

WORKERS' DAY SPECIAL



White workers earn 380% more than black workers

Reflections on regression, resistance, renewal

Unionised workforce is still ideal



Angelique Kidjo is unstoppable

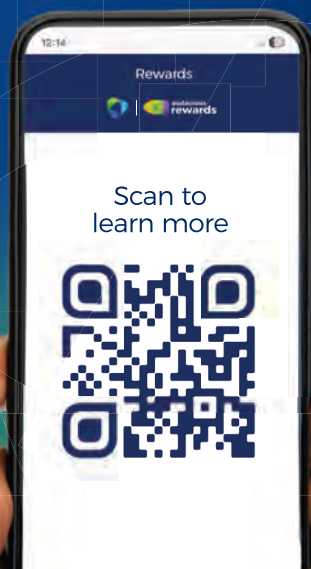
IDC fails black entrepreneurs



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IN BRIEF



Slain: Mali's defence minister Sadio Camara.
Photo: Defence ministry

Coordinated chaos

Mali's defence minister was killed amid a spate of attacks launched by insurgents in the West African country over the weekend, the *Independent* reports.

The regional al-Qaeda affiliate, Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin, cooperated with the Azawad Liberation Front (FLA), a Tuareg-dominated rebel group, to coordinate attacks in several key regions across Mali.

The victims include Defence Minister Sadio Camara, who died after a suicide bomber rammed a vehicle with explosives into his home in the state of Kati on Saturday. Camara suffered critical injuries and died in hospital.

The paired groups conducted attacks in Kidal, where the FLA claims to have seized control of several positions, Gao, Sevare, Bamako airport and other northern regions.

The FLA announced on social media that it had struck a deal to allow Russian mercenaries to depart from their besieged camp outside Kidal. Russia began supporting Mali's military government after French and other Western forces were ousted from the country.

Hunter becomes hunted

An American millionaire was killed by a small herd of elephants, *SF Examiner* and Breitbart report. Ernie Dosio, 75, was on an African safari hunting trip organised by Collect Africa in the central African country of Gabon.

A guide and another professional hunter accompanied Dosio on the \$40 000 (R660 500) hunting trip when his crew was ambushed by five elephants that were with their calves.

They emerged from an underbush, 140m away, attacked the guide, who suffered serious injuries and flung the second hunter, leaving Dosio with the five elephants that trampled and gored him to death with their tusks.

Female elephants, which can typically weigh up to 6 000kg, tend to act aggressively towards threats in the presence of their young.

Breached sovereign systems

Sri Lanka has launched an investigation into a cyberattack that saw hackers breach the finance ministry's computer systems and steal \$2.5 million (R41.2m), the BBC reports.

As the ministry attempted to transfer a debt it owed to Australia, the funds were diverted to other bank accounts during a cyberattack in January. Details of the crime emerged as officials announced the launch of an investigation and after four senior officials from the public debt management office were suspended.

With assistance from foreign law enforcement agencies, Sri Lanka hopes to uncover the

NUMBERS OF THE WEEK

M&G mg.co.za

The number of years since Palestinians held an election, *CNN* reports. Last Saturday, Palestinians voted in a municipal election in Gaza for the first time since Hamas took over in 2006. The election was held in Deir al-Balah, central Gaza, the least decimated area since Israel bombarded the region two years ago. The elections were largely symbolic, conducted as part of efforts to advance the efforts of a US-brokered ceasefire. 70,000 Palestinians (less than 5%) participated in the elections, which banned Hamas from participating because of its refusal to recognise Israel and support a two-state solution.

20



44

Is Kirsten Dunst's age on 30 April. The Oscar nominated actor and star of several chick flicks shares her birthday with fellow actors Gal Gadot and Ana de Armas.



18



The number of wolves found dead in and around the Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise National Park in Italy due to suspected poisonings, *Wanted In Rome* reports. Rangers and specialist units discovered the wolves' carcasses in clusters across different territories in the reserve, which covers the three central regions of Italy. Remains consistent with poisoned bait were discovered in some but not all sites where the wolves were found. Authorities have opened an investigation into the deaths.

\$400K



The amount of money a US Army soldier made after he bet that Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro would enter Venezuela and be removed from power, *Reuters* reports. Gannon Ken, an active-duty soldier since 2008, was involved in the "planning and execution" of Maduro's capture and bet on the prediction market, Polymarket. He was indicted on charges of unlawful use of government information, commodities fraud, wire fraud and making an unlawful monetary transaction.

The number of White Afrikaner refugees that President Donald Trump's administration may take into the country annually after US officials considered increasing the annual refugee cap from 7,500, *The Herald* reports. Three unnamed individuals who are familiar with internal planning spoke to *The Herald* on condition of anonymity, with Secretary of State Andrew Vepek confirming that an alteration of the refugee cap was being considered.

10,000



Graphic: BUSI LETHOLE Compiled by: MAMAPUTLE BOIKANYO

mechanisms used to perform the heist and possibly recover the stolen funds.

Investigators suspect hackers might have tampered with emailed payment instructions. Sri Lankan officials were alerted after Australia reported the unsettled payment but the attack became clear only when cyber criminals tried to make another payment to India.

Casualties of AI race

Mega tech firm, Meta, is expected to cut 10% of its workforce as it ramps up investments into AI, *France24* reports. The job cuts will affect about 8 000 employees and leave thousands of other positions unfilled.

The move aligns with the firm's heavy investments into AI as it competes with other tech giants like OpenAI, Amazon, Google and Microsoft over advancements in AI.

"I'm looking forward to advancing personal superintelligence for people around the world in 2026," said Meta chief executive Mark Zuckerberg.

Meta reported earnings in January that surpassed expectations and showed revenue increasing with AI investments. Its costs have been boosted by 40% to \$35.15 billion compared to the same period in the previous year, with capital expenses, such as infrastructure to build data centres to power AI, totalling \$22.14bn in the quarter.

In a note to investors, Wedbush analyst Dan Ives said: "We believe that this is part of Meta's



Filling in: Taiwanese Foreign Minister Lin Chia-lung. Photo: Wang Yu Ching

strategy to increasingly leverage AI tools to automate tasks that once required large teams, allowing the company to streamline operations and reduce costs."

An unbreakable bond

Taiwan's foreign minister made a trip to Eswatini after China allegedly exercised its influence to block the Asian country's president from visiting its last African ally.

Reports by the *Independent* state that Madagascar, Mauritius and the Seychelles revoked overflight permits for President Lai Ching-te's planned visit to Eswatini, where he was invited by King Mswati III for his birthday and the anniversary of his ascension to the throne.

Foreign minister Ling Chia-Lung attended the event in the president's stead and stated, after his arrival, that "authoritarian forces" could not hold back his country. He added that Taiwan's friendship withstood distance.

China praised the decisions of the three countries but denied allegations that it had influenced them. China rejects Taiwan's sovereignty and recognises it as one of its provinces.

South Africa had strong relations with Taiwan during the apartheid era, although the dynamics of those relations changed in 1998 when former president Nelson Mandela recognised Taiwan as a province of China.

Return of the pirates

Pirates hijacked ships twice last week off the coast of Somalia, raising concerns about a resurgence of piracy in the region, the Associated Press and *Gulf News* report.

The first attack occurred last Wednesday between the coastal towns of Hafun and Bandarbeyla in the semi-autonomous state of Puntland. The targeted fuel tanker was intercepted by six armed men from Somalia's Bandarbeyla district as the ship departed from the port of Berbera and steered towards

Mogadishu, an official from Puntland's police force told the Associated Press.

It's unclear how many crew members were on the ship, though community members are placing pressure on authorities to recover the vessel and rescue the crew members.

The ship, which carried a large shipment of oil, is owned by Pakistani interests.

A cargo ship was also hijacked on Sunday, about six nautical miles northeast of Garacad, Somalia, with the hijackers reportedly diverting the vessel into territorial waters. The UK Maritime Trade Operations reported the incident on X but did not provide further details.

Secret recovery

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced he had undergone treatment for early-stage prostate cancer 18 months ago and said he was in excellent health, CBS News reports. Netanyahu made the announcement on X on Friday, adding that the removed tumour was less than 1cm.

"You already know me," he wrote. "When I'm given information in time about a potential danger, I want to address it immediately. This is true on the national level and also on the personal level."

Netanyahu's medical report was due to be published two months ago but he claims to have delayed releasing it for fear that Iran would use the information as propaganda. Netanyahu is expected to visit the White House in the next few weeks to discuss maintaining peace with Iran amid a fragile ceasefire.

Corporate penance

OpenAI chief executive Sam Altman has apologised to Canadian community members affected by a mass shooting linked to its AI chatbot.

In February, an 18-year-old mass shooter opened fire at the school of a small community of Tumbler Ridge in northeast British Columbia and killed eight people, including his mother and 11-year-old sibling.

The shooter, Jesse Van Rootselaar, had a ChatGPT account that was flagged by an automated abuse detector and human investigators who monitor potential misuses of AI.

Although his account was blocked, OpenAI was criticised for not reporting it to law enforcement authorities.

British Columbia Premier David Eby published a letter on social media, penned by Altman, in which the chief executive said: "I am deeply sorry that we did not alert law enforcement to the account that was banned in June," Altman said in the letter on Thursday. — *Mamaputle Boikanyo*

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Lunga Mzangwe

ANC secretary-general Fikile Mbalula and his deputy Nomvula Mokonyane have been accused of manipulating the West Rand regional conference to ensure that their preferred candidates emerge victorious.

Three regional executive committee (REC) members alleged this week that Mbalula and Mokonyane wanted their preferred candidates to win “by hook or by crook” and that they were even reportedly prepared to manipulate the organisational processes of the conference to favour them.

One REC member told the *Mail & Guardian* that both Mbalula and Mokonyane were swayed by the regional chair and secretary to ensure their victory, even if the processes were flawed.

“This is about accessing the purse of the government. There has been money exchanged to ‘buy’ the conference. The chair and the secretary do not have a majority in the REC,” the REC member said.

“If we continue with the current REC until the end of our term in June, we will have to recommend three names to the province for mayor, speaker and chief whip. They know this REC will not recommend them for those positions.

“If we go to elections now, the regional secretary and the chair will not be recommended for mayoral positions. That is why they want the conference now, to ensure they get the REC they want so they can be recommended. If they had a majority in the REC, they would not be convening this conference,” the member added.

Mbalula did not respond to requests for comment, while Mokonyane said she would not respond to anonymous sources.

Regional secretary Mkhuseleli Jokazi referred all questions to the party’s national spokesperson, saying “please speak to comrade Mahlengi Bhengu”.

ANC West Rand regional chairperson William Matsheke told the *M&G* that the allegations are untrue and that he respects the elected leadership of the ANC. He said he has subjected himself and the structure he leads to organisational discipline.

According to Matsheke, these allegations that a mere regional chairperson can buy the secretary-general and the deputy secretary general are a malicious attempt to dent the good names of their leaders.

“The national office-bearers condoned the West Rand to continue with its regional conference among

‘By hook or by crook’

The ANC has been served with court papers by branches seeking to halt the conference, which was officially set for Wednesday



Meddling: ANC secretary-general Fikile Mbalula, right, and his deputy Nomvula Mokonyane. Photos: Supplied

many other regional conferences in Free State and other provinces. We are the only region in Gauteng that was outstanding. The decision was based on the adopted roadmap by the REC.”

Matsheke said he did not want to speak on behalf of REC members raising the allegations, adding that ANC members understood that some people resorted to making accusations when organisational processes did not favour them.

He said all ANC members should respect the office of the secretary-general, which was elected by conference to safeguard the ANC and its processes.

Asked whether he believed there had been any wrongdoing relating to the conference, Matsheke denied this, saying all processes had followed the ANC roadmap without exception and were guided by the party’s constitution and conference guidelines.

On members who had approached the courts in an attempt to stop the conference, he said the ANC had consistently discouraged members from bypassing internal organisational processes in favour of litigation.

“The image of the ANC will never be damaged by those that are ill-disciplined. In fact, it shows their lack of organisational understanding and respect for democratic cen-

tralism ... The regional conference is convened and will be attended by the overwhelming majority of branches in the West Rand which is a clear indication that branches remain the basic unit of our movement. Out of 89 branches in good standing, 73 have qualified to attend the Regional Conference.”

The *M&G* understands that the ANC has been served with court papers by branches seeking to halt the conference, which was officially set for Wednesday, until all processes have been properly followed.

Several REC sources have accused Mbalula of manipulating branches to ensure the conference meets the required threshold to proceed and elect a new leadership aligned with him.

The sources raised discrepancies in the final Branch General Meeting (BGM) verification report dated 12 April and signed off by Mbalula, which *M&G* has had sight of.

In one instance, Mbalula signed off a branch as qualified to attend the conference but the date listed for its BGM was 14 July 2026, making it impossible as the calendar was still in April at the time.

According to the verification report, there are 102 branches in the West Rand, with 80 verified. Six were

disqualified and three were deemed invalid due to comprising fewer than 100 members. Another REC source said that after the verification report was signed off, no branch should have held a BGM unless there were disputes requiring a rerun.

The source questioned whether the required 70% threshold for the conference to proceed had actually been met. ANC guidelines state that a conference can only proceed if this threshold is reached: “The report was signed off on 12 April by the secretary-general, which should have stopped all processes beyond that date. However, the same report includes branches scheduled for the 13th, 14th and 15th of April.

“There is a contradiction. It appears that in conducting fraudulent activities, they failed to notice that some dates fall beyond the 12th, when the report was finalised. The report cannot be issued to close all branch sittings, yet still include about 17 branch meetings on 13, 14, and 15 April.

“The report states that on the 13th, certain branches sat, formed a quorum, qualified and elected leadership. But how can you confirm that a branch scheduled to sit the next day has already qualified?

“Out of the 71 branches, 36 have disputes, leaving only 35 untested. Additionally, six have been

disqualified. Why would anyone proceed with the conference under such conditions? Some branches are even listed as sitting in July but still qualify.”

Another source said Mbalula had formally written to them informing them the ANC’s NWC had decided to convene a conference within two weeks of its decision.

The *M&G* has seen the letter, dated 15 April, in which Mbalula states the NWC met on 13 April and directed that the conference must be held within two weeks.

“If you count 14 days from 13 April, the deadline passed yesterday [Tuesday] without a conference taking place. Our own roadmap required the conference to be held between 14 and 26 April and that deadline has also passed. As things stand, we are being told there will be a conference tomorrow, yet the REC does not know the venue, who is funding it or any details about finances. We do not know the theme, size or security arrangements.”

Another REC source expressed confidence in their legal case, citing numerous procedural flaws: “We believe we will win this case. Any legitimate process would have been dismissed due to non-compliance. We followed procedures strictly. As far as we are concerned, Mbalula is taking an illegal route due to money-related issues. We strongly believe he has been compromised.”

The source added the REC has not seen key documents, including the organisational, financial and political reports, all of which are required. “The conference is being funded through state resources. The treasurer says there is only R100 000 in the region, yet the conference will cost over R2 million.

“The previous conference scheduled for 24 to 26 April was already paid for, so where is the funding for this one coming from? We do not even have conference committees. This shows that just as branches were manipulated, the conference is being manipulated too. Some branch leaders have been listed as verified, yet they are unaware that their branches even sat or were approved.”

Spokesperson Diketo Moreotsenye said the REC had not complied with the conditions set out by Mbalula: “... we have not complied with the terms outlined in the NWC letter written by the secretary-general. We have not met the 70% threshold, we do not have a credentials report and we do not have an elections agency. From where we stand, there is no structure in place to conduct the elections.”

However, Moreotsenye declined to comment on allegations against Mbalula and Mokonyane.

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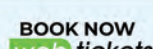
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IDC under scrutiny as entrepreneurs detail liquidation fallout

An entrepreneur has accused the Industrial Development Corporation of rigid recovery practices that ignore the impact of Covid-19, as calls grow for an inquiry into its treatment of struggling black-owned businesses

Brian Sokutu

Amid growing calls for an inquiry into the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC), entrepreneurs in distress are speaking about their experiences with the state-owned lender.

The push follows appeals by the National African Federated Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Nafcoc) and opposition parties for scrutiny of the IDC's lending practices, after several black-owned companies faced liquidation over loan repayments.

Challenging the IDC's rationale behind the liquidations, Nafcoc secretary-general Richard Zulu has appealed to the state-owned development finance institution (DFI) to reconsider its aggressive debt collection tactics saying their approach contradicted "the very mandate of a DFI".

"Among Nafcoc's proposals is a structured inquiry into recovery practices, transparency on liquidation versus restructuring outcomes and a Developmental Recovery Charter that prioritises rehabilitation over foreclosure," said Zulu.

Two weeks ago, Trade, Industry and Competition Minister Parks Tau convened a meeting between the IDC and Nafcoc to discuss concerns and several challenges levelled by Nafcoc against the state-owned funding organisation.

Tau's spokesperson Kaamil Ali confirmed that a meeting had taken place between the two parties but declined to disclose its outcomes.

For some of the entrepreneurs affected by the IDC's heavy-handed approach to debt collection, the consequences have been deeply personal. Among them is Apiwe Nxusani-Mawela, whose agro-processing and beverage manufacturing company, Brewsters Craft, shut its operations in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Nxusani-Mawela made an impassioned plea for government intervention to support black-owned businesses under pressure.

"We are just ordinary South Africans seeking to grow our economy and create jobs. All we are asking our government through institutions like the IDC is to provide sufficient funding support and interventions for our businesses to thrive," she said.

