&B singer has a lot going on.

On this particular morning she's elected to do a bit of multitasking, giving an interview while getting her hair done, fielding questions on the ins and outs of being a rising star while people chat in the background.

This weekend she's opening for Grammy Award-winning British sensation Ella Mai at the GrandWest Grand Arena in Cape Town, a moment made all the more significant because it will be her first time performing in an arena.

"Honestly, it was really shocking," she says of being invited to join the show's line-up by the event promoter.

"It was really exciting when I heard because the line-up had been decided but it was a case of people having genuinely advocated for me to be on more R&B line-ups. And I'm very grateful for that advocacy because it worked."

Other supporting acts include Sjava, Nasty C, Zee Nxumalo, Scorpion Kings, Uncle Waffles and Oscar Mbo.

Nanette Sphehile Nobethu Mbili Jolobe has come a long way from Durban where she was born and grew up listening to the R&B legends that would come to influence her later sound like Brandy, Janet Jackson and Destiny's Child.

"The list is really endless but I spent most of my formative years listening to very soul and gospel/jazz-influenced music," she says while also mentioning Brenda Fassie, Miriam Makeba and Hugh Masekela among that formative soundtrack.

The smooth R&B sound she's become known for now wears its '90s influences on its sleeve but it also has the perspective and vulnerability to make it stick.

Her most recent album, *Painfully Happy*, was partly shaped by the death of her aunt, a loss that

threatened to sour what was otherwise a hopeful and exciting period of her life.

"I wanted to make an album that spoke to how success and joy can coexist with things like grief and pain," she says.

"And so the whole time while I was going through what I was going through, it just felt like a lot of painfully happy moments. That name sort of stuck. I was reflecting on life and how things really aren't linear, how sometimes things can be going great and terrible at the same time."

Next month she's releasing the deluxe edition of the album with five new songs to add to the original 12. One of them is *Baggage*, recently released as a single in anticipation of the deluxe release.

Over an infectious baseline by Grammy Award-winning producer Andre Harris, Nanette delivers a soundtrack for letting go of what holds us back. With lines like "A hundred motherf*****s woulda told me I'm the best/ A hundred motherf*****s wouldn't make me so depressed", she turns anger into irreverent R&B poetry.

But as with any singer-songwriter admired for the vulnerability of their lyrics, there's the ever-present question of what to keep for herself and what to share with the world, how to maintain a private self while being a public figure.

"Because I leave it all in the music and my music is very candid, I don't like to share too much of my personal life," Nanette says.

"That's how I try to maintain the balance. Even when, for instance, I go to podcasts and they ask me who I'm dating or who I'm sleeping with, I'm always just like: If you really want to know, you'll listen to the music, because there's nothing I don't talk about in the music.

There's nothing I'm not candid about in the music.

"Obviously, I don't want my life to become one big gossip page where I have to tell people the names of people I'm messing with or who I'm beefing with."

"I feel like I try to keep that for the music and I hope that the listeners can understand that. That's just the type of person I am. I don't want to conflate my personal life with my art because I'm a very shy, private person. I like to be in my home watching anime and just chilling.



Upward trajectory: Nanette Sphehile Nobethu Mbili Jolobe has come a long way from Durban where she was born and grew up listening to the R&B legends that would come to influence her later sound. Photo: Supplied

"Most of the honesty and the candidness and the very interpersonal parts of me, I put them in the music and then I can keep a bit of what's my life to myself."

Released last year, *Painfully Happy* was her third album after *The Waiting Room* (2024) and *Bad Weather* (2002). While always sticking close to her R&B foundation, Nanette has experimented with EDM, rap and amapiano featuring artists like Nasty C, Major League DJz, Zwayetoven, Tellaman and Blxckie.

Then there's also the two tracks from Kelvin Momo's album *Amukelani* — *Fool Me* and *Imfula* — she was featured on, which both charted at No 1 on Spotify, YouTube Trending and Apple Music charts.