Nxusani-Mawela is South Africa's first black woman to found a micro-brewery and also holds a rare distinction as the first black South African to earn a national diploma in clear fermented beverages.

A microbiologist and trained brewmaster, Nxusani-Mawela spent a decade at SABMiller as a brewer before leaving in 2015 to start her own venture in the craft brewing space.

"I helped a few brands start their



Out of business: Apiwe Nxusani-Mawela of Brewsters Craft, an agro-processing and beverage manufacturing company that shut down after the Covid-19 pandemic. Photo: Supplied

own businesses. Two years later, I approached the IDC with a business plan – the aim being to obtain a loan to build our own brewery," she said.

After due diligence, the IDC approved a R10 million loan to Brewsters Craft, although her request for working capital was declined.

The onset of Covid-19 and the subsequent lockdown dealt a severe blow to the industry, forcing operations to shut down. In January 2021, the IDC transferred her account to its legal department. Assets that had cost about R6.7 million were later sold for R1.3 million.

"When we closed, we had our first group of five students. Unfortunately, they could not complete the training because of us being forced to close down the plant accredited as a training centre," she said.

"The business had three permanent employees and three who worked on a temporary basis, including some taken on learnership. They all lost their jobs after the shutdown."

Nxusani-Mawela believed the IDC could have taken a more flexible approach. "Failure to pay back the loan was not due to the funds

[being] misused or mismanaged. The IDC only focused on what the policy says: If someone skips payment for three months, the next thing is legal – without putting into context the impact of Covid to the industry at the time. They box all the entrepreneurs into one, not realising that black entrepreneurs need support beyond just the release of funds. The IDC is not developmental and not patient – putting small businesses at the same level as big ones needing billion rand funds."

The pressure pushed her to formally challenge her treatment. "I had to lodge a formal complaint because I was being victimised. I felt things could have been handled differently if they were dealing with someone with a different skin colour."

Nxusani-Mawela also pointed to the broader vulnerability of black entrepreneurs navigating funding systems. "Black-owned businesses have become the most affected at

the IDC because we don't know how to raise issues when under pressure. Black-owned businesses find it so difficult to even get the funding."

At the height of the crisis, the stakes were personal as well as financial. "I almost lost my house and everything because someone decided that following policy was more important than understanding the context of the country and the world engulfed by the Covid pandemic."

Despite the setback, she has begun rebuilding her business through partnerships, producing Tolokazi Beer for the UK market after losing her own manufacturing facility.

She has also returned to training, with a renewed focus on skills development and job creation. "I have been accredited by the QCTO [Quality Council for Trades and Occupations], training over 50 young students. We are now going back to rehiring the same people who lost their jobs during Covid – signalling that things have changed."

She believes that with greater institutional support, the outcome could have been very different.

"Instead of being patient, the IDC did not react in the best interest of a black woman-owned business ... We would have created more jobs and made an impact in the business value chain – from farmers to retailers."

In another case, businessperson Angus Norkie said his experience with the IDC had been "prolonged and damaging", leaving his company Nocks Oil (Pty) Ltd "in operational limbo for more than seven years".

"We experienced administrative injustice, failure of accountability mechanisms and involvement in unlawful conduct," said Norkie.

Nocks Oil applied in August 2018 for R45 million in funding to establish a fuel and energy business, which it said would create jobs and supply chain opportunities.

"Had the application been approved, 49 full-time jobs would have been immediately created, with further indirect employment opportunities across logistics, services and supply chains."

Norkie said the business model was commercially sound and supported by prospective clients willing to enter into supply arrangements. However, the application was rejected in March 2019.

"The letter explicitly stated that the IDC had contacted all our prospective clients and that – based on feedback received from those clients – the IDC decided to reject the application. This assertion was reiterated and confirmed by IDC officials during a meeting held on 18 March 2019."

Norkie disputes this account, saying his company later confirmed directly with its prospective client that no such engagement had taken place.

"We subsequently obtained email confirmation from an IDC official, which verified that the stated client engagements, relied upon in the rejection letter, were not conducted as claimed."

This meant that the rejection decision was based on false information and in contravention of the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act, he said. "We contend that rejecting an application based on demonstrably false grounds, constitutes procedurally unfair and unlawful administrative action – in contravention of basic principles of administrative justice and governance."

The matter was referred to the Public Protector, which found in favour of the IDC but Norkie said the company has now escalated the dis-

pute to the Constitutional Court.

There, "we are seeking final relief and clarity. We hope that constitutional principles of legality, fairness and accountability will be properly applied".

DFIs must "be held accountable for the accuracy of their decision-making processes", he added.

"Businesses with genuine job-creation potential must not be left in permanent limbo due to administrative failures. Government cannot credibly champion entrepreneurship, industrialisation and job creation, while allowing institutions tasked with those objectives to act without consequence."

Tshepo Ramodibe, the spokesperson for the IDC, said that business distress and liquidation are not unique to IDC-funded businesses, nor are they unusual in a weak economic environment.

"South Africa has experienced elevated levels of business failure in recent years as a result of structural constraints such as electricity supply challenges, logistics disruptions, rising input costs and subdued economic growth. For example, Stats SA recorded 1 534 liquidations in South Africa in 2025.

"Within this environment, the IDC acknowledges that business partners in our portfolio are under pressure," Ramodibe said, adding that this is reflected in the corporation's publicly disclosed figures showing elevated portfolio stress in the 2024/25 financial year.

He stressed, however, that liquidation is not the default response to distress. "Importantly, however, liquidation is not the default response to business distress at the IDC. The Corporation distinguishes between stressed, distressed and liquidation cases and actively pursues turnaround, restructuring and recovery interventions where there is a reasonable prospect of viability."

He said about R2 billion was approved in the past financial year to support distressed firms through restructuring, balance-sheet repair, working capital support and business rescue processes.

"These interventions are often implemented over extended periods, and, in line with our commitment to prevent de-industrialisation, liquidation is considered only once all reasonable recovery options have been exhausted."

Ramodibe said Nafcoc remains a key stakeholder. "Its objectives align with our mandate to grow black business and transform our economy. To this effect, we remain engaged in finding solutions on how best we can meet our shared objectives."

The IDC differs from commercial lenders in its investment approach. "A notable differentiator between the IDC and commercial banks is that we are a patient investor and lender – precisely why the challenging economic environment is impacting businesses across our portfolio."

He said distress is spread across multiple sectors, including manufacturing, agro-processing, construction, mining-linked value chains and services.

"This reflects the broader performance of the economy over the past decade rather than sector-specific or ownership-specific factors. In particular, sectors heavily exposed to structural constraints, input-cost pressures and weak demand have experienced heightened stress, consistent with wider economic trends."

Ramodibe noted that 60% of the IDC's portfolio is invested in black-owned, black-empowered and black-shareholding companies. "With this high concentration of black-owned companies in our portfolio, this explains why most distressed businesses in our portfolio are black-owned."

'We are now going back to rehiring the same people who lost their jobs during Covid – signalling that things have changed.'

Tshwane Metro tender favouritism and unpaid security services

Nkateko Joseph Mabasa

The Madlanga commission has explored numerous security contracts awarded to Ngaphesheya security services, a company owned by Sergeant Fannie Nkosi's brother, Bheki Nkosi.

Suspended Tshwane Metropolitan Police Department (TMPD) deputy chief Umashi Dhlamini was questioned about multiple tender documents he sent to Nkosi. Commissioners noted that Ngaphesheya was favoured in bid evaluation processes.

"What is going on here? Why are you sending these documents to Sergeant Nkosi?" asked commissioner advocate Matthew Chaskalson.

The commission was presented with WhatsApp evidence of Dhlamini having sent multiple documents during the tender application and bid evaluation for the TMDP1 contract, amounting to R59 million and the TMPD2 contract, amounting to R2m.

WhatsApp text shows Dhlamini sent Nkosi a clearance certificate during the application and a bid evaluation committee report while the contract was being decided.

Dhlamini denied any favouritism and tender rigging in favour of Ngaphesheya but said that because of their close friendship, he had opted not to get involved, instead referring Nkosi to a tender consultant, Nico Mathobela.

"As I indicated, I received this information from Sergeant Nkosi to check. I then checked with Nico Mathobela, who forwarded screenshots to show he had these documents on his desk and that he had dealt with these matters," he said.

Chaskalson presented a list of six issues identified in Ngaphesheya's submission Mathobela sent to Dhlamini: the company was not certified with the Private Security Industry Regulatory Authority; its director was graded at level B; it lacked a letter of good standing, a firearm licence and proof of a provident fund.

The city of Tshwane awarded Ngaphesheya a R59m security contract, said Chaskalson, whereas the company received a security licence in February 2025, while the tender had closed four months earlier in October 2024.

"I indicated earlier that I met Nkosi and took an interest in him in 1997 when he started working at the [SAPS]. He will sometimes ask me to intervene and assist."

Dhlamini said Mathobela had been assisting him with a range of issues and that forwarding the documents had been part of the routine, mutual business relationship.

He added that he would regularly receive information to verify and pass on to Nkosi. Dhlamini was also questioned on why he had assisted Ngaphesheya to acquire a contract in Mpumalanga.

"Is this a tender for a Mpumalanga municipality that Ngaphesheya is bidding for? What does this have to do with you?" Chaskalson asked.

"I did not play any role, I was relaying the information as I received it,"

he said.

"But he and his brother have a series of pending bids with the city that you are aware of – TMPD1 and TMPD3, where Ngaphesheya is a bidder. Did you not think it was inappropriate for you to assist Ngaphesheya in another bid?" Chaskalson asked.

Dhlamini denied having favoured Ngaphesheya, saying he had recused himself from the Tshwane bid and delegated responsibilities.

Ngaphesheya was awarded TMPD1 for R59m and TMPD2 for R2m, both of which were cancelled after irregularities were found.

"I did not personally assist. I have the capacity and skills to do so but I did not at this stage," he said.

"Yes but you are acting as the conduit between Ngaphesheya and Nico," Chaskalson said.

"I'm not a conduit. I have indicated that I have a long-standing relationship with Sergeant Nkosi," Dhlamini replied.

"When Sergeant Nkosi wants Nico to do something in relation to Ngaphesheya, he asks you. When Nico wants documents to go back to Sergeant Nkosi and Bheki, he gives them to you," Chaskalson said.

Dhlamini said he would intervene on the "odd occasion" when there were misunderstandings. Under pressure from commissioner Mbuyiseni Madlanga, he conceded that he had passed information onto Nkosi but denied acting as a conduit in any tender irregularities.

The commission questioned Dhlamini regarding unpaid invoices for security services involving Tshwane Chief Financial Officer Gareth Mnisi. The controversy surrounds contract renewal for existing security companies and a list of new companies compiled by Nkosi and sent to Mnisi and Dhlamini.

Mnisi previously told the commission that he had been with Nkosi when he had received a phone call from a director of Gubis85 Security Service who was threatening legal action for unpaid invoices. Nkosi had acted as a middleman between Dhlamini and Mnisi to resolve the non-payment issue and avoid going to court.

"On the 4th of March, I received a call from Sergeant Nkosi, who was with the CFO and the CFO spoke to me about outstanding payments that were owed to three service providers for a period of six months or so. He requested my intervention to go and investigate and assist in ensuring that we sort out the matter," said Dhlamini.

He said the next day, he had confirmed with his office about the outstanding payments and had to resolve it immediately.

"How can you find yourself in a situation where there are a whole lot of invoices that were issued and have not been paid and for which it seems there are no purchase orders?" asked Chaskalson.

Dhlamini said that had been an

TMPD deputy chief Dhlamini denied favouring a security company owned by Sergeant Fannie Nkosi's brother Bheki Nkosi



Conduit: Suspended Tshwane Metropolitan Police Department (TMPD) deputy chief Umashi Dhlamini denied personally assisting Ngaphesheya.

oversight, which his office had picked up later. He said he had to intervene in that instance as Mnisi had indicated the service provider was threatening to go to court.

"There's no dispute that services were rendered and companies need to be paid to prevent the city's account from being attached. That's where my intervention came in," said Dhlamini.

He said Mnisi had decided to involve Nkosi as his proxy and that the CFO would be better positioned to give reasons for why the companies were not paid.

Chaskalson asked Dhlamini about the R5m security invoices for July 2024 where a purchase order requesting security services was never generated.

Dhlamini said the request for security services came from Asset Protection and Security Services head Tshukudu Malatji.

"No one was held accountable, it was the thing of passing the buck.

"Much as I indicated we have quarterly coaching where these issues would have been dealt with," said Dhlamini.

"But in this case there was no management of consequences. Nobody was held to account for sitting on invoices for six months," said Chaskalson.

"In this instance there was none that was taken," said Dhlamini.

"I did not personally assist. I have the capacity and skills to do so, but I did not at this stage," he said.

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.

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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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BELLVILLE DISTRICT SIX GRANGER BAY MOWBRAY WELLINGTON

Mandisa Makgaka

Civil society organisation Public Interest SA has lodged a criminal complaint with the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation (Hawks) against advocate Andrea Johnson, the head of the Investigating Directorate Against Corruption (Idac), over her alleged involvement in a past recruitment process in which her husband Junaid Johnson was a candidate.

The complaint, filed in Pretoria under the Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act (Precca), comes after Johnson acknowledged that she participated in an interview and selection process of her spouse during her time in the former Directorate of Special Operations, known as the Scorpions, which led to his appointment.

Public Interest SA alleges that the circumstances point to a potential conflict of interest and may constitute an abuse of public office for the benefit of a connected person. The organisation has called for the matter to be investigated independently by law enforcement authorities.

In its submission, Public Interest SA said the complaint is intended to trigger an external assessment rather than draw conclusions on guilt or liability.

"The purpose of this complaint is to request that the relevant authorities independently assess whether the conduct in question falls within the scope of the Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act," it said.

Complaint against Idac head

Precca makes provision for offences involving the use of public office to improperly influence decisions that benefit the office-holder or a connected person, including a spouse.

In such matters, criminal liability typically turns on whether there was improper influence or an undue advantage linked to official duties.

Johnson currently heads Idac, a specialised investigative and prosecutorial unit within the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), mandated to strengthen the state's capacity to investigate and prosecute high-level corruption cases. These include matters linked to state capture and systemic corruption across public institutions.

The unit was established following recommendations of the Zondo Commission, which called for a strengthened and more coordinated prosecutorial response to corruption affecting the state.

Johnson is a long-serving NPA prosecutor and previously served in the Scorpions. Her career within the NPA has included senior roles across prosecutorial divisions and she has been involved in high-profile anti-corruption work over an extended period.

However, her name has also surfaced in previous internal leadership processes within the institution. During earlier NPA leadership interview processes, Johnson acknowledged concerns linked to the recruit-

Conflicted: Andrea Johnson, head of the Investigating Directorate Against Corruption (IDAC).
Photo: Parliament of RSA



ment process involving her husband and expressed regret over how it had been handled.

Johnson told parliament that she had been part of a panel which recommended her husband for appointment but said she had taken steps to manage the conflict of interest. She said she declared that they were married and did not take part in interviewing or scoring him nor in deliberations on his candidature.

She said both she and her husband had disclosed the relationship in line with the process that was in place at the time. "I did physically recuse myself from shortlisting, the actual interview and the actual adjudication."

Johnson acknowledged before the panel that she should not have participated in the process at all, in order to avoid any perception of irregularity. "I do regret it. I wish someone had raised that it was irregular," she said.

She has also previously urged selection panels to take into account her broader professional record when assessing her suitability for senior leadership positions within the NPA.

Johnson told parliament that questions about her husband's appointment process only surfaced for the first time in 18 years during proceedings linked to allegations raised by KwaZulu-Natal police commissioner Nhlanhla Mkhwanazi.

She said, in retrospect, she should have fully excluded herself from the process in 2007. Johnson described her involvement as a misjudgement, adding that she believed she could have handled the situation differently with the benefit of hindsight.

"I accept that maybe what I should have done in 2007 was recuse myself completely. It was a misjudgment. In hindsight, I accept I could have done better and differently. I accept that how it looks is not good," she said.

She acknowledged that although

steps were taken at the time to manage the conflict of interest, her participation still created an unfavourable perception.

Johnson has been considered in several senior appointment processes within the prosecuting authority but was not selected, as the institution has undergone repeated leadership transitions and restructuring in recent years.

The current complaint places scrutiny on whether her involvement in the recruitment process constituted a breach of conflict-of-interest rules or meets the threshold for criminal conduct under anti-corruption legislation.

Public Interest SA has argued that the matter requires independent assessment outside internal institutional structures, particularly given Johnson's current position heading a key anti-corruption unit.

"The matter must be independently assessed to ensure transparency and accountability in the handling of allegations involving senior prosecutorial officials," the organisation said.

The National Prosecuting Authority has not responded to requests for comment. Idac and Johnson have declined to comment on the complaint when prompted by the *Mail & Guardian*. "IDAC and Adv Johnson will not comment," her spokesperson, Henry Mamothame said. The Hawks are expected to review the complaint and determine whether it meets the threshold for further action under their investigative mandate. They had, however, not responded to the *M&G* at the time of publication.

INVITATION

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Africa leads efforts to help ailing Cuba

A Southern African-led initiative is coordinating humanitarian support as the country struggles with shortages and infrastructure collapse

Melody Emmett

A new Southern African-led solidarity platform is mobilising humanitarian support for Cuba as the Caribbean nation grapples with one of the worst economic crises in its recent history.

Cuba Solidarity Now (CSN), launched in South Africa in February, has rapidly expanded into a growing international network focused on delivering practical assistance, including medical supplies, food support and solar energy infrastructure, to communities in Cuba.

The initiative emerged amid worsening conditions on the island after renewed economic pressure from the US under Donald Trump. An executive order issued in January intensified restrictions affecting Cuba's access to oil and international trade, compounding an economic crisis marked by widespread power outages, fuel shortages, food and medicine scarcity, inflation and crumbling infrastructure.

"There are many platforms where activists engage about the political

issues at play but what is refreshing about this group is the focus on the key task at hand, which is providing practical and material support," said ANC MP Cameron Dugmore.

The platform includes about 800 participants from South Africa, Namibia and other countries, ranging from civil society activists to solidarity organisations.

"There are cabinet ministers and former cabinet ministers in the group; two former South African ambassadors to Cuba are also in the group," said labour law specialist and conflict mediator professor Brian Williams, who spearheads the initiative.

Williams said CSN was intentionally structured to avoid the ideological divisions that often weakened solidarity campaigns. "Cuba needs practical solidarity at this point — medicine, food, energy solutions and humanitarian support," he said.

Contributions have funded two solar energy installations in Cuba — one at a care centre for the elderly and another at a rural medical clinic.

The initiative operates through a legally registered non-profit special purpose vehicle, with funds man-



People power: Contributions have funded two solar energy installations in Cuba. Photo: Supplied

aged through an independent law firm and accountants. "It is a very tight ship we are running," the chief executive of the Castle of Good Hope and a CSN participant, Calvyn Gilfellan, said.

For many involved in the campaign, the solidarity effort is rooted in Southern Africa's liberation history. Since the 1960s, Cuba has provided military, medical and technical support to many African countries, including assistance to liberation struggles and post-independence development programmes.

Thousands of students have also received scholarships to study in Cuba. Engineer Clever Baganayi, the national secretary of the South African Friends of Cuba Society and a CSN participant, was among about 3 000 Southern African students who studied in Cuba through the Fidel Castro Solidarity Education Programme. In the 1990s, students from South Africa, Zimbabwe, Angola, Mozambique and Namibia were trained as engineers, doctors, dentists and teachers.

"Those who were offered an educa-

tion came from poor backgrounds," Baganayi said. "It had a life-changing impact on most of us."

Namibian media and communications professional Norah Appolus, another CSN administrator, said her support for Cuba was shaped by her family's exile history.

Her Namibian father and South African mother were involved in Swapo. The family moved across several African countries during years in exile. "Cuba and the Russians shared trenches with our fighters and sacrificed their lives for our cause," Appolus said.

"Having been brought up by freedom fighters, it was a natural progression for me to assist ... those who supported us in our hour of need. We owe a huge moral debt to Cuba."

Dugmore recalled visiting Cuba while serving as Western Cape MEC for education, where he saw memorials dedicated to Cubans killed during the Angolan war.

"Seeing that made it practical and concrete to me that Cuba was celebrating the role its soldiers and medical personnel and others had played in supporting our struggle," he said.

"There are plenty of other groups for debating Marxist-Leninism, post-colonialism and decolonialism," said Gilfellan. "All the theoretical debates will not provide immediate relief."

For more information, contact Calvyn Gilfellan at Gilfellanc@gmail.com

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Sheree Bega

South Africa is positioning itself as a continental leader in critical minerals, a sector seen as central to electric vehicles, renewable energy systems and artificial intelligence infrastructure.

But as the government and industry accelerate plans to expand exploration and mining, warnings are mounting that the benefits of the boom might once again bypass the communities living closest to extraction.

The concerns are surfacing in response to the department of mineral and petroleum resources' critical minerals and metals strategy, approved by cabinet in May last year, which is designed to anchor the country as a key supplier in global value chains.

The strategy identifies 21 minerals and metals as critical, based on their importance to the economy and the global energy transition. It classifies platinum, manganese, iron ore, coal and chrome ore as high critical minerals.

It further identifies mineral commodities such as gold, vanadium, palladium, rhodium and rare earth elements as minerals with moderate to high criticality. Copper, cobalt, lithium, graphite, nickel, titanium, phosphate, fluorspar, zirconium, uranium and aluminium are identified as minerals with moderate criticality.

The strategy prioritises exploration, beneficiation and investment attraction. It also proposes special economic zones, tax incentives and infrastructure investment to support local processing and job creation, aiming to link national growth with local development.

But the Centre for Environmental Rights warns that many mining-affected communities fear displacement and injustice as projects often proceed without free, prior and informed consent. "This has led to forced relocations, land disputes and inadequate compensation," it said, noting economic exclusion as another major concern.

"The familiar 'resource curse' pattern — exporting raw minerals without local processing — limits job creation and deepens inequality, allowing elites to benefit while local labour is exploited."

At a recent webinar on the legal framework governing critical minerals in South Africa, the centre's mining programme head, Tarisai Mugunyani, cautioned that communities remained marginal to decision-making.

"We have positioned critical mining as this unique introduction that is being put into our economic development but critical mineral mining is mining in essence," she said.

"We sit with an implementation crisis of our social and labour plans in the country. How will then these promised benefits be tangible for communities?"

"We believe that as we speak around mining, mining benefits and how mining is centred as the bedrock of South Africa's economy, we will do a disservice to any conversation if we do not put mining-affected communities at the centre," she said.

Promises vs implementation

The strategy targets significant job creation, local procurement, community infrastructure and skills development through mining expansions.

But the commitments are unfolding against what Mugunyani describes as a deep implementation crisis, with only 24.5% of social and labour plan commitments delivered across audited communities.

Systemic risks cut across governance, infrastructure and environmental stress. Weak municipal

Minerals boom but benefits bypass communities

South Africa is positioning itself as a key player in the global race for critical minerals but new research and warnings suggest those closest to extraction might lose out, echoing long-standing inequalities in the mining sector



Injustice: Despite the mining sector's profitability, host communities see less than 1% of corporate profits.

Photo: Chris Louw/Centre for Environmental Rights

capacity, growing water scarcity in mining regions and consultation deficits all threatened the "social licence" required for mining to operate sustainably, she said.

The risks were compounded by structural inequalities in how mining benefits were distributed. Despite the sector's profitability, Mugunyani pointed out that host communities saw only 0.13% of corporate profits. Similarly, weak oversight of community trusts led to mismanagement.

Implementation constraints deepen the problem. Delays in compensation, infrastructure strain as populations grow and a mismatch between training programmes and available jobs limit the benefits that reach communities. Local businesses also face barriers to entering mining supply chains despite policy commitments to local procurement.

Environmental pressure points

About 16% of mines are in water-scarce regions, intensifying pressure on stressed resources. Dust and emissions contribute to deteriorating air quality, while land displacement disrupts traditional livelihoods.

Contamination from tailings and acid mine drainage poses long-

term risks to water systems and health impacts, including respiratory illnesses, are borne by host communities.

The toxic legacy of the country's 6 100 abandoned mines adds further strain, leaving what Mugunyani describes as "environmental debts" that communities continue to carry.

Against this backdrop, she argues that South Africa faces a stark choice: continue with a business-as-usual model or reshape how mining benefits are defined and delivered.

The urgency of the choice is underscored by new global research that situates South Africa's concerns within a broader pattern.

The hidden costs of green minerals

A report the United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health released on Wednesday finds that demand for critical minerals, including lithium, cobalt and graphite, could quadruple by 2050, with some materials rising by as much as 500%.

The minerals underpin the global shift to clean energy and digital infrastructure but their extraction is increasingly concentrated in vulnerable regions.

Africa, it says, holds 30% of critical mineral reserves, while South Africa holds 90% of platinum reserves.

"The economic and environmental gains of highly industrialised nations are often sustained by social and ecological injustices in resource extraction zones across the Global South," the report notes.

The report's lead investigator, Kaveh Madani, cautioned against viewing the transition as inherently equitable.

"Technological disruptions are needed and useful," he said.

"But we should be aware of and proactively address their unintended consequences if we want the whole world to equally benefit from them. You cannot call a transition green, sustainable and just if it simply moves the environmental harm from the rich to the poor."

At the centre of the findings is

water. Producing a tonne of lithium requires about 1.9 million litres. In 2024 alone, global lithium production consumed an estimated 456 billion litres, equivalent to the annual domestic water needs of 62 million people in sub-Saharan Africa.

About 16% of global reserves are in high water-stress regions, while more than half of the projects sit on or near Indigenous territories.

In Chile's Salar de Atacama, lithium mining accounts for up to 65% of regional water use. In Bolivia's Uyuni region, extraction is undermining agricultural livelihoods.

Excluded communities

The environmental toll extends beyond water. For every tonne of rare earth minerals produced, about 2 000 tonnes of toxic waste are generated. In 2024 alone, global production created an estimated 707 million tonnes.

The report describes critical minerals as the "oil of the 21st century", warning that the transition risks creating new "sacrifice zones".

Nowhere are the human costs more visible than in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which supplies most of the world's cobalt. Despite its mineral wealth, more than 70% of the population lives in extreme poverty, while more than 80% of mineral output is controlled by foreign companies.

Health impacts are severe. According to the report, 72% of people living near mining sites reported skin diseases, while 56% of women and girls experienced gynaecological problems. Birth defects are significantly higher in mining zones than other places and around 30% of mining sites employ children.

"The communities doing the actual digging, breathing the dust and losing access to clean water are largely excluded from its benefits," said Abraham Nunbogu, the report's lead author. "If we don't correct the governance failures driving this, we will have built the clean energy economy of the future on the same extractive injustices as the fossil fuel economy of the past."

For Tshilidzi Marwala, the UN under-secretary-general and rector of the United Nations University, this has implications for global development goals.

"A transition that deepens poverty, undermines access to clean water and concentrates health burdens on the world's most marginalised communities is not a transition toward the Sustainable Development Goals," he said. "It is a step away from them."

Community-centred mining

In South Africa, the global warnings sharpen a pressing debate. Mining contributes about 6% to 7.6% of GDP and supports 470 000 jobs.

The country had 1 700 operational mines. Of those, Mugunyani said, 14 were platinum mines, 12 chrome mines, eight manganese mines and four iron ore mining operations.

"We have other mining companies that are mining moderate high criticality and the moderate criticality minerals," she said. "Of concern to us will be the growing number of applications that will be put forth for mining of critical minerals and ... the conversation around the funding mechanisms for those."

Mugunyani said continuing with business-as-usual would mean under-delivery, conflict and missed opportunities. A community-centred approach, by contrast, would support a sustainable social licence, shared prosperity and more resilient supply chains.

"Success requires shifting from compliance to genuine partnership, with enforced accountability and transparent benefit-sharing," she added.

'You cannot call a transition green, sustainable and just if it moves the environmental harm from the rich to the poor'

On The Road: Built in SA

A new mood for the BMW X3

The Pure Design strips back the aggression of SUV styling in favour of a cleaner, more elegant approach — while delivering the smooth performance and comfort expected from the badge

Eyaaz Matwadia

I was at the launch of the BMW X3 in early 2025 when the brand launched three derivatives: a diesel, a plug-in hybrid and a performance variant. However, there was no pure petrol version.

I was also at the South African Car of the Year awards last year when the X3 won the prestigious award. Still, no pure petrol version.

It was only in November 2025 that BMW released an X3 with a four-cylinder 2.0 litre turbocharged petrol engine that would serve as the entry point for the model — the X3 Pure Design. Now that felt refreshing.

The Pure Design is an alternative styling package to the sporty and aggressive M Sport package from BMW. It offers a more basic and clean design that adds a touch of class to an attractive car. The response to the look has been met with mixed feelings but for me, the illuminated large kidney grille brings the car to life.

We had the car on test for a week and it was refreshing to enjoy the X3 as is, without sporty elements and firm suspension. If anything, it exposes BMW in its purest form: German engineering built with elegance to provide extreme comfort.

The X3 did that for me. The interior follows a minimalist, refined elegance philosophy that focuses on high-tech essentials rather than excess. It features BMW's 14.9 inch curved display that stretches from the driver side halfway across the

front and it is easy to use.

The infotainment display is equipped with Apple Car Play and Android Auto. While many have complained about the quality of the BMW interaction bar on the door panels, I found it unique and enjoyable, apart from the fact that the quality can be improved.

The X3 Pure Design also comes standard with electrically adjustable sport seats upholstered in Veganza (synthetic leather), available in Black or Espresso Brown. I had the Espresso Brown interior which contributed to its overall elegance.

But there's no doubt that the best part about the X3 Pure Design is driving the vehicle. The 2 litre turbocharged petrol engine (aided by 48V mild-hybrid technology) produces 148kW of power and 335Nm of torque. It is mated to an eight-speed automatic torque converter and is available only in a rear-wheel-drive.

Its buttery smooth on the road thanks to the more comfortable and soft suspension. It's not too far off from the traditional handling of a BMW because the suspension controls the body roll of the vehicle, which maintains comfort and good handling.

New beginnings

Late last year, BMW announced that the iX3 would be the first of its Neue Klasse (New Class) range that marks a new era for the brand.

However, the latest edition of the X3, which is manufactured at BMW's Plant Rosslyn in Pretoria, aided the



Value for money: The BMW X3 does everything right and the interior follows a minimalist, refined elegance philosophy that focuses on high-tech essentials rather than excess. Photos: Supplied

shift. From the X3, you can see the transition of interior and exterior elements towards the Neue Klasse range. It feels fresh, away from the older generation, more classy and elegant but remains a BMW.

The week I had the X3 Pure Design on test also marked the birth of my second child and first daughter. I guess the Neue Klasse of the Matwadia family coincides with BMW's new design language. I

brought her home in the BMW X3, which meant I set the standard high for any future man in her life.

Verdict and pricing

The BMW X3 does everything right. From comfort to energy. From smoothness to elegance. Even though it costs more than R1 million to get into, it's no wonder the X3 is common on South African roads, because at the end of the day, what

you are getting remains excellent value for money from BMW.

The X3 20d (the diesel variant) is priced above R1.1 million and the Pure Design starts from R1 107 760, according to BMW Press Group, although BMW South Africa has it priced from R1 057 000.

I wish that because the car is built locally, the price could have been less than R1m to make it slightly more accessible to South Africans.

Eyaaz Matwadia

Mercedes-Benz unveiled the all-new electric C-Class at its global launch last week, drawing mixed reactions to its updated design language.

Before the next chapter arrives, we spent time behind the wheel of the current, fifth-generation C-Class — a model rolling off the production line at the Mercedes-Benz plant in KuGompo City.

One thing I love about the exterior is that Mercedes-Benz transformed it from its entry-level and basic-looking sedan to a luxurious-looking model while keeping it as its bread and butter. It's impressive because the

C-Class has refinement and elegance. It is also a head-turner. The C-Class leans far into the design of being a baby S-Class and that's why it stands out from previous generations.

The feeling inside a Mercedes-Benz is unparalleled. Through the styling and feel, the brand is the best at making you feel like you are in a luxury vehicle.

While I felt that from the atmosphere in the car, thanks to the

screens and ambience lighting, I had an AMG-Line package equipped on the test car, which meant a bright red and black interior, with more red than black.

I understand that the AMG-line is supposed to add sporty elements but I am not a fan of that amount of red. At the end of the day, I was driving a regular C 200 and not a sporty performance-based C63.

It didn't deplete the comfort by any means but it felt a tad off from the mood of the car. If you do purchase a C-Class, the seats are optional extras so it won't be automatically included. Other than that, it is premium as

the interior is defined by a high-tech, driver-centric cockpit that borrows from the flagship S-Class. The 2024 model year features the latest MBUX infotainment system with a portrait-oriented central display that flows into the centre console.

Artico man-made leather with topstitching, complemented by carbon-fibre and the 64-colour ambient lighting outlines the dashboard, the door panels and even the air vents.

The *Burmester* sound system was crystal clear. The space was more than sufficient and backseat passengers are also treated to a good amount of headroom and legroom.

When it comes to driving, the C200 has a four-cylinder 1.5 turbocharged petrol engine paired with a 48V mild-hybrid system, producing 150kW and 300Nm of torque. It is mated to a 9G-Tronic Automatic gearbox that provides a comfortable ride. It picks up speed calmly in a quick linear fashion and gives more than enough to get by on. It's the standard drive you expect from a Mercedes-Benz.

Now that the next generation C-Class is coming soon, the pricing will be interesting. Mercedes-Benz has opted for a new styled interior and exterior. The first released from the range is a fully-electric model and will debut in South Africa around the R1.5 million mark.

However, what made the current C-Class such a hit for me was that it was upgraded to a baby S-Class and when it was released in 2021, pricing started below R900 000.

Mercedes-Benz would do well to keep in line with current pricing when the new generation hits showroom floors.

While we can expect it to probably come in at around R1m, we hope the brand doesn't push it too far above, so South Africans can continue to enjoy a locally built elegant vehicle.



A knockout: The C-Class leans far into the design of being a baby S-Class and that's why it stands out from previous generations. Photos: Supplied

Investing for the price of a coffee

The most accessible entry point is through real estate investment trusts. Think of them as the ‘Uber of property ownership’ — you don’t need to own the car to benefit from the ride

Ask Ash
Ash Müller

Property investment often feels like a gated community. The traditional view is that you need millions of rand or a massive bank loan to participate. This perception keeps many potential investors on the sidelines.

However, the South African market offers several vehicles that allow you to own high-quality assets without a R2 million deposit.

The most accessible entry point is through Real Estate Investment Trusts (Reits). Think of them as the “Uber of property ownership” — you don’t need to own the car to benefit from the ride.