But the main ambition is to become an international act. Sharing a stage with Ella Mai this Sunday feels like a step in the right direction for the young singer.

"I genuinely believe I've proved myself to be deserving of these stages," Nanette says.

"I'm not even trying to toot my own horn but I don't know how many

better performers than myself there are in this country. I leave my whole soul on that stage. And I've never received a bad performance review.

"I always walk away with more people wanting to know about my music. And that's the whole point. I come from a stage background and I think that the stage is such a spiritual place that maybe a lot of people don't think about and don't even care to think about.

"When I step on that stage, I don't have it in me to disrespect the stage and that means I don't have it in me to disrespect the audience either. I always tell myself: Even if I had what I believe is a bad show, it's 10 times better than what someone calls their best show."

It's that level of self-confidence that's pushed her to where she is today, climbing the charts and working with some of the most talented artists and producers in the music industry, all before she celebrates her 25th birthday.

As her star rises, Nanette says she

wants to be a consistent artist who remains true to herself. What does consistency look like for a rising R&B star in Mzansi's crazy music scene?

'If you're always willing to learn from other people or from other experiences, then there's always room for more growth'

"Consistency looks like never stopping yourself from learning. If you're always willing to learn from other people or from other experiences, then there's always room for more growth because you've never told yourself that you've reached your plateau or your ceiling. Beyond that, I feel like consistency just looks like showing up, even when you're not in the mood for it.

"Showing up even when you don't want to. It's a whole lot of showing up. Even when people don't see that you're doing what you need to. A lot of the time we want to show up and have people see that but often no one's going to give you the credit for still showing up on your worst day. But you still have to do it."

Show up at GrandWest Grand Arena in Cape Town to see Nanette live on April 26.

Friday

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FAIRTREE

Excellence isn't measured in seconds. It is measured in years.

By Roslyn Jones

One of the clearest shifts in asset management is that uncertainty is no longer being treated as a temporary phase. It is increasingly seen as a structural feature of the investment landscape. The old assumption that investors could rely on a simple balance between equities for growth and bonds for protection has come under pressure in a world where inflation shocks, policy divergence and supply-chain fragmentation can reprice multiple asset classes at once.

Fairtree's Cornelius Zeeman, an equity portfolio manager, says the conventional 60/40 portfolio has come under real strain in recent years as correlations have risen during risk-off periods. Investors therefore need to think more broadly about what diversification really means. Rather than simply holding different asset classes, he argues, portfolios should be built around genuinely uncorrelated sources of risk and return.

SPECTRUM OF EXPOSURES

That more nuanced understanding of diversification is echoed in the fixed-income space. Prescient's Head of Bonds, Reza Ismail, says: "Investors need to stop treating bonds as a single defensive bucket and instead view them as a spectrum of exposures, each with different sensitivities to inflation, growth, liquidity, fiscal risk and monetary policy".

In this view, the key question is no longer whether an investor owns bonds, but which part of the fixed-income complex they own, what kind of shock that exposure is expected to absorb, and through which pricing channel it is

Asset management in an age of uncertainty

Global investing has rarely felt straightforward, but today's environment is testing asset managers in new and demanding ways. Geopolitical tension, uneven growth, shifting rate expectations, technological disruption and evolving ESG demands are forcing a rethink not only of where capital should go, but also of how portfolios are built to withstand shocks without sacrificing long-term return potential. As a result, diversification, active management and risk discipline are all being reassessed through a more practical lens.



Reza Ismail, Prescient Investment Management's Head of Bonds

meant to deliver returns. That is a more demanding framework, but also a more realistic one in today's

environment.

The implication is that diversification has become more con-

ditional and more deliberate. In weaker-growth environments with contained inflation, high-quality duration may still offer protection and capital appreciation. In more inflation-sensitive conditions, inflation-linked bonds or selective short-duration exposures may prove more resilient.

ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES

In equity portfolios, alternatives, real assets and differentiated strategies are receiving closer attention as investors seek return streams that do not all respond to the same macro trigger. Zeeman says Fairtree sees growing value in alternative strategies such as long/short equity, commodities and real assets alongside traditional long-only portfolios, while also emphasising

the importance of diversity of style and thinking within portfolio management teams.

This changing backdrop is also strengthening the case for active management. In calmer periods, passive investing can look efficient and cost-effective. But in volatile markets marked by wide valuation dispersions, policy divergence and rapidly changing fundamentals, asset managers argue that selectivity matters more.

“Investors need to stop treating bonds as a single defensive bucket and instead view them as a spectrum of exposures”

ACTIVE MANAGEMENT

Zeeman says active management is especially valuable when investors need to distinguish between businesses likely to benefit from

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The more efficient AI gets, the more we'll use it

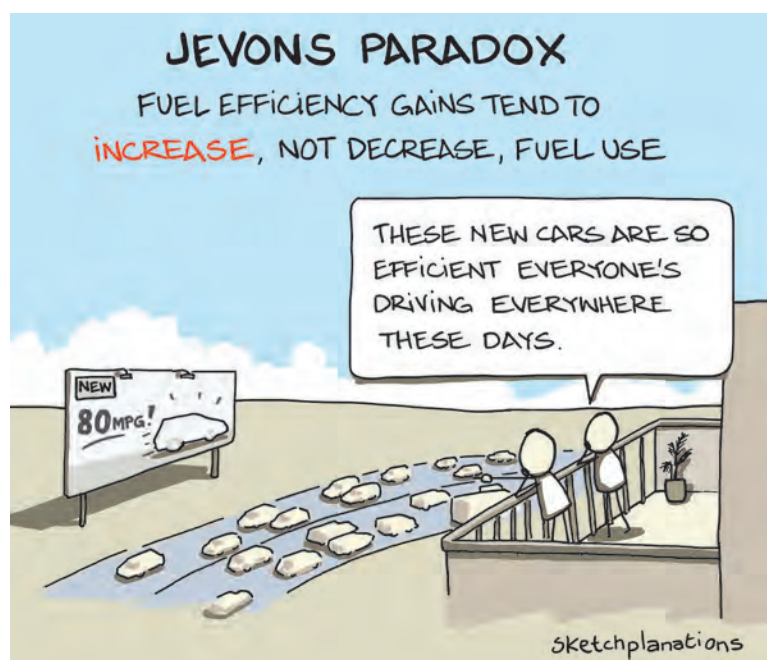
Why the sell-off in hyperscaler and software stocks may be missing a 19th-century economic lesson.

By Cornelius Zeeman, Equity Portfolio Manager, Fairtree

In 1865, the English economist William Stanley Jevons observed something counterintuitive: as steam engines became more fuel-efficient, Britain didn't consume less coal; it consumed far more. Cheaper operation expanded the number of uses, the number of users, and ultimately total demand for energy. This insight, now known as the Jevons paradox, is one of economics' most durable lessons. And it may be precisely what markets are overlooking today.

Recent months have seen aggressive sell-offs in hyperscaler stocks, such as Microsoft, Amazon, Google and their peers, as well as software platforms exposed to AI spending. The narrative driving the selling is straightforward: if AI models are becoming cheaper and more efficient, revenue and infrastructure spend must follow them downward.

DeepSeek's emergence, demonstrating that frontier-level reasoning is achievable at a fraction of the prior cost, spooked investors who feared commoditisation.



Falling AI costs ≠ shrinking market

We believe this logic is flawed. When AI inference costs fall dramatically, the addressable market doesn't shrink; it explodes. Tasks that were previously uneconomical to automate suddenly be-

come viable.

New categories of AI-native software are created. Businesses that couldn't justify the expense begin adopting tools at scale. More queries, more agents, more workflows, more cloud infrastructure; and all of it expanding si-

multaneously.