Growthpoint is a prime example of the structure. A Reit is more than just a listed company; it is a specific legal entity designed to pass income to its shareholders. The funds are required by regulation to distribute at least 75% of their taxable earnings to shareholders annually as dividends. In practice, many distribute closer to 80% to 90%.

The structure also ensures that investors receive a consistent income stream while the fund avoids corporate tax on the distributions. That’s important because it turns property from something that pays off only one day when you sell into something that pays you consistently along the way.

Over the long term, listed property in South Africa has delivered average dividend yields of 7% to 10%, depending on the cycle. That’s materially higher than what many investors get from traditional income products and in many cases, it comes with the added benefit of capital growth.

Instead of saving for years to buy



Piece of the pie. Instead of saving for years to buy one flat, you could own slices of office parks, shopping centres and logistics hubs across the country, starting with as little as R50. Photo: Supplied

one flat, you could own slices of office parks, shopping centres and logistics hubs across the country, starting with as little as R50.

One of the biggest advantages of listed property is that you can choose your story. If you prefer specific regions or sectors, you can tailor your portfolio to your outlook.

If you believe semigration is reshaping the country, then Spear gives you a focused bet on the Western Cape, a region that has consistently outperformed in terms of governance, infrastructure and economic activity.

If you’ve ever noticed how self-storage facilities seem to pop up everywhere (and never look empty), Stor-Age offers a pure-play exposure to the trend. Globally, the self-storage sector has shown occupancy rates often above 85 to 90%, even during downturns which is a sign of how “sticky” the demand really is.

Then there’s logistics, arguably the most important property theme of the past decade. Every time you click “buy now”, there’s a warehouse

somewhere making that happen.

Companies like Equites and Fortress own the backbone of the e-commerce economy: distribution centres, logistics parks and last-mile delivery hubs.

The growth of online retail in South Africa, while behind global peers, has been accelerating at double-digit rates annually and that demand flows directly into these assets.

On the other end of the spectrum, Fairvest focuses on neighbourhood and township retail. While high-end malls struggle with vacancies, these community centres often show more resilient rental collections and consistent foot traffic because they cater to everyday needs like groceries, pharmacies and essential services.

The above investment examples showcase different sectors with different risks and opportunities yet

all are accessible from the same brokerage account.

Technology has also introduced fractional ownership through platforms like EasyProperties. The platform allows you to invest in specific residential blocks of flats. Instead of buying an entire flat, you can choose a specific building and buy a stake in it. This lowers the barrier to entry for residential property to just a few rand.

Owning an industrial park or a shopping centre is no longer reserved for the ultra-wealthy

Liquidity and leverage are the final pieces of the puzzle. Unlike a physical building that can take months to sell, listed shares can be traded instantly on the JSE.

You can also lend against your shares the way you would take out a bond against a physical property. This provides a way to access capital without selling your assets and remains a sophisticated way to manage a portfolio.

When considering companies to

invest in, particularly with a focus on leverage and liquidity, it is crucial to evaluate their debt levels carefully. Aim to choose companies where debt does not exceed 40% of their total assets.

This ensures that the company maintains a healthy balance sheet and reduces the risk of financial instability. Companies with lower debt levels are generally better equipped to weather economic downturns and can allocate more resources to growth opportunities rather than servicing high debt.

This prudent approach helps safeguard your investment and provides greater peace of mind in managing your portfolio.

Casey Sprake, a market strategist at AG Capital, highlights the ability to diversify across sectors and geographies with small amounts of capital being a game-changer for the average South African.

“From a capital markets perspective, South Africa’s listed property sector is slowly once again repositioning itself as a yield-plus-growth asset class, where disciplined balance sheets, sector specialisation and improving funding conditions are starting to restore investor confidence after a tough cycle.

“For retail investors, that means access not just to property but to a more liquid, diversified and institutionally managed income stream that behaves very differently from direct ownership.”

In other words, Casey is saying that this isn’t just about access anymore, rather it’s about better access.

She also points out that these instruments are powerful tools for financial inclusion, offering transparency, professional management and diversification that most individual landlords can’t achieve on their own.

Owning an industrial park or a shopping centre is no longer reserved for the ultra-wealthy.

You can start building your property empire through your brokerage with the capital you have available today.

The mindset change from physical ownership to listed assets provides a more flexible and accessible path to long-term wealth.

You don’t need millions to get started. Just a brokerage account, a bit of curiosity and yes ... sometimes just the price of a coffee.



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Thought Leader

Comment and analysis from the Mail & Guardian

Reflections on workers' regression, resistance and renewal

With millions of South Africans unemployed — particularly young people — employers wield enormous power. The message is clear: “If you don't accept these conditions, there are hundreds waiting to take your place”



Zwelinzima Vavi

As we commemorate May Day 2026, we must confront a difficult but necessary truth: the state of workers' rights in South Africa is not advancing in any meaningful sense.

In many respects, it is under sustained attack — both openly through policy proposals and quietly through economic restructuring that is hollowing out the very foundation of decent work.

This is not simply a South African story. It is global. But in our context, shaped by apartheid's legacy of cheap labour and inequality, the consequences are far more brutal.

A moment of regression, not progress

The democratic breakthrough of 1994 brought with it a progressive labour framework — anchored in the Constitution, the Labour Relations Act, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act and, later, the National Minimum Wage Act. These were hard-won victories of a militant working class.

But today, we are witnessing a creeping rollback.

Under the guise of “labour market flexibility”, there are renewed attempts to weaken collective bargaining, introduce differentiated labour standards and normalise precarious work. The push for a two-tier labour market — where some workers are protected and others are deliberately excluded — is not theoretical. It is already unfolding in practice.

We see it in the explosion of labour broking, outsourcing, contract work and the so-called “gig economy”. We see it in proposals like the Unemployment Exemption Certificate, which effectively seeks to legalise super-exploitation under the false promise of job creation.

This is not reform. It is regression.

The silent crisis of the non-unionised worker

One of the most profound shifts in the labour market is the growing number of workers who are not unionised.

Yes, there is still something called the “non-unionised worker” — but the more important question is why this number is growing and what it means.

In sectors like retail, agriculture, domestic work, platform-based work and parts of manufacturing, millions of workers operate outside the protec-

tion of unions. Many are young, precariously employed and constantly rotating between short-term contracts and unemployment.

When these workers face abuse — unfair dismissal, wage theft, unsafe conditions — where do they go?

In theory, they can approach institutions like the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA). In reality, the system is intimidating, slow and often inaccessible without organisational backing. The employer, by contrast, arrives with legal representation and resources.

The truth is simple: without collective organisation, the individual worker is powerless.

Trade unions were never meant to be service providers. They are instruments of collective power. Where that power is absent, exploitation flourishes.

This is why rebuilding worker organisation — especially among the precarious and the unorganised — is not optional. It is an existential task.

Unemployment: The weapon against workers' rights

We cannot discuss workers' rights in isolation from unemployment.

With millions of South Africans unemployed — particularly young people — employers wield enormous power. The message is clear: “If you don't accept these conditions, there are hundreds waiting to take your place.”

This is how rights are eroded in practice — not always by changing the law but by creating conditions in which workers cannot exercise those rights.

Unemployment is not just an economic issue. It is a disciplinary tool used against the working class.

It weakens bargaining power, undermines unionisation and normalises exploitation.

The AI question: Threat or opportunity?

The rise of artificial intelligence is the latest frontier in the struggle over work.

There is no doubt that AI and automation are reshaping the labour market. From manufacturing to services, tasks that were once performed by humans are increasingly being automated.

The dominant narrative is that tech-



Labour market: AI and automation are reshaping the labour market.

nology will create new jobs. History tells a more complicated story.

Yes, new jobs may emerge — but they often require higher skills, fewer workers and are concentrated in specific sectors.

Meanwhile, existing jobs are displaced at a faster rate, particularly for low- and semi-skilled workers.

In South Africa, where the education system is already failing millions, this transition is especially dangerous.

AI, under the current economic system, is not being deployed to reduce working hours or improve the quality of life for workers. It is being used to cut costs, increase productivity and maximise profits.

The question is not technology itself. It is who controls it and for whose benefit.

How do we respond?

We cannot respond to these challenges with nostalgia or defensive postures alone. The situation demands bold, forward-looking strategies.

First, we must rebuild and expand worker organisation — especially

among the unorganised, the informal and the precarious. This requires new organising models, not just traditional workplace-based unionism.

Second, we must defend existing labour rights with everything we have. Any attempt to introduce a two-tier labour system must be defeated decisively.

Third, we must fight for a radically different economic path — one that prioritises job creation, industrialisation and public investment over austerity and profit maximisation.

Fourth, on AI and automation, we must demand a just transition:

- Reduced working hours without loss of pay;
- Worker participation in technology decisions;
- Public investment in skills and reskilling; and
- Social protection for displaced workers.

Technology must serve humanity — not the other way around.

A crisis — but also an opportunity

Despite the bleak picture, this moment also presents an opportunity.

Across the world, we are seeing new forms of worker resistance — from platform workers organising for rights to renewed strikes in traditional sectors.

In South Africa, anger is building. The crisis of unemployment, poverty and inequality is reaching unsustainable levels.

The question is whether this anger will be organised into a coherent movement for change or whether it will be fragmented, misdirected and ultimately contained.

Conclusion: The future is not predetermined

Workers' rights in 2026 are not guaranteed. They are contested.

There is no automatic movement towards greater protection and respect. Progress will depend on struggle — organised, conscious and sustained.

The non-unionised worker must become the centre of our organising efforts. The threat of AI must be confronted with bold demands.

And the broader economic system that produces mass unemployment and inequality must be challenged at its root.

May Day is not a ritual. It is a reminder.

A reminder that every right workers enjoy today was won through struggle — and that without struggle, those rights can be taken away.

The task before us is clear: to rebuild working-class power in a changing world.

Nothing less will suffice.

Zwelinzima Vavi is the general secretary of the South African Federation of Trade Unions (Safu). He formerly held the same position at trade union federation Cosatu.

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When these workers face abuse — unfair dismissal, wage theft, unsafe conditions — where do they go?

Mail & Guardian

Workers' Day 32 years on

Today we dedicate our Thought Leader section to Workers' Day, one of the most important days in honour of workers across the globe.

Who better to chronicle the struggles of the working classes than the people at the forefront of leading the fight for workers' rights?

Veteran unionist Zwelinzima Vavi, the general secretary of the South African Federation of Trade Unions and erstwhile leader of labour federation Cosatu, confronts the question of workers' rights in a country where policy proposals and economic restructuring have wreaked havoc on collective bargaining and weakened worker unions. Vavi also tackles the devil of unemployment, especially among the youth and how employers weaponise it to present a take-it-or-leave-it approach to prospective employees who will take anything to survive in this tough economy.

Zingisa Losi of Cosatu, the ANC's partner in the tripartite alliance with the SA Communist Party, calls on us to reflect on the 32 years of democracy and how workers' rights have evolved in the three decades. She also confronts the issue of the relevance of unions today in a world where the nature of work has evolved and why unions must be attractive to young people, particularly those joining the job market for the first time.

Perhaps the most troubling issue is the race-based pay disparities, which author Gillian Schutte tackles with statistics showing that the more things change, the more they remain the same. It's unfathomable that 32 years into democracy, most black workers earn slave wages while their white counterparts remain "at the summit of earnings and security".

She places the inequalities in the context of colonialism, apartheid and land ownership and how this history continues to put black workers at the bottom of the chain.

It is clear from our contributors to this special edition that Workers' Day comes as a bittersweet moment. This year, three decades after the democratic transition and just days after we commemorated Freedom Day, must be a time for reflection for workers, employers, labour unions, the state and all political parties.

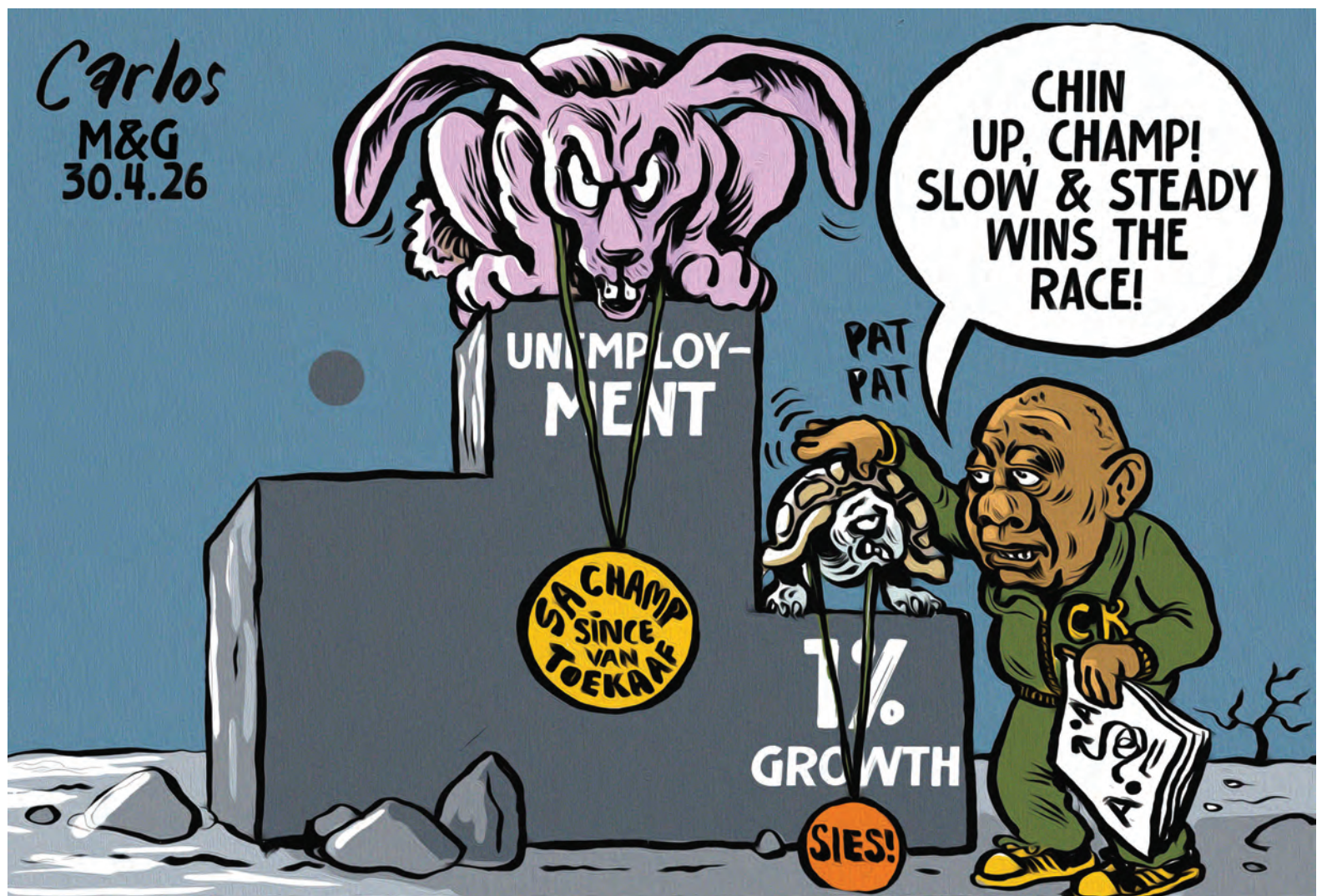
Workers' Day 2026 lands in the middle of a jobs bloodbath across several sectors of a stunted economy. Young people in particular face the brutalities of joblessness. Without jobs, people lose dignity.

It is by design the issue of unemployment comes up in nearly every article we carry today.

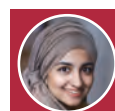
New DA leader Geordin Hill-Lewis warns that Workers' Day should not become a "ritual of denial" but a moment to tackle joblessness. As part of the Government of National Unity, we hope the DA will use the opportunity to contribute to economic growth and job creation instead of playing politics to win black votes.

As he rightly puts it, Worker's Day is hollow when millions of our people are unemployed.

M&G Media Ltd



Hidden inequality in SA's workplaces



Aisha Adam

As South Africa marks Workers' Day on 1 May, much of the public conversation rightly focuses on wages, job security and rising unemployment.

Yet there is a quieter, often overlooked issue shaping the everyday experiences of workers: how they are judged based on their appearance.

From hairstyle and dress to body type and personal presentation, appearance plays a powerful role in how individuals are perceived in the workplace.

While many employers justify these expectations as part of maintaining a "professional image", the line between preference and discrimination is often blurred. For many workers, particularly those from historically marginalised groups, appearance standards can become a subtle but significant barrier to fair treatment.

South Africa's legal framework has made important strides in addressing workplace discrimination over the past 30 years.

Section 9 of the Constitution and section 6 of the Employment Equity Act (EEA) prohibit unfair discrimination on a wide range of grounds, including race, gender, religion and culture.

However, physical appearance, beyond aspects already covered by these categories, remains largely unprotected. This creates a gap in the law that leaves many workers vulnerable.

Consider, for example, how workplace policies regulate hairstyles, clothing or grooming. These rules are often framed as neutral, yet they may disproportionately affect certain groups.

A hairstyle that reflects racial identity, a tattoo that is symbolic of one's

culture, a beard worn for religious reasons or clothing that expresses personal identity may be deemed unprofessional or inappropriate.

Although some of these cases can be challenged under existing grounds such as religion or culture, many cannot. Where appearance does not neatly fit within a recognised category or protected ground, workers are left without clear legal protection.

Unfortunately, this problem is not only legal but also deeply social, as our appearance is closely tied to our identity, dignity and self-expression.

Being told to alter one's appearance to fit workplace norms can undermine a person's sense of self and belonging.