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Recent sell-off = opportunity

Our base case is that demand for hyperscaler infrastructure and AI-enabled software will grow substantially over the coming years, driven precisely by falling costs unlocking latent demand. The companies that provide the picks and shovels of this transformation, such as cloud platforms, foundation model providers and productivity software, are well-positioned to benefit. The recent sell-off, we believe, represents an opportunity rather than a structural turning point. Jevons knew this in 1865. The market is currently pricing in "this time is different".

Cornelius Zeeman joined Fairtree in 2015 as an Equity Analyst and is currently an Equity Portfolio Manager in the investment team. He began his career in 2012 as a trainee accountant at Deloitte. Cornelius holds a Bachelor of Accounting degree from the University of Stellenbosch. He is also a Chartered Accountant (SA) and a CFA® charterholder.



Cornelius Zeeman, Equity Portfolio Manager at Fairtree

ABOUT FAIRTREE

Fairtree is a leading global investment manager that manages traditional and alternative investment portfolios across all asset classes for local and global clients. Headquartered in South Africa, Fairtree manages R199 billion (as at January 2026) in award-winning, diverse global portfolios. As a trusted investment partner, Fairtree continually strives for investment excellence and to deliver consistent and competitive returns while pursuing its mission of enriching the lives of all our stakeholders. To find out more, visit: www.fairtree.com.

Asset management

A new gateway to global alternatives

By Reginald Labuschagne, Head of Product and Strategy, Sanlam Private Wealth

In an environment in which traditional asset classes face increasing volatility, many investors are looking towards alternative investments for new sources of diversification and returns. Against this backdrop, Sanlam Private Wealth has launched the SPW Global Alternatives Fund – a solution designed to add resilience to our clients' portfolios and enhance long-term growth potential.

Alternative investments – including private equity, private credit and hedge funds – sit outside the traditional listed universe. Their appeal lies in their ability to behave differently across market cycles, offering return streams that are less correlated with equities and bonds.

This diversification can help smooth portfolio performance over time, while also providing access to sectors, strategies and opportunities not available in public markets. In modern portfolios, alternatives are no longer peripheral – they are increasingly a core component in achieving improved risk-adjusted returns.

Yet for many investors, accessing these opportunities has historically been difficult. Minimum investment thresholds are often high, requiring substantial capital to build a diversified allocation across managers and strategies. At the same time, many alternative investments are inherently less liquid, with capital typically committed over longer time horizons.

These constraints have meant

that alternatives have largely remained the preserve of institutional and ultra-high net worth investors.

The SPW Global Alternatives Fund has been designed specifically to address these challenges. By pooling capital into a single structure, the fund provides a streamlined access point to a curated selection of leading global alternative managers – removing the complexity, high minimums and administrative burden that would otherwise apply at the individual investment level.

The rationale for launching this fund is straightforward: to enhance the portfolios we construct for our clients. We are continually assessing how to improve long-term outcomes, and a key part of this process is identifying asset classes with differentiated return drivers. Alternatives offer precisely this – exposure to opportunities that respond differently to economic and market conditions, ultimately contributing to more diversified portfolios with improved risk-return characteristics.

Access and liquidity

What sets this solution apart are two defining features: access and liquidity.

On access, the fund opens the door to institutional-grade opportunities that would typically require significant capital commitments. Offshore alternative managers often impose prohibitively high minimums per investment, making meaningful diversification difficult without very large portfolios. By aggregating client capital, the



Reginald Labuschagne, Head of Product and Strategy, Sanlam Private Wealth.

fund enables participation in a diversified portfolio of best-of-breed global managers through a single investment.

On liquidity, the structure has been carefully designed to balance the inherently long-term nature of certain alternative assets with the practical needs of private clients. By blending less liquid exposures such as private equity and private credit with more liquid strategies such as hedge funds, the fund seeks to manage liquidity prudently.

As an evergreen, monthly-priced structure – rather than a traditional closed-ended vehicle – it provides a degree of flexibility while still preserving the integrity of the underlying investments.