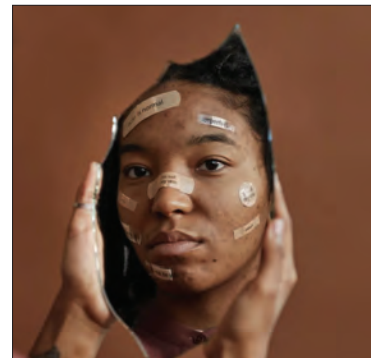
It reinforces the idea that certain bodies, styles or ways of presenting oneself are more acceptable than others. Over time, this contributes to systemic inequality, where opportunities are shaped not only by merit but by how closely an individual conforms to dominant standards.

Furthermore, the issue becomes even more complex when viewed through an intersectional lens, which recognises that individuals may experience overlapping forms of disadvantage such as race, gender and religion, which operate together rather than in isolation.

Appearance-based discrimination rarely operates in isolation, as it often intersects with race, gender, religion and culture, further compounding disadvantage. For example, expectations around "neat" or "professional" hair have historically been shaped by colonial and Eurocentric standards, which disproportionately affect black employees.

Similarly, gendered expectations about dress and presentation can place unequal burdens on women. In these cases, appearance is not simply about aesthetics; it becomes a vehicle through which deeper patterns of inequality are reproduced.

Despite these realities, workers who experience appearance-based



Equality: Workers are judged based on appearance.

discrimination face significant hurdles in seeking legal recourse because appearance is not explicitly recognised as a protected ground. As a result, individuals must rely on more complex legal arguments. They may have to show that their experience is comparable to an existing ground of discrimination or demonstrate how their dignity has been impaired.

This places a heavy burden of proof on claimants and creates uncertainty about whether their claims will succeed in practice. As a result, many instances of unfair treatment go unchallenged.

Recognising physical appearance as a distinct ground of discrimination in the EEA would go some way towards addressing this gap. It would provide clarity for both employees and employers, making it easier to identify and challenge unfair practices. Importantly, it would not prevent employers from maintaining legitimate workplace standards.

There will always be contexts, such as health and safety or specific job requirements, in which certain forms of regulation are justified. However, these justifications should be carefully scrutinised to ensure they do not mask arbitrary or exclusionary practices.

Clear legal recognition would also encourage employers to reflect more critically on their policies. Rather

than relying on vague notions of professionalism, organisations would need to ensure that their rules are inclusive, proportionate and respectful of diversity. This shift is not only a matter of compliance but also of building workplaces where all employees feel valued and can participate fully.

Some may argue that extending legal protection to appearance risks opening the floodgates to trivial claims. However, similar concerns were raised in the past about recognising discrimination based on race, gender and other established grounds. Experience has shown that legal recognition does not trivialise discrimination; rather, it brings visibility to harms that were previously ignored and provides a framework for addressing them.

At its core, the question is one of dignity. Workers are not only entitled to fair pay and safe working conditions but also to be treated with respect. This includes the freedom to express aspects of their identity through their appearance, without fear of unfair exclusion or penalty. As workplaces continue to evolve, so too must the legal frameworks that govern them.

Workers' Day is a moment to reflect on the progress that has been made in advancing labour law rights but also on the work that remains.

Addressing appearance-based discrimination is part of this broader project. By recognising the role that appearance plays in shaping inequality, South Africa can take another progressive step towards realising the promise of substantive equality in the workplace.

Dr Aisha Adam is a postdoctoral researcher in the department of mercantile law at Stellenbosch University. This article is based, in part, on her paper 'Advancing substantive equality in the workplace: Recognising appearance autonomy through an intersectional lens', published in the Industrial Law Journal (2025).



Zingiswa Losi

We celebrate May as workers' month, to remember those who sacrificed so much to improve the lives of workers and the many challenges still to be overcome.

This week, not only are we celebrating Workers' Day on 1 May but also 32 years of democracy on 27 April. Both provide an opportunity to reflect on how far we have come as workers and still have to journey.

The trade union movement's contributions to improving the working and living conditions of workers across the world are immense. Key victories it has won have included achieving recognition for the right to form trade unions, to collective bargaining, to strike and ending some of the most abhorrent forms of exploitation at the workplace, including child and forced labour.

Closer to home the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) played a key role defeating the apartheid regime, achieving the 1994 democratic breakthrough, crafting our progressive Constitution and labour laws, ensuring 60% of the Budget is invested in uplifting working-class communities amongst many other important gains.

Critics correctly challenge Cosatu not to rest upon past victories' accolades but to continuously raise the bar and earn the trust and confidence of workers and society.

Analysts correctly argue that organised labour needs to work closely with government and business to address South Africa's many entrenched and painful socio-economic challenges. This is a point Cosatu has long embraced and spent considerable effort on because neither government nor social partners can overcome these obstacles alone.

This is a call that trade unions have pursued with great success in Sweden, Norway and other countries where the progressive agenda and spirit of social dialogue and compacts have achieved great success in building inclusive economies, where workers' rights are protected, inclusive growth and high living standards secured.

Workers need businesses to do well to ensure they remain employed, jobs can be created, working conditions are improved and employees are paid a living wage. Businesses need to appreciate that their most important asset is their staff, to treat workers well and invest in them, as a happy worker is a productive worker.

The government needs thriving businesses, well-paid workers and falling unemployment to generate the taxes required to fund the public services society requires.

Cosatu and its affiliates work closely with employers in both the public and private sectors, at bargaining councils, sectoral master plans, Nedlac

and Parliament. Of course, where there are differences, these must and are tackled, often sharply as labour and business interests and mandates differ on many issues.

It is with this spirit of social compacts, the national interest and advancing working class struggles that Cosatu has pursued a variety of key socio-economic interventions over the



Trade unions: The key for unions to remain relevant to workers is to address their most basic needs. Photo: My_Cosatu

Unionised workforce still ideal

years, not only to champion the interests of workers but also those of the economy and society at large.

In 2019, after extensive negotiations chaired by then Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa, business and labour achieved the historic National Minimum Wage boosting the wages of six million impoverished workers and injecting a sorely-needed stimulus into the economy.

It has been one of the most important interventions since 1994 to uplift the most vulnerable parts of the workforce, to reduce poverty and inequality, to improve the lives of the working class and inject stimulus into the economy.

In 2020, Cosatu drafted the Eskom Social Compact, later adopted by government and social partners at Nedlac, not only to secure workers' jobs but to ensure the ability of the entire economy to function. Workers' jobs cannot be secure unless the economy has reliable electricity.

This Compact relieved Eskom of R250 billion worth of debt, enabling it to ramp up its maintenance and investment programmes and thus end the debilitating loadshedding that had threatened the entire economy. Cosatu continues to work closely with Eskom, government and industry to now find ways to reduce the price of electricity as this is key to economic growth as well as reducing the increasingly high cost of living.

During COVID-19, Cosatu worked closely with government and business at Nedlac to help oversee the health and safety, as well as socio-economic responses to this devastating pandemic. Sectors where union membership and collaboration with employers are the strongest saw the highest vaccination rates, saving millions of lives and livelihoods.

Labour and business worked

closely with the government to help ensure the release of over R65 billion to provide for their families and the introduction of the SRD Grant helping eight million unemployed persons.

These helped keep the economy going. Countless hours were spent by unions and businesses to make sure this relief found its way to factories, restaurants and other workplaces and ultimately to the pockets of workers and their families.

The key for unions to remain relevant to workers is to address their most basic needs. This means unions have to be on the ground with workers, representing them and securing positive wage increases and improving their working and living conditions.

Cosatu and its affiliates routinely train shop stewards on labour laws and other important tools to empower workers and ensure they are able to exercise their hard-won labour rights.

It means putting money in their pocket. The Two-Pot Pension Reforms that Cosatu drove have provided relief to millions of highly indebted workers (over R70 billion to more than four million workers to date) whilst simultaneously boosting long-term retirement savings.

Cosatu has long championed local procurement. This is a call that the entirety of government, the private sector and consumers need to embrace. Supporting locally produced goods; be it clothes, shoes, food, furniture or cars is one of the most important ways to save jobs and businesses and secure sustainable growth.

Simultaneously we have worked closely with the South African Revenue Service to ensure that it has the resources needed to tackle tax and customs evasion.

This is key to protecting local jobs and businesses as well as ensuring that the state has the funds necessary to provide public and municipal ser-

vices required by working-class communities and the economy.

Much of the nation's attention over the years has been on the Budget and finding the right balance between raising revenue and prioritising expenditure.

The focus of Cosatu's extensive engagements on the Budget at Nedlac and Parliament has been to ensure it capacitates the state to provide the services the working-class depend upon, inject the stimulus needed to unlock economic growth, provide relief to the poor and a path to employment for the unemployed.

A progressive budget is intrinsic to creating jobs and improving the lives of the working class.

Cosatu is often attacked by its critics when workers go on strike. The question should be how can we address workers' grievances timeously and thus boost labour market stability?

This requires employers to respect collective bargaining and our labour laws, engage with unions in good faith and pay workers a living wage. In short, value employees. This is key to a productive economy.

A key model for building trust between workers and employers is the co-determination approach used with great success in some of the major companies in Germany, Sweden and Japan.

Worker representation on company boards builds a better understanding of workers' frustrations by the employer and enables workers to have a greater stake in the companies' success.

Reducing the wage gap between employees too is critical to reducing unacceptable inequality levels. Some of the most difficult challenges facing unions include organising the unorganised.

Accessing farm and domestic

Unions need to keep pace with the evolving nature of work and to prove their relevance to young people entering the labour market for the first time.

workers who are scattered far and wide and petrified of losing their jobs is tough. Recruiting workers through labour brokers and more recently e-platform companies is not easy, as many are vulnerable, casual or wrongly regarded as self-employed.

Unions need to keep pace with the evolving nature of work and to prove their relevance to young people entering the labour market for the first time.

They will join unions that can protect their livelihoods and improve their working conditions. Struggle songs and T-shirts are not enough.

Organising is never easy but if it could be done during apartheid's darkest days, then surely it can be done in the comfort of a constitutional democracy.

We are proud of how far Cosatu has come since it was launched 40 years ago in Durban and the role it has played in ending apartheid, securing our constitutional democracy, uplifting workers and enshrining their rights into law.

Equally we dare not be complacent when faced with a staggering 41.1% unemployment rate, entrenched levels of inequality and poverty, endemic crime and corruption, struggling public and municipal services, amongst many other dire challenges.

Our task is to lead the struggles against these and improve the lives of the working class.

Are unions still relevant today? Yes, they are and will remain relevant as long as workers are not paid a living wage, are subjected to abusive working conditions, or live in communities where a better life remains a distant dream. That is what drives Cosatu.

Zingiswa Losi is the president of Cosatu.

Thought Leader

On Workers' Day 2026, the typical white worker still stands far above the typical black African worker in a labour market built through conquest, land theft and racial rule

Gillian Schutte

White conservative groups continue to claim exclusion, while the labour market keeps white workers at the summit of earnings and security.

The Democratic Alliance (DA)'s challenge to employment equity law carries that politics straight into the government of national unity (GNU) period and gives white grievance an official platform. Meanwhile, the Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) median earnings table strips that fiction bare.

White workers take home a median of R25 000 a month. Indian or Asian workers take home R15 000. Coloured workers take home R6 067. Black African workers take home R5 200. White workers therefore earn 380.8% more than black African workers on the median measure. Indian or Asian workers earn 188.5% more and coloured workers earn 16.7% more.

The median captures the ordinary worker rather than the executive fringe, which gives these figures real political weight in South Africa's wage debate. On Workers' Day 2026, the typical white worker still stands far above the typical black African worker in a labour market built through conquest, land theft and racial rule.

This devastation is rooted in history. White settlers who pushed into the hinterland in the 18th century wanted land, cattle, water and labour and they directed the harshest force of conquest against large African agrarian and pastoral communities of the eastern and interior regions, especially Nguni-speaking formations.

Colonial administrations then used taxation to destroy African autonomy and force labour into the settler economy. A fiscal history of South Africa records hut taxes, poll taxes, dog taxes and road taxes imposed on Africans to compel cash dependence and migrant labour.

The Glen Grey regime intensified that coercion and deepened the assault on African agrarian independence. White accumulation rested on African ruination from the beginning. Railways, mines, ports, farms and food chains all emerged from the foundation of black African exploitation by white settlers.

The 1913 Natives Land Act widened that assault at national level. Government centenary material records that the Act limited African landholding to seven percent of the land, later 13%, restricted black people from buying or occupying land except as employees of a white master and opened the door to white ownership of 87% of the land.

The Act attacked an indigenous economy and deepened a labour system already built through coercion. The indigenous majority moved

White workers earn 380% more than blacks



Devastation: Distance between white workers and black African workers shows how the racial order graded oppression rather than equalised it.
Photo: Supplied

further into dispossession, labour tenancy and wage dependence. The monthly gap between R25 000 and R5 200 records the survival of that structure in the present.

The unemployment figures place the same history in the present tense. Black Africans made up more than 80% of the working-age population between 2019 and 2024, yet they accounted for more than 91% of the unemployed in 2024. June 2024 figures place official unemployment at 37.6% for black Africans, 23.3% for coloured people, 13.9% for Indian or Asian people and 7.9% for white people.

A wider measure of exclusion cuts deeper still. Stats SA's June 2024 labour tables recorded 12.668 million employed black Africans, 7.632 million unemployed and 13.567 million outside the labour force from a total working-age population of 33.867 million.

More than six in 10 working-age black Africans therefore stood either unemployed or outside the labour force, while only 37.4% were employed. The black majority carries the central burden. Coloured communities carry the next heaviest burden in the graded racial order that white supremacy built.

Median earnings give that hierarchy its most concrete form. A median of R25 000 and R5 200 describes two different social worlds. Monthly income determines the quality of food in the home, the ability to travel to work, the margin against debt, the chance to study further, the possibility of rest and the capacity to survive a crisis without humiliation.

Coloured workers sit above black Africans in the median table, yet the distance between R6 067 and R25 000 shows how the racial order graded oppression rather than equalised it. Indian or Asian workers occupy a higher rung. White workers remain at the summit.

The same order appears in occupational hierarchy and formal-sector access. White workers held 61.6% of their employment in skilled occupations in 2024, while black Africans held 17.6%. White workers also held 90.6% of their employment in the formal sector, while black Africans held 64.0% and recorded the largest shares in informal work.

Coloured workers again stood closer to black Africans than to whites. Stats SA's occupational medians show the material return attached to that hierarchy. Skilled work carried a median monthly income of R23 000 in 2024; semi-skilled work R6 500; and low-skilled work R3 800.

Managers and professionals each recorded R25 000, while technicians recorded R20 000.

The late Sampie Terreblanche explains the continuation of this malaise after so-called liberation.

He argued that the handover protected the old white elite while cultivating a narrow black elite whose ascent never altered the distribution of wealth and power.

Patrick Bond tracked the same settlement through the neoliberal turn of the mid-1990s and through the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (Gear) plan's labour effects. He recorded 71 000 formal-sector non-agricultural job losses in

1996, 126 000 in 1997 and 186 000 in 1998, with 500 000 net losses from 1996 to 1999.

The GNU now governs that inheritance through austerity. The treasury's May 2025 Budget Overview states that consolidated spending over the medium term was revised down by R69.4 billion and that debt-service costs would consume 22% of revenue in 2025/26.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) 2025 Article IV report pressed South Africa to maintain fiscal consolidation despite weak growth, while acknowledging that consolidation constrains public investment and social spending. Education activists recorded more than 23 000 posts cut across provincial departments.

External pressure continues to tighten the domestic squeeze. The World Bank recorded weak growth, contracting per capita income and unemployment above 30%, while the United States imposed a 30% tariff on South African goods in August 2025. Eskom implemented an average electricity tariff increase of 8.76% from 1 April 2026, which drives up the cost of food, transport, rent and production.

Poverty works through the body and the psyche and policy discourse captures only part of that damage. Stats SA reports that 10.8 million people remained below the food poverty line in 2023 and that 66.7% of South Africans lived below the upper-bound poverty line. The National Food and Nutrition

Security Survey places stunting among children aged 0 to 5 at 28.8%. The 2017 Land Audit found that white individual owners held 72% of farms by area, while African owners held 4%.

White ownership still dominates the ground. Black workers continue to bear the labour burden, while children absorb its effects physically and parents absorb them psychologically.

Black workers continue to bear the labour burden, while children absorb its effects physically and parents absorb them psychologically.

A society in which the typical white worker earns R25 000 and the typical black African worker earns R5 200 reproduces dispossession each month through the wage structure itself.

White grievance politics refuses to confront the degradation imposed on the majority across centuries. The wage table, unemployment figures and ownership patterns already deliver the verdict.

South Africa now faces the question of power. The country requires a strategic transfer of economic and political power grounded in land, industry, labour and sovereign control over the material basis of life. Workers' Day will carry truth only when African power takes command of African land, labour and destiny.

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.

Fragmented workers, the only mourners in ANC-SACP divorce

Lubabalo Cengani

That powerful and instructive closing in the famous pamphlet *The Communist Manifesto* (“Working Men of All Countries, Unite!”), written during a volatile time in modern history by Marx and Engels, should resonate with every worker.

It should challenge those responsible for protecting workers' rights on this Workers' Day.

This message reinforces that workers should not mimic the cold indifference of their oppressors or adopt their harmful practices.

It calls workers to a shared vision. When many stand together, bound by their struggle, they hold the rightful power to repair the broken foundations of society and reclaim the dignity that capitalism has denied them for too long.