The fund itself spans a range of alternative asset classes, including private market opportunities such as private credit, private equity, and infrastructure and hedge funds. Together, these exposures aim to deliver diversified return streams, potential inflation protection and access to an illiquidity premium over time.

For clients, the benefits are clear. As part of a well-structured portfolio, the fund offers

access to opportunities typically unavailable through conventional routes, enhanced diversification and the potential for improved long-term outcomes within a single, integrated solution. Importantly, it provides exclusive private client access to an institutional-grade portfolio, available only through Sanlam Private Wealth.

A proven foundation

At Sanlam Private Wealth, we've been active in the alternatives space for several years – incorporating private equity, private credit and hedge fund strategies into selected client portfolios. This experience is complemented by the deep expertise of the Sanlam Investments multi-manager, which undertakes rigorous due diligence across investment teams, processes, operations and legal structures.

The SPW Global Alternatives Fund combines institutional-level global manager selection by the multi-manager with our own centralised portfolio construction capabilities, allowing us to build a solution that is both robust and tailored to the needs of private clients.

The fund is available only to qualifying investors, either through an existing managed portfolio with Sanlam Private Wealth or with a minimum investment of US\$100 000.

Visit [sanlamprivatewealth.com](https://www.sanlamprivatewealth.com) to schedule a private client consultation.

This article is provided for information purposes only and does not constitute financial advice or an offer to invest. Investors should consult their portfolio manager or a licensed financial services provider to determine whether the investment is appropriate for their individual circumstances.

Note: The SPW Global Alternatives Fund is a foreign collective investment scheme approved for distribution in South Africa by the Financial Sector Conduct Authority (FSCA) under Section 65 of the Collective Investment Schemes Control Act. The fund is classified as a Qualified Investor Hedge Fund and is only available to investors who meet the applicable eligibility requirements.

Asset management in an age of uncertainty

From page 1

structural shifts and those likely to be undermined by them. Passive strategies, he notes, buy everything in proportion, including companies that may be overvalued or structurally challenged. In less efficient markets such as South Africa and other emerging markets, he believes that disciplined fundamental research and a willingness to deviate from benchmarks can add significant value.

The same logic applies to fixed income. Ismail notes that passive ownership can be particularly blunt in bond markets because benchmarks are issuance-weighted. "This means they allocate more capital to the heaviest borrowers rather than to the most attractively priced risks," he explains.

In an environment where central

banks are not moving in lockstep, inflation shocks are unevenly transmitted and credit spreads reflect a wider range of issuer and liquidity risks, active management allows investors to distinguish between duration that is being paid for and duration that is not, as well as between credit spreads that genuinely compensate for risk and those that only look attractive.

MORE COMPLEXITY IN SA

For South African investors, this debate carries an added layer of complexity. Local portfolios must navigate domestic structural constraints while still capturing global opportunities. South Africa offers pockets of value, particularly in quality companies with global earnings, commodity exposure and attractive valuations, but it also operates in a context of subdued growth, currency risk and

policy uncertainty.

Zeeman says South African investors should maintain meaningful global diversification to access growth markets and provide protection against Rand depreciation, but should not abandon local opportunities altogether. Patient investors willing to do the work, he argues, can still find genuine value on the JSE.

Prescient makes a similar point from the bond-market perspective. It argues that South Africa's fixed-income landscape is currently being shaped by a combination of improving inflation dynamics, a more credible fiscal trajectory, a new 3.0% inflation target and an economy still operating below its potential, all of which can be constructive for bonds. Yet those positives remain exposed to global oil prices, exchange-rate sensitivity and broader emerging-market risk repricing.

That means local strategy cannot be built on domestic fundamentals alone. It must continuously weigh local valuation and policy credibility against global liquidity conditions, international rate volatility and external tail risks.

AI IS RESHAPING THE INDUSTRY

Technology is another force reshaping the industry, though perhaps with more pragmatism than hype. Asset managers are using data analytics, quantitative tools and AI to improve research, identify opportunities, test scenarios and strengthen risk oversight.