The workers' struggle prior to democracy was closely linked to the need to end the oppressive apartheid system.

This included fighting against legal segregation through pass laws, job reservations and migrant labour systems. The fight also involved ending the suppression of unionism and collective bargaining.

Black trade unions faced denial of recognition and their leaders faced severe oppression, including banishment. Black workers were excluded from being recognised as employees under the Industrial Conciliation Act.

The greatest challenge today remains economic exploitation. Black workers are still paid far below a living wage and lack access to benefits enjoyed by their white counterparts.

In mining and agriculture, safety standards for Black workers were poor, leading to high rates of injury, permanent disability and death. These aspects of exclusion were critical for the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP).

They were central reasons for moving towards a more radical, militant, mass-based approach. This struggle forced the ANC and SACP into an alliance to advance workers' issues even during apartheid's darkest days, ultimately helping to usher in a democratic South Africa.

The Constitution adopted in 1996, influenced by both the ANC and SACP, serves as the foundational document for the advancement of workers' rights in South Africa.

Under an ANC-led government in formal alliance with the SACP and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu), South Africa's labour system was transformed. The Labour Relations Act of 1995 revolutionised dispute resolution by establishing the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA).

The Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997 set a workweek of 45 hours, mandated paid annual leave of 21 consecutive days and established rights to sick leave

When workers are divided by political loyalty to competing parties, they cannot effectively unite against employers during wage negotiations



Seeing red: The decision by the SACP to go it alone during the local government elections leaves workers in a difficult position as their allegiance is torn between the Communists and the ANC. Photo: SACP

and maternity leave.

The Skills Development Act of 1998 set up the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) to fund and oversee worker training, supported by employer levies aimed at upskilling the historically disadvantaged workforce.

For the first time, domestic and farm workers gained access to the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF), providing a safety net against job loss. The SACP and ANC advocated for laws that dismantled the job reservation legacy, which had excluded Black workers from skilled positions.

The Employment Equity Act of 1998 aimed to correct past imbalances by requiring designated employers to implement affirmative action for Black people, women and people with disabilities. The National Minimum Wage Act of 2018 marked a significant recent victory by establishing a national wage floor across all sectors.

However, not all workers' struggles from the past have been resolved.

While workers advanced their battles over the last 32 years of democracy, Cosatu underwent significant changes or rather, decline. High-profile political exits included SADWU in 1998, LIMUSA and NUMSA in 2014, LIMUSA in 2015, FAWU in 2016 and the disaffiliation of SAFPU and SASAWU.

SAFTU was re-established in 2017. AMCU began in 1998, founded by Joseph Mathunjwa after he was expelled from NUM, a Cosatu

affiliate.

These departures mattered because they shattered the “One Industry, One Federation” goal, resulting in a multi-federation landscape where Cosatu no longer monopolised organised labour in South Africa.

The exits of UDM in 1997, COPE in 2008, EFF and WASP in 2013, SRWP in 2019 and uMkhonto weSizwe in 2023 from the ANC/SACP partnership further hindered efforts to unite and advance workers' struggles.

Instead of forming a powerful voting bloc that could pressure the government to implement pro-poor policies, the working-class vote is now divided among the ANC, SACP, EFF and MKP.

As of early 2026, the struggle for unity remains challenging.

Recent directives from the ANC National Executive Committee (NEC) regarding dual membership, which force members to choose between the ANC and SACP, have further strained the remaining elements of the tripartite alliance.

The tragedy lies in the fracture of the Left in South Africa. The long-standing tripartite alliance has reached a breaking point, with the SACP now preparing to contest the 2026 local government elections.

Workers, mostly Cosatu affiliates, will have to choose between the ANC and SACP on the ballot, further fragmenting the unity of the Left and threatening the tripartite alliance.

When the ANC and SACP split, the worker vote suffered. Rather than a unified voting bloc that can push for pro-worker policies like the National Minimum Wage or NHI, the movement is splintered into smaller, com-

peting factions.

The dual membership ultimatum issued by the ANC in April 2026 forces grassroots activists to choose between their socialist beliefs (SACP) and their historical political home (ANC).

This situation creates a sense of mourning at the community level, as neighbours and comrades become divided. Traditionally, Cosatu, ANC and SACP formed a stable support system.

With the ANC and SACP in conflict, Cosatu is effectively left without a home. If it aligns with the SACP, it loses its government seat; if it sticks with the ANC, it risks being seen as a sell-out by its own radical members.

A divided alliance cannot speak with one voice at the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC), which makes it easier for business interests to dominate policy discussions.

For the average worker, this may not lead to a socialist revolution but instead create a weaker government less capable of delivering services or safeguarding jobs.

Workers will find themselves mourning, as without the SACP's internal pressure, the ANC is likely to move more quickly towards privatisation and fiscal austerity, policies that typically hurt workers the most.

Meanwhile, workers will also mourn the loss of a unified revolutionary movement that once promised them a Better Life for All.

Workers are the only mourners because they directly feel the impact

of the ANC's recent policy changes.

The divorce leaves the “one industry, one federation” messaging paralysed because the split in the alliance affects factories and mines. When workers are divided by political loyalty to competing parties, they cannot effectively unite against employers during wage negotiations.

In the tripartite alliance, Cosatu is ideally in alignment with both parties. If it supports the SACP, it loses its access to state power. If it supports the ANC, it sacrifices its identity.

This fragmentation directly undermines the earlier Marxian directive of proletarian unity. This internal division creates paralysis. The common economic interests of workers in mines and factories get overshadowed by political gatekeeping. This situation ultimately benefits employers, who profit from a divided labour force.

By making workers choose between state access and ideological purity, the structural split keeps the labour movement localised and competitive.

It prevents the movement from becoming a unified, revolutionary force that can confront capital.

The divorce leaves the “one industry, one federation” messaging paralysed because the split in the alliance affects factories and mines.

The SACP and ANC advocated for laws that dismantled the job reservation legacy, which had excluded Black workers from skilled positions.

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The leadership crisis behind joblessness

Our high unemployment rate is not incidental. It is the outcome of decisions taken, priorities set and in some cases, the absence of decisive action across institutions responsible for shaping economic and labour market outcomes

Walter Matli

South Africa's unemployment crisis is often described as an economic failure. It is, more fundamentally, a failure of leadership. Millions remain excluded from the labour market and the data continue to reflect an economy that is not absorbing its people at the scale required.

Yet what remains insufficiently confronted is what lies at the centre of the crisis.

The national conversation is fragmented. Economists point to the structure of the economy. Business leaders raise concerns about regulatory constraints. Young, unemployed South Africans speak of exclusion, networks and limited access to opportunity. Policymakers invoke the enduring legacy of apartheid.

Each of the explanations carries weight.

What is less evident, however, is a sustained, collective focus on resolving the crisis.

This is where the argument must shift. South Africa does not only have an unemployment crisis. It has a leadership crisis.

Unemployment at this scale is not incidental. It is the outcome of decisions taken, priorities

set and in some cases, the absence of decisive action across institutions responsible for shaping economic and labour market outcomes.

Leadership, in this sense, is not confined to individuals. It is reflected in how systems function, how resources are allocated and how urgency is defined.

At a surface level, the crisis reflects familiar governance challenges. We see it where systems do not deliver as intended, where institutional mandates are not fully realised and where the alignment between capability and responsibility is uneven.

These are not isolated shortcomings. They shape the everyday experience of citizens navigating both the state and the economy.

But the crisis runs deeper.

South Africa's unemployment exists alongside significant concentrations of wealth and economic power. This is not a contradiction but a structural feature of the economy.

When discouraged job seekers are included, more than 11 million people are without work, according to Statistics South Africa's Quarterly Labour Force Survey for Q4 2025.

These coexist with those who hold the resources, influence and capacity to expand economic participation.

The question is whether the resources are being deployed in ways that meaningfully broaden access to work.

Those with economic power are often best positioned to drive employment creation, whether through investment, enterprise development or value chain expansion. Doing so, however, requires a shift in how value is defined, from accumulation alone to inclusion and sustainability.

This is not only a normative position. It is an economic imperative in a society where exclusion at scale undermines long-term growth and stability.

There are long-standing debates about whether such outcomes are inherent in the structure of capitalism and whether alternative systems could produce more equitable results. Evidence across different contexts suggests that no system, in isolation, resolves the question of employment.

The differentiating factor remains leadership: how individuals and institutions act in those systems, what they prioritise and how they respond to persistent inequality.

It is in this context that leadership must be interrogated more directly.

Consider the institutional response to unemployment.

Government has, over time, introduced a range of initiatives aimed at improving labour market access.

The expansion of public employment services, skills development programmes and labour activation initiatives reflects an attempt to respond to the crisis. Indeed, recent performance reports indicate that targets related to work-seeker registration, employment counselling and work and learning opportunities have been exceeded.

The achievements should not be dismissed. They demonstrate administrative effort and a degree of system functionality.

However, they also point to a more fundamental limitation. The distinction between facilitating access to opportunities and generating employment at scale remains unresolved.

Registering work seekers and improving placement mechanisms are necessary interventions but they



The reality: More than 11 million people are without work, according to Statistics South Africa's Quarterly Labour Force Survey for Q4 2025. Photo: jcomp on Magnific

do not, in themselves, expand the number of sustainable jobs available in the economy.

This is where leadership must move beyond process and confront outcomes.

Similarly, proposed policy reforms aimed at encouraging job creation, including support for small businesses and adjustments to labour market entry conditions, reflect an attempt to engage with the problem more directly.

However, the interventions must be assessed carefully. The objective of expanding employment, particularly for new entrants, is critical. At the same time, reforms must ensure that the pursuit of job creation does not come at the cost of eroding fundamental worker protections or entrenching precarious forms of work.

The balance between inclusion and protection is not easily resolved. It requires thoughtful, evidence-based leadership that is attentive to both economic realities and social consequences.

Beyond the state, the role of business leadership is equally central. Employment creation ultimately depends on the capacity and willingness of companies to invest, expand and absorb labour. Where this does not occur at the required scale, it raises questions about the broader orientation of economic decision-making.

This is not to suggest indifference or neglect. It is to recognise that prevailing models of growth might not be sufficiently aligned with the imperative of mass employment.

Addressing this requires a rethinking of how opportunity is generated across sectors, particularly in areas with higher labour absorption potential.

Organised labour, too, operates in this ecosystem.

Historically, its focus has been on protecting the rights and conditions of those employed. This

remains essential.

However, the scale of unemployment requires a broader engagement with the realities of those outside the labour market and with the policies and strategies that can expand inclusion.

Taken together, the dynamics point to a central conclusion. The unemployment crisis is not solely a function of economic structure. It is also a reflection of how leadership is exercised across the system.

This brings us to a critical question: What kind of leaders are we producing if the economy cannot absorb its people?

Institutions of higher learning and business schools in particular, cannot remain peripheral to the question. They play a formative role in shaping how future leaders understand value, risk, growth and responsibility.

If leadership continues to reproduce patterns that sustain exclusion, then the environments in which that leadership is developed must be examined.

At the Unisa Graduate School of Business Leadership, this responsibility is taken seriously.

The school's approach to leadership development is intentionally grounded in ethics, responsiveness and social awareness. Leadership is not framed narrowly as managerial competence but as the capacity to engage with complex, real-world challenges, including inequality, exclusion and the changing nature of work.

This orientation is reflected in both academic programmes and executive education offerings, which seek to equip leaders with the tools to think critically, act decisively and remain accountable to the broader society in which they operate.

Engagement with industry, government and communities ensures that this learning remains connected to lived realities.

The aim is not to position the institution as a solution in itself but as a contributor to a broader ecosystem of leadership development that is better aligned with the demands of the present.

If unemployment is to be addressed meaningfully, leadership must evolve. It must move beyond narrow institutional or sectoral interests and engage with the larger question of how opportunity is created and distributed. It must be willing to confront uncomfortable trade-offs, to rethink established approaches and to act with urgency.

Workers' Day offers an opportunity to reflect on these issues with clarity.

It is a moment to recognise the gains made in securing rights and protections for workers. But it is also a moment to acknowledge the scale of inequality that persists.

In a context where millions remain without work, with

Statistics SA recording that 3.5 million young people are not in employment, education or training, the meaning of Workers' Day must extend beyond those in employment to those seeking entry into the labour market.

South Africa does not lack ideas or resources. What it requires is leadership that is prepared to align both in the service of a more inclusive economy.

Until then, unemployment will remain not only an economic crisis but a reflection of the limits of our leadership.

Professor Walter Matli is the executive dean and CEO of the Unisa Graduate School of Business Leadership.

What kind of leaders are we producing if the economy cannot absorb its people?

The meaning of Workers' Day must extend beyond those in employment to those seeking entry into the labour market

A focus on one faltering building block

Busani Ngcaweni and Pali Lehohla

A persistent question confronts policymakers and analysts in South Africa: Why has sustained economic growth not occurred at the scale and pace required to transform the economy and reduce poverty and unemployment?

Despite the country's wealth in natural resources, relatively advanced infrastructure and a sophisticated financial system, the economy remains constrained by structural weaknesses. These include low productivity, high levels of unemployment and premature deindustrialisation.

In their Decadal Plan Report, released in March this year, the department of science and innovation identifies three broad areas around which the long-term development strategy is structured.

The first is societal grand challenges and associated economic enablers. These include climate change and environmental sustainability, with a focus on the circular economy and a just transition that protects vulnerable households as the country shifts to green energy.

They include future-proofing education and skills to address the mismatch between schooling outcomes and the requirements of a digital economy. They also encompass the future of society, where innovation is directed towards resolving the interlinked challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment.

The plan emphasises modernising traditional sectors such as agriculture, mining and manufacturing through technological upgrading, as well as health and energy innovation, including vaccine production and renewable energy solutions to stabilise the national grid.

The second pillar is the construction of a capable and inclusive state. The emphasis is on strengthening decision-support tools through data analytics, satellite data and geographic information systems to improve municipal service delivery.

It also includes a commitment to spatial transformation by aligning science, technology and innovation investment with the District Development Model, thereby extending the footprint of innovation beyond metropolitan centres.

Taken together, the priorities reflect an implicit recognition that economic transformation is not driven solely by policy instruments but by the underlying institutional and social conditions that shape how the instruments are absorbed and translated into productive activity.

The insight resonates with the thinking of the 18th-century sage of the Caledon Valley, Morena Mohlomi, a Mosotho chief, philosopher and mentor to Morena Moshoeshoe, the founder of the Basotho nation.

Mohlomi's conception of leadership is neither neutral nor procedural. He distinguishes between responsible and irresponsible leadership, defining the former as a leader who understands themselves and those they lead, pursues peaceful and productive alliances, accommodates stakeholders and deploys new instruments of power to create intergenerational value.

What is notable is not simply the emphasis on ethical conduct but the implicit theory of the causation it

The country presents a clear illustration of how a weak social foundation constrains industrial development and reinforces structural inefficiencies but we can change that



Shaky ground: the social foundation of industrial experience has been undermined by systemic inequality, inadequate investment in vocational education and poor alignment between education, skills development and industry demands. Photo: Delwyn Verasamy

contains. Leadership, in this view, shapes the conditions under which societies organise themselves, generate knowledge and sustain productive system.

The causal pathway provides the intellectual basis for understanding the social foundation of industrial experience as both an outcome of leadership and a determinant of long-term economic performance.

Against this background, this article examines one dimension of South Africa's underperformance: the role of the social foundation of industrial experience in shaping the country's industrial capabilities and its broader implications for long-term growth.

The concept of the social foundation of industrial experience refers to the set of social, institutional and cultural conditions that influence how individuals and communities engage with, participate in and benefit from industrial activity.

It encompasses systems of education and training, labour relations, workplace norms, social identity, community structures and access to economic opportunity across race, class and gender.

In societies where the foundation is strong, individuals are equipped with the skills, networks and institutional support required to contribute meaningfully to industrial processes. This, in turn, promotes innovation, enhances productivity and facilitates broader participation in economic development.

Conversely, a weak social foundation undermines industrial capability by disconnecting individuals from opportunity, limiting the accumulation of productive knowledge and reproducing structural inequality and inefficiency.

While the Decadal Plan's emphasis

on decision-support tools and spatial transformation seeks to address some of the constraints, the persistence of the conditions suggests deeper systemic limitations. When viewed through this lens, South Africa presents a clear illustration of how a weak social foundation constrains industrial development and reinforces structural inefficiencies.

The social foundation of industrial experience has been undermined by systemic inequality, inadequate investment in vocational education and poor alignment between education, skills development and industry demands. The endurance of colonial and apartheid legacies continues to shape the structure of the real economy. The outcomes of post-apartheid investments in both basic and post-school education are particularly concerning given the scale of public expenditure.

South Africa allocates a higher share of its gross domestic product to education than many of its global peers, with substantial resources directed towards the sector education and training authorities and the higher education system. Yet the real economy continues to reflect weak educational outcomes.

Persistent deficiencies in literacy and numeracy, low throughput from schools into post-school training and a misalignment between qualifications and labour market needs continue to constrain the development of a skilled and adaptable workforce.

The conditions have contributed to a manufacturing base that is both narrow and shallow, with limited capacity to upgrade or diversify.

Outside relatively well-supported sectors such as automotive manufacturing, South Africa struggles

to attract sophisticated industrial investment. The shortage of skilled labour and weak institutional coordination discourage both domestic and foreign investors.

This has led to a cycle of low productivity and high unemployment, where industrial stagnation continues to erode the capabilities required to rebuild. At its core, this reflects a constrained accumulation of productive knowledge rooted in the social foundation's weaknesses.

The importance of diversifying productive knowledge has been extensively researched by the Harvard Growth Lab, which argues that growth can be driven by diversifying know-how to produce a broader, increasingly complex set of goods and services. This insight emphasises that development is a process of acquiring and applying new knowledge in more sophisticated ways.

For South Africa, this requires not only economic reform but also a deliberate effort to cultivate the institutional and social conditions necessary to support complex production systems. In other words, structural transformation must be rooted in a strong social foundation that equips people to contribute to and benefit from industrial transformation.

President Cyril Ramaphosa's 2025 State of the Nation address recognised the need to rebuild the foundation and implement reforms that target the underlying constraints to growth. He emphasised the urgent need to realign education and skills development with the needs of a modern economy, stating that South Africa is shifting towards an approach that combines academic and skills-based training.

He called on the private sector to provide experiential learning placements for youth and announced the

expansion of technical and vocational education and training colleges to produce more artisans. The reforms represent a step towards strengthening the human capital base and improving the employability of young South Africans.

The president also highlighted a broader programme of institutional reform, including the investment of more than R940 billion in infrastructure over three years and efforts to revitalise state-owned enterprises such as Eskom and Transnet. The reforms aim to restore the efficiency and reliability of the state's economic coordination mechanisms, improving investor confidence and facilitating industrial development.

Ramaphosa reaffirmed his government's commitment to Operation Vulindlela, a reform initiative aimed at unlocking growth in sectors such as energy, transport and digital infrastructure.

To fully realise the potential of the reforms, South Africa must go beyond administrative changes and adopt a mission-oriented industrial strategy that targets both short-term opportunities and long-term transformation.

Diversifying the country's know-how must involve targeted efforts to revitalise vocational education, enhance research and development capacity and foster closer collaboration between the state, industry and educational institutions.

In short, the advanced manufacturing skills agenda must be driven by industry rather than bureaucratic coordination alone. Sectors such as agro-processing, mineral beneficiation and green industrial production present opportunities for value addition that build on comparative advantages while contributing to industrial upgrading. The sectors offer potential for economic diversification, employment creation and rural development.

Ultimately, the rebuilding of South Africa's industrial capacity depends on strengthening its social foundation, which reflects the quality of leadership and shapes the country's long-term industrial capability.

Without a skilled and empowered workforce, functional public institutions and effective systems of coordination, efforts to attract investment and stimulate growth will remain constrained.

The success of the reforms outlined in the 2025 State of the Nation Address will depend on the state's ability to implement them coherently and inclusively. Aligning education, innovation and industrial policy within a broader social framework will enable South Africa to construct a more resilient and inclusive growth path and move closer to an economic model that is both more productive and more just.

The question before us, therefore, is whether the country can meet the standard of responsible leadership articulated by Morena Mohlomi to generate intergenerational value.

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May Day and the disappearance of the labour beat

As the country marks another May Day, the central question is not nostalgia for an earlier media moment. It is whether democratic communication can still make workers visible in ways equal to their continuing role in shaping South African society

Mandla J. Radebe

With the country marking the 32nd anniversary of May Day since the democratic breakthrough, an increasingly uncomfortable question arises: who will tell the story of labour and how, in a context where the labour beat is steadily disappearing from mainstream media?

For much of South Africa's democratic journey, labour occupied a visible place in public debate. Workers were not only present in protest action and bargaining chambers but also in daily news reporting.

Labour disputes, wage struggles and union interventions were once treated as central political developments because they reflected wider questions of democracy, citizenship and social justice.

But today that visibility has weakened considerably. Labour appears less frequently in headlines and when it does, it is often framed narrowly through economic language rather than its broader democratic meaning.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, labour reporting formed an important part of South African journalism. Newspapers followed strikes, factory occupations, wage negotiations and worker mobilisation as key developments shaping the anti-apartheid struggle. Journalists understood that workplace struggles were inseparable from larger political battles.

This was the period that scholars like Philip Hirschsohn described as social movement unionism, a form of unionism in which workplace demands were linked to wider community and political struggles.

However, some argue that, post-apartheid, organised labour movements such as Cosatu moved towards "political unionism" by becoming part of the alliance with the ANC and SACP, as noted by Devan Pillay.

Nevertheless, the visibility of labour changed with the restructuring of the media industry after 1994. This was the period when sections of the alternative press shifted towards commercially driven operations as donor funding declined and market pressures intensified.

In this context, newsrooms were forced to reduce specialist reporting areas. Labour journalism was among the first casualties. Dedicated labour correspondents became fewer, news-



Dying breed: In the 1980s and early 1990s, labour reporting formed an important part of South African journalism. Photo: Supplied

room retrenchments accelerated and many publications shifted attention to areas considered commercially more attractive.

The result is that labour now enters the news mainly during moments of crisis. Strikes are covered when they disrupt production, transport or public services.

Wage disputes become news when they affect markets or investor confidence. The language of reporting often foregrounds cost, instability and economic loss, while giving less attention to why workers mobilise, what conditions they face and what broader structural inequalities shape labour conflict.

This shift is visible even in publications such as the *Mail & Guardian*, one of the few surviving titles from South Africa's alternative press tradition.

During apartheid, alternative newspapers treated labour as central to democratic struggle. But, like many institutions in the post-apartheid media environment, they too have had to adapt to commercial realities. Labour remains present but often through shorter and more episodic treatment than before.

This is not simply a matter of editorial preference. It reflects deeper structural changes in how news is produced under capitalism. In a commercial media environment, newsworthiness increasingly follows profitability.

Specialist reporting that requires historical depth, institutional memory and long-term attention becomes expensive to sustain. Labour reporting, which depends on context and continuity, suffers under such conditions. The consequences are serious. Labour remains central to South Africa's democratic life. Questions of wages, public services, unemployment, social inequality and economic restructuring all continue to shape everyday political life. Yet journalism

increasingly struggles to represent these questions through labour's own voice.

Even when labour leaders appear in the media, their contributions are often reduced to immediate economic consequences. Public discussion quickly turns to production losses, fiscal pressure or market reactions. What disappears is the larger political meaning of labour as a democratic force.

Ownership patterns deepen this tendency. South Africa's media remains concentrated within a small number of corporate groups.

Of course, such concentration does not mechanically determine content but it influences editorial priorities and newsroom culture. Labour perspectives therefore compete in an environment where business, finance and political elite voices are often structurally privileged.

This helps explain why labour anniversaries, worker campaigns and union interventions seldom receive the same sustained attention as corporate developments or financial events.

Labour is often visible only when conflict becomes unavoidable.

A further complication now emerges through artificial intelligence. Since the arrival of generative AI systems, newsrooms have increasingly adopted digital tools to summarise reports, automate routine tasks and accelerate content production. In South Africa, editors are cautiously integrating AI because of financial pressures and newsroom constraints.

But this technological shift raises an important concern. If labour reporting has already weakened because of reduced human capacity, automation may intensify the trend. AI systems rely on existing datasets and dominant patterns of visibility.

Where labour is already underrepresented, automation risks reproducing that absence.

This means that labour's marginalisation is no longer only an editorial issue; instead, it may become embedded in future digital systems of knowledge production. Without conscious intervention, technology may deepen an already unequal communicative field.

The issue therefore goes beyond restoring a traditional reporting beat. It concerns democratic communication itself. A democracy in which workers become less visible in public storytelling risks weakening public understanding of inequality, labour rights and economic justice.

South Africa requires renewed public-interest journalism capable of restoring balance. Community media, labour publications, progressive digital platforms and public broadcasters all have an important role in ensuring that labour remains visible in national conversation.

Digital tools, including AI, can support this work but only if guided by ethical commitments that prioritise social inclusion over speed alone.

The disappearance of the labour beat is therefore not just a newsroom issue. It reflects a broader weakening of class visibility in public discourse. Journalism that loses labour loses part of its democratic function.

As the country marks another May Day, the central question is not nostalgia for an earlier media moment. It is whether democratic communication can still make workers visible in ways equal to their continuing role in shaping South African society.

If labour disappears from headlines, an important part of democracy disappears from public understanding as well.

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25 YEARS AGO

Tokyo Sexwale is known in Johannesburg's mining circles as the "rainmaker"; an affectionate nickname alluding to his success in bringing black empowerment in the resource sector into the commercial mainstream. A previously sceptical investment community has applauded the achievements of Sexwale's Mvelaphanda Mining, the black empowerment business vehicle he created in 1998. Before that, the outright failure of the industry's first mining empowerment transaction - the African Mining purchase of Anglo American's stake in JCI - left in its wake a hoard of avowed disbelievers. But just how badly Minister of Safety and Security Steve Tshwete may have hurt the commercial ambitions of one of the country's foremost black businessmen, only time will tell. Tshwete last week accused Sexwale of plotting to overthrow President Thabo Mbeki; no proof was given to back up the allegations which appear to have come from a questionable source. Sexwale is in esteemed company though. — *Mail & Guardian, May 4 to 10 2001*

VERBATIM

● "While they were in the river, the group noticed that the water level was rising. It is alleged that the adult female lost her footing and attempted to regain her balance by holding onto the two teenagers. Unfortunately, all three individuals lost stability and submerged in the water. The church leader attempted to rescue the victims but was unsuccessful... They were all declared dead at the scene." — Police spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Jabu Ndabane, explaining the tragic event in which church members who lost their lives during a baptism at a river in Embalenhle, Mpumalanga.

● "Yes, the former employee was dismissed fairly for misconduct, including dishonesty, stealing, making threats and extorting other staff on our payroll following a formal process. The subsequent settlement agreement was unrelated to her appalling conduct. The agreement is confidential and I will not comment further, including on allegations that are simply rubbish and inaccurate." — Anele Mgudlwa, the host of the breakfast show on 947 FM, responding after agreeing to pay her former helper, Thuleleni Mlalazi (popularly known as Florence), a total of R90 000 after she took her to the CCMA for unfair dismissal and a vehicle ownership dispute.

● "I'll be drinking tea with Ramaphosa to tell him that we can't fight over things we shouldn't be fighting about. We need to tell him that this was not done before — asking people where they were when we were fighting for freedom." — uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) Party leader Jacob Zuma said he plans to meet ANC president Cyril Ramaphosa in a bid to end what he described as a growing dispute over the legacy of liberation struggle figures.

● "One Secret Service officer was shot in the chest but was wearing a ballistic vest that worked. This heroic officer who was hit five times at Allen, who was not shot but fell to the ground and was promptly arrested." — Acting attorney general Todd Blanche told a news conference on Monday after the attempted assassination of US President Donald Trump at a Washington dinner.

Workers' Day is hollow when millions lack jobs



Geordin Hill-Lewis

On 1 May, South Africa once again marks Workers' Day. It is a day with real historical meaning.

It honours the dignity of work, the struggles of workers and the labour movement's role in the fight for justice in our country. But this year, as in too many years before it, the occasion arrives with a bitter irony: millions of South Africans are expected to celebrate workers while being denied the chance to become workers at all.

That is the central tragedy of South Africa in 2026. On the official definition, unemployment stands at 31.4%. On the expanded definition, which includes discouraged work-seekers who have given up looking, it stands at 42.1%.

That means roughly 7.8 million South Africans are officially unemployed. To me, these are not abstract figures in the Quarterly Labour Force Review.

They are parents who cannot provide, young people who cannot start and families who are told hollowly to wait just a little longer for the economy to turn around.

Workers' Day should be a celebration of progress through work. In South Africa, it too often becomes a ritual of denial.

On this day, South Africans are often treated to the stale theatre of political self-congratulation. Yet the lived reality of millions of citizens is not dignified work, but exclusion from work: no ladder into the economy, but a wall around it.

A country cannot call itself serious about workers while so many of its people remain locked out of work altogether.

The first truth we need to recover is that jobs do not come from rhetoric. Jobs come from growth, investment and confidence in the economy.

Jobs require functioning and maintained infrastructure, reliable electricity, safer streets, efficient transport, clean governance and a state that understands its job is to enable enterprise, not suffocate it.

A society does not become more pro-worker by making it harder to hire, build, trade and invest. It becomes more pro-worker by clearing the path for breakout growth, making it easier for millions more people to enter the world of work.

That is why the contrast within South Africa matters so much. The Western Cape now has the lowest official unemployment rate of any province in the country, at 18.1%, compared with the national rate of 31.4%.

On the expanded definition, too, the Western Cape performs materially better, at 23.7% compared with 42.1% nationally.

Between the third and fourth quarters of 2025, the Western Cape added 93 000 jobs and year on year it added 95 000. These are not miracles and they do not mean all is well. But they do show that better policy, better governance and a more functional state can produce better outcomes



Cohort of unemployed: Too many young people - often graduates with skills, still stand impatient and visibly angry outside the economy.

for working people.

The same is true in Cape Town. Stats SA's latest figures show that Cape Town's official unemployment rate fell to 19.8% in the fourth quarter of 2025.

The metro added 69 000 jobs quarter on quarter and 113 000 jobs year on year, taking the number of employed people in the city to 1.895 million. The city's employment-to-population ratio also rose to 57.6%.

These are encouraging numbers and evidence that where government does its basics well — where it keeps the lights on, maintains infrastructure, manages finances responsibly and works to create an environment for growth — people have a better shot at finding work and building a life.

The growth you see in places where the Democratic Alliance (DA) governs is the result of leadership, of setting a clear vision, of making it easier to do business by cutting red tape, of focusing relentlessly on the basics and of creating an environment that attracts investment and job creation rather than repels it — a government that gives people a better shot at finding work and building a life.

Of course, nobody should pretend Cape Town or the Western Cape has solved unemployment. They have not. Too many residents are still looking for work.

Too many young people still stand outside the economy, impatient and understandably angry. But there is a profound difference between a gov-



Job creation: National government cannot build a thriving labour market on the foundations of failing infrastructure.

ernment that confronts the problem seriously and one that merely narates it.

There is a difference between a state that sees business and the private sector as a partner in job creation and one that treats enterprise as a political enemy. There is a difference between governing for headlines and governing for results.

This is the lesson South Africa's national government has refused to

learn. You cannot regulate your way into mass employment. You cannot tax, threaten and paralyse your way to prosperity.

You cannot build a thriving labour market on the foundations of failing infrastructure, collapsing rail and ports, municipal dysfunction, crime, cadre deployment, corruption and ideological hostility to growth.

And, importantly, you certainly cannot honour workers while presiding over one of the highest unemployment rates in the world.

To be truly pro-worker is not merely to speak warmly about labour. It is to build a country in which work is possible.

It is to understand that the unemployed are not a separate class to be pitied every election cycle and forgotten thereafter.

They are South Africans whose dignity is being denied by a state that

has failed in its most basic economic duty. The best labour policy is one that produces more labour market entrants.

The best social policy is one that grows the number of breadwinners. The best dignity policy is a job.

So this Workers' Day, South Africans should ask a simple question: what does it mean to celebrate workers in a country that keeps producing unemployment?

The answer cannot be another speech or another slogan. It must be a commitment to growth, to reform, to cleaner government, to safer communities, to reliable infrastructure and to an economy that rewards effort instead of punishing it.

Geordin Hill-Lewis is the DA Federal Leader and mayor of Cape Town.

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That means roughly 7.8 million South Africans are officially unemployed.

Paying tribute to the working class



Mahlengi Bhengu

As the world marks May Day, the African National Congress (ANC) pays tribute to the indomitable spirit, courage and heroic role of workers whose sacrifices helped free our nation.

May Day is a poignant reminder of the struggles and hard-won victories of the working class, both globally and at home. For South Africa, May Day carries a profound revolutionary meaning. It speaks to the very soul of our struggle, to the unbreakable unity of workers and communities and to the unfinished task of building a truly national democratic society.

As we reflect on this day, we must ask what May Day demands of us in the current epoch and how its powerful message must guide our actions as we intensify the struggle for fundamental transformation.

At the centre of this reflection stands the working class – the primary motive force of our revolution – organised under the banner of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) and its militant forerunner, the South African Congress of Trade Unions (Sactu).

We pay revolutionary tribute to these organisations and to the broader working class for their decisive role in the defeat of apartheid and the birth of a democratic South Africa.

These formations have been uncompromising defenders of workers' rights and vanguards in the struggle against exploitation, oppression and injustice. The 1994 breakthrough was a triumph forged in mass resistance, worker militancy and relentless struggle.

The roots of May Day in South Africa are thus deeply intertwined with the broader struggle against apartheid colonialism. Workers were not passive victims of oppression and exploitation.

They were active agents of change. Factories, mines, farms and workplaces became sites of resistance and worker militancy. It was here that the working class developed a powerful consciousness anchored in the understanding that economic exploitation and racial oppression were two sides of the same coin.

The formation of Sactu marked a turning point in this struggle. Operating under extremely repressive conditions, Sactu became the voice of workers who had been denied basic rights and dignity. It aligned itself firmly with the liberation movement, recognising that the struggle for workers' rights could not be separated from the struggle for national liberation.

This proud tradition found renewed expression in the formation of Cosatu in 1985. Cosatu emerged at a time when the apartheid regime was intensifying its repression against all progressive forces but it also marked a period of heightened resistance.

From its inception, Cosatu posi-



Worker's rights: Cosatu recognised that the emancipation of the working class required a united front against apartheid and its economic foundations.

tioned itself not only as a defender of workers' rights but as a central pillar of the broader liberation movement. Cosatu recognised that the emancipation of the working class required a united front against apartheid and its economic foundations.