Fairtree says it is investing in alternative data, quantitative screening and risk analytics, while also using AI in company research, earnings analysis and document processing. But the firm stresses that human judgement, business understanding and behavioural discipline remain central to long-term investing.

Prescient's view is similarly measured. It sees technology's most useful contribution not as replacing judgement, but as improving inference under noisy and com-

plex conditions. In fixed income, where investors are often dealing with latent variables such as inflation expectations, term premia and liquidity premia, better modelling and scenario analysis can sharpen decision-making. But Is-

mail also warns that these tools only add value when they are grounded in economic structure and disciplined model governance. AI can strengthen judgement, it suggests, but not replace it.

THEN THERE IS ESG

ESG, meanwhile, is increasingly being treated less as a branding exercise and more as a matter of performance, governance and downside risk. Zeeman says Fairtree views ESG as both a governance and a performance issue, but primarily as a performance

“Properly understood, ESG is not an optional overlay, but part of orthodox credit and sovereign analysis”

“Passive strategies... buy everything in proportion, including companies that may be overvalued or structurally challenged”

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PRIVATE Wealth

Asset management

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consideration, because companies that manage environmental, social and governance risks well tend to be better-run and more sustainable over time. Governance, in particular, remains a critical signal of management quality, capital allocation discipline and long-term investment viability.

In debt markets, Ismail argues, ESG factors matter because bondholders are especially exposed to downside asymmetry. Unlike equity investors, they do not meaningfully participate in upside beyond contractual cash flows, but are highly vulnerable to deterioration in governance, institutional quality and refinancing conditions. Properly understood, ESG is therefore not an optional overlay, but part of orthodox credit and sovereign analysis because it affects the reliability and valuation of promised cash flows.

IT'S CLARITY OVER CERTAINTY

Ultimately, what investors appear to want most from asset managers right now is not certainty, because that is in short supply, but clarity. That means disciplined portfolio construction, sharper differentiation between types of risk, and an ability to remain flexible without becoming reactive. It also means accepting that resilience is not about avoiding risk altogether, but about ensuring that portfolios are appropriately compensated for the risks they do take.

In uncertain markets, that balance between defence and opportunity may be the defining test of modern asset management. Zeeman says one of the biggest mistakes investors still make is extrapolating recent trends too far into the future, while Ismail emphasises that resilience comes from constructing portfolios that do not rely on a single macro forecast. Between those two observations lies the central challenge for asset managers in 2026: staying adaptable, but not unanchored.

For years, diversification was often understood as a straightforward balance between equities for growth and bonds for protection. But in today's environment, that formula is under pressure. Inflation shocks, geopolitical tension, uneven growth and policy divergence are making it harder for traditional asset mixes to deliver the protection investors expect.

Cornelius Zeeman, equity portfolio manager at Fairtree, says diversification now needs to be understood more broadly. Rather than simply holding different asset classes, investors should aim for genuinely uncorrelated sources of risk and

return. That is why alternatives, real assets and differentiated strategies are receiving more attention alongside traditional long-only portfolios.

Prescient's Head of Bonds, Reza Ismail, makes a similar point from a fixed-income perspective. He argues that bonds should no longer be treated as a single defensive bucket, but as a spectrum of exposures with different sensitivities to inflation, growth, liquidity and monetary policy. In other words, the question

is no longer just whether investors own bonds, but which bonds they own and what role those holdings are expected to play.

Sanlam Private Wealth adds a third dimension to the debate through alternatives. Reginald Labuschagne, Head of Product and Strategy, says these investments are appealing because they "behave differently across market cycles, offering return streams that are less correlated with equities and bonds". Sanlam

positions its new SPW Global Alternatives Fund as a way of giving qualifying investors streamlined access to global alternative managers and more diversified return drivers over time.

In uncertain markets, diversification is becoming more deliberate and more flexible. It is less about ticking asset-allocation boxes and more about building portfolios that can respond differently to different kinds of shocks.

Beyond 60/40: rethinking diversification

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