The Tripartite Alliance became a formidable force in the struggle for freedom. It combined political leadership, mass mobilisation and ideological clarity. Workers organised under Cosatu played a decisive role in rendering the country ungovernable through strikes, boycotts and mass protests.

As we reflect on the downfall of apartheid, we must be clear that the democratic breakthrough of 1994 was not handed to us. It was won through struggle and the working class stood at the forefront of that struggle. May Day, therefore, is also a celebration of that victory, which opened the door to a new constitutional order based on dignity, equality and freedom.

The achievement of political democracy was only the beginning. The ultimate objective is the fundamental transformation of the economy and society to reflect the aspirations of the majority. It is about dismantling the structural inequalities inherited from apartheid and building a society in which all can share in the country's wealth.

Since 1994, the ANC-led government, working with organised labour, has undertaken far-reaching interventions to defend and advance workers' rights, fundamentally reshaping South Africa's labour landscape. Progressive labour laws have entrenched protections against unfair dismissal, guaranteed collective bargaining and unionisation and

ensured safe working conditions.

At the heart of this transformation has been a progressive legislative framework, including the Labour Relations Act, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act and the Employment Equity Act. These laws institutionalised the right to organise, strike and bargain collectively, while also addressing workplace discrimination and promoting fair labour practices across sectors.

The creation of the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) has been a cornerstone of this progress. The CCMA provides free, accessible dispute resolution services, enabling workers – especially the most vulnerable – to challenge unfair dismissals and labour practices without the burden of costly legal processes. This has significantly strengthened workplace justice and reduced exploitation.

A landmark achievement has been the introduction of the National Minimum Wage, which established a wage floor for millions of low-income workers in sectors such as agriculture, domestic work and retail. This intervention has helped to narrow extreme income disparities and improve the quality of life for many working families.

Complementing this, sectoral determinations and labour law amendments have progressively extended protections to historically marginalised workers, including those in informal and precarious employment.

The ANC-led government has also expanded social protection mechanisms. The Unemployment Insurance Fund has been strengthened to provide income support during periods of job loss, illness or maternity leave. During the Covid-19 pandemic, this fund played a critical role in cushioning workers and sus-

taining livelihoods through temporary relief schemes.

Enforcement capacity has been enhanced through labour inspectorates to ensure compliance with labour laws, while institutions such as Nedlac have enabled structured engagement between government, labour and business on key socio-economic policies.

The impact of these interventions has been profound. We have witnessed improved working conditions, greater job security, increased equity in the workplace and the empowerment of workers to assert their rights.

These gains have not come without resistance. The forces of capital and right-wing political formations have persistently sought to resist and roll back these gains. They are intensifying their offensive.

In the face of this onslaught, the ANC remains committed to working with Cosatu and other partners to defend hard-won gains, strengthen collective bargaining and accelerate transformation.

The ANC remains steadfast in its commitment to the working class because economic growth cannot be built on the exploitation of labour. Sustainable development requires fairness, inclusion and justice.

As we look ahead, we must acknowledge that significant problems remain. Unemployment, deepening inequality and persistent poverty remain the defining fault lines of our society. The changing nature of work, driven by technological advancements and globalisation, presents new complexities. These challenges require innovative responses.

We must deepen our efforts to create decent work opportunities, particularly for the youth. We must strengthen our industrial base and

support sectors that can generate sustainable employment.

We must continue to invest in education and skills development so that workers can be equipped to participate meaningfully in a changing economy. We must do all this while safeguarding the rights and dignity of workers.

The alliance remains central to this task. Its relevance resides not only in its history but in its capacity to adapt and respond to contemporary realities.

Let May Day be a moment to honour those who came before us and to draw inspiration and strength from their enduring revolutionary legacy.

We salute Billy Nair, John Gaetsewe, Stephen Dlamini, Moses Mabhida, John Nkadameng, John Gomomo, Emma Mashinini, Elijah Barayi and many other stalwarts of the working-class movement.

Their blood, sweat and unbreakable spirit forged the path we walk today. They remind us that unity is our greatest strength and that divisions only empower those who wish to reverse the gains of the working class.

May Day demands that we jealously defend every hard-won right of workers. It also demands that we forge unbreakable unity and intensify the struggle for a just and equitable society.

We must stand firm and close ranks against those who seek to reverse our gains and march forward with courage and discipline.

The road that lies ahead will not be easy. Let us walk it together with unwavering commitment to the total emancipation of the working class.

Mahlengi Bhengu is the national spokesperson of the African National Congress.

May Day demands that we jealously defend every hard-won right of workers.

The roots of May Day in South Africa are thus deeply intertwined with the broader struggle against apartheid colonialism.

Where are the unions and the ANC for suffering silicosis victims?

Recently, a proposed amendment announced by the Tshiamiso Trust — set up to disburse compensation — now threatens to shut out even more former mine-workers with the disease from compensation they were promised after a successful class action

Lucas Ledwaba

The strike by mineworkers in Marikana in August 2012 marked a significant milestone in the mining sector because, for the first time in the history of the industry, workers rebelled against traditional labour unions and chose to represent themselves.

Workers in Rustenburg's platinum belt decided to form strike committees early that year after falling out with the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) because of its cosy relationship with mining houses.

This resulted in one of the biggest strikes in the platinum belt in January that year and led to the mass dismissal of thousands of workers.

Unfortunately, the strike was marred by intimidation, violence and as has been the case in the past, equally violent repression by the state's security forces.

Traditionally, in South Africa, the labour force on mines has been drawn from the peasantry — rural people with limited education and even worse political education.

But it is an undeniable fact that a human being, regardless of their background, does not need a university degree to know when their human rights are being violated.

Even Africans captured and transported to the US in the transatlantic slave trade of centuries past did not need a university professor to tell them they were being oppressed and violated by their masters.

Hence, they eventually rose up, defying violent repression, imprisonment and death.

Historically, the NUM, led by its then general secretary Cyril Ramaphosa — now President of South Africa — had been the power representing and fighting for the labour and human rights of mineworkers.

This was after almost a century of non-representation of workers in this sector because of state repression.

Under the apartheid regime, the mineworkers' strikes of 1922, 1946 and 1987 displayed the barbaric lengths the state was prepared to go to suppress the voice of workers — assault, torture, murder and mass dismissal.

With the end of legislated apartheid in 1994, it was expected that the



Waiting widow: Noziqhamo Mgidi's husband died before the settlement was reached. Photos: Delwyn Verasamy

ANC government, a strong ally of the labour movement during the struggle years, would be different.

But the Marikana strike proved this expectation wrong. Ramaphosa, by then an influential senior figure in the ANC and a shareholder in the mining industry, was expected, given his background, to support workers.

But history shows that he chose the side of capital and used his influence to urge the state to crack down on striking miners at Marikana rather than calling for and pursuing dialogue to resolve the labour dispute.

The former revolutionaries in union T-shirts are now the men in pinstriped suits, like the mining magnates they once opposed.

It should be noted that the majority of mineworkers — most of them unskilled — have, throughout the history of industrialised mining in South Africa, been black, poor and drawn largely from rural areas and neighbouring countries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region.

Many of those working for a pittance in the gold mining sector contracted the deadly, incurable lung disease silicosis. A class action brought by lawyers on behalf of workers in 2012 was successful in the courts but this has not translated into meaningful change for most litigants in the suit, which covered those employed on mines between 1965 and the time the action was filed in Johannesburg.

Recently, a proposed amendment announced by the Tshiamiso Trust — set up to disburse compensation — now threatens to shut out even more former mineworkers with the dis-



Added responsibility: Notungana Kwekwe took in her granddaughters after their mother died of grief when her husband died from silicosis.

ease from compensation they were promised after a successful class action.

Hundreds of thousands of current and former mineworkers and their dependents have lodged claims with the Tshiamiso Trust for silicosis — a preventable but incurable lung disease — related to tuberculosis.

Yet, as of October 2024, only about 25 500 claimants had received payouts totalling R4.6 billion, according to trust data. Many others remain in the system, while thousands are believed to have died waiting.

Now, amendment No. 9 seeks to eliminate Occupational Diseases in Mines and Works Act (ODMWA) certificates as valid proof for compensation claims. These certificates, issued by the state, confirm that a miner's lung disease is directly linked to underground work. For thousands of former mineworkers, they remain the only official evidence of illness.

In far-flung villages in rural Lesotho, the Eastern Cape, Mozambique, Eswatini and else-

where across the SADC region, hundreds of families continue to live in abject poverty — a result of the legacy of gold mining in South Africa.

Breadwinners have died from silicosis with little to show for years spent on the gold mines. Those who still live with the condition are subjected daily to red tape that compounds their struggle for compensation.

I have been in their homes, where sometimes the only available food is a packet of salt. Children and grandchildren have not been spared by the scourge of unemployment ravaging South Africa. Those former mineworkers who are still alive are disabled by the disease, battling to do even the most basic chores as their lungs deteriorate.

As the world marks Workers' Day, one would have expected that the South African government, run by the ANC and built on the toil and sacrifice of workers, would be fight-

ing to ensure that mineworkers are supported and assisted to navigate the bureaucratic minefield blocking their compensation.

One would have thought an ANC government would be working to derail the generational cycle of poverty affecting families tied to the mining sector, particularly gold mining.

This Workers' Day, I am reminded of the words of Zwelendaba Mgidi. He spent the best years of his life working on the gold mines of the Witwatersrand. Years later, he returned home to Flagstaff, a sick and wasted man with failing lungs. He is dead now and his family remains dirt poor. He had nothing to show for years underground. He took his last breath, still engaged in the long battle for compensation. He was bitter, broke and broken.

His words still haunt me: "Those ones who owned the mines, I hate them, I hate them very much."

I wonder how many others share this feeling — children, spouses, grandchildren and descendants of men like Mgidi.

Hate is a strong word. But I share Mgidi's feelings towards the current regime's indifference to former gold mineworkers afflicted by silicosis. I hate the pain they and their families endure to access compensation won in the courts. I hate the suffering that greets me each time I enter those homes. I hate the emptiness that lingers long after visiting the graves of silicosis victims.

The ANC, as a (former) liberation movement aligned with workers, should do more to help these men and their families access compensation.

Workers of the world, unite.

Lucas Ledwaba is the author of *Broke & Broken — The shameful legacy of gold mining in South Africa* (BlackBird-Jacana, 2016).

Many of those working for a pittance in the gold mining sector contracted the deadly, incurable lung disease silicosis.

THE HIDDEN LABOUR ISSUE IN PLAIN SIGHT

Why menopause is a workers' issue South Africa can no longer ignore

This is the first in a five-part Workers' Month series on menopause, midlife and the workplace. It begins by re-framing menopause as a labour and economic issue, not only a personal or health experience.

On Workers' Day, the focus is usually on jobs and rights; a critical issue undermining women's participation often goes unnoticed. It affects millions of women at the peak of their careers, influencing their retention and place in the workforce.

Menopause

Not recognising menopause has real consequences. It influences how women work, perform and remain in their roles. Many workplaces are only beginning to grasp the scale of menopause's impact.

Treating menopause solely as a private health matter misses what is increasingly evident: it directly affects productivity, gender equity and the wider economy. Addressing it openly is essential for building effective, equitable workplaces.

In South Africa, this group is especially important as organisations face increasing skills shortages, ongoing leadership gaps and persistent gender disparities. Retaining experienced women is both a fairness issue and a workforce priority.

Menopause unfolds gradually and can be difficult to predict, bringing physical, cognitive and emotional changes. While hot flushes and night sweats are well known, fatigue, insomnia, anxiety, memory lapses and difficulty concentrating are often more disruptive.

Many women manage these alongside demanding work and personal responsibilities. These symptoms do not always lead to absence, but they can affect consistency, confidence and sustained performance.

The invisible impact at work

Across workplaces, a familiar pattern is emerging. Women experiencing menopause continue to meet expectations. Outwardly, little appears to change.

how women are assessed, supported and advanced.

A missing data story

South Africa does not yet have sufficient workplace data on menopause. That gap matters.

Without local evidence, menopause-related patterns are often absorbed into broader explanations: burnout, caregiving, ageism or personal choice. Menopause is not the only factor shaping women's careers in midlife, but it remains under-recognised and under-measured.

International research provides a useful signal. In the UK, the Fawcett Society (2022) found that around one in ten women aged 45-55 left their jobs because of menopause symptoms and lack of workplace support. Many more considered leaving, reduced their working hours or stepped back from leadership roles.

THE RETENTION RISK

Around 1 in 10 women aged 45-55 have left their jobs due to menopause symptoms and lack of workplace support. (UK Fawcett Society, 2022).

The question for South Africa is straightforward: **what is our number?** Until it is measured, the scale of the issue will remain underestimated.

Different jobs, different realities

Menopause is not experienced in the same way across all workplaces.

For a woman in an office, a hot flush may be uncomfortable. For a woman in mining, retail, healthcare, domestic work or manufacturing, the same symptom may occur while wearing protective equipment, standing for long hours or working shifts.

Class, race, industry and job type all shape how menopause is experienced. Access to healthcare, flexibility, job security and workplace culture influence whether symptoms are manageable or disruptive.

This is why menopause cannot be addressed only at an individual level. Workplace context matters.

NOT ONE EXPERIENCE

For women in mining, retail, healthcare or domestic work, menopause can unfold in physically demanding environments - very different from office settings.

Workplace context shapes how symptoms are experienced.

A workplace and legal question

South Africa already has a strong

labour framework, including the Employment Equity Act, which aims to prevent unfair discrimination and promote equitable working conditions.

Menopause is not explicitly addressed in these frameworks. However, its effects may intersect with issues of gender, health, dignity and reasonable accommodation.

This raises a practical question: how can existing workplace systems - wellness, leave, flexibility and performance management - respond more effectively to life-stage realities?

In many cases, the tools already exist. They are simply not applied with menopause in mind.

The wider workforce consequences

Together, these patterns point to a clear trend: experienced women may scale back or leave work during midlife, often when organisations need them most.

The cost is significant - loss of skills, gaps in institutional knowledge, reduced productivity, disrupted leadership pipelines and the expense of replacing experienced talent.

These effects extend beyond individual careers. They influence inclusion, organisational knowledge and workforce stability.

What begins as a personal transition can shape participation and performance across organisations.

The economic and social dimension

As reduced participation, scaled-back roles and career disruption build, they ripple into the economy and society. Lower participation constrains productivity and economic growth, while interrupted careers affect earnings and long-term financial security.

At a broader level, this connects to gender equity, inclusion and dignity at work.

When a natural life stage significantly disrupts women's careers, workplaces need to adapt. Treating menopause as a workplace issue is part of that response.

From awareness to action

Recognising menopause at work

does not mean medicalising offices or introducing complex systems. It means responding practically.

Organisations can start by:

- Allow flexibility where sleep disruption affects performance.
- Review workplace environments, including temperature and uniforms.
- Equip managers to understand symptoms and respond appropriately.
- Use existing leave and wellness provisions without forcing disclosure.

SIMPLE WORKPLACE ACTIONS

Organisations can start by:

- Flexible hours where sleep disruption affects performance.
- Cooler workspaces and uniform adjustments.
- Manager awareness and training.
- Use of existing leave and wellness provisions.

These are extensions of good workplace practice, not specialised interventions.

Bringing menopause into the Workers' Day agenda

Workers' Day has long been a platform for raising issues affecting fairness, participation and the future of work.

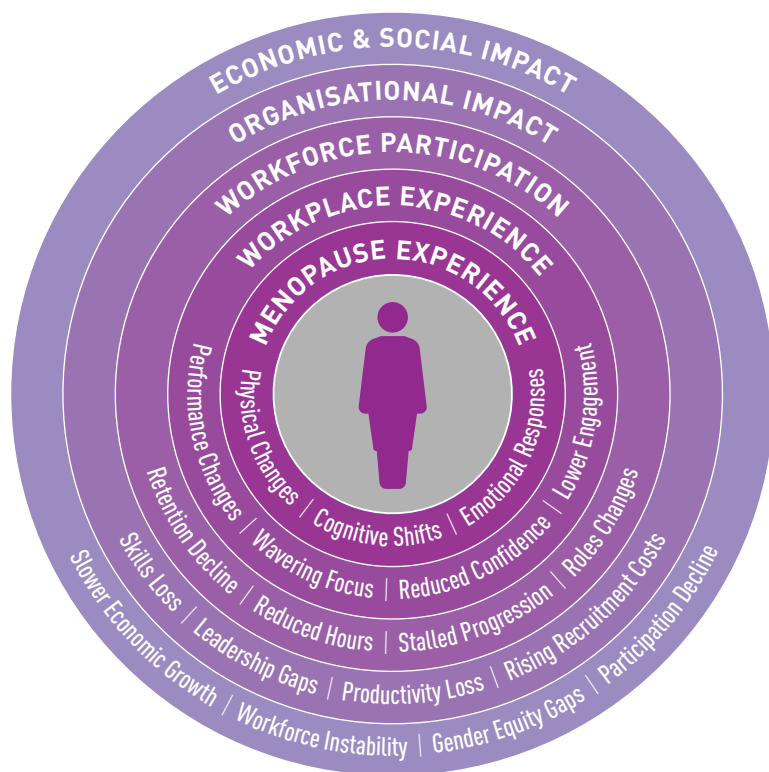
Menopause belongs in this conversation.

It is not a secondary matter but a workplace issue with implications for individuals, organisations and the economy. Treating it solely as a private concern obscures its wider consequences.

This is not about presenting menopause as a problem to fix. It is about ensuring that workplaces do not unintentionally push experienced women out at a critical stage of their working lives.

By Workers' Day 2027, menopause should be part of the national conversation on work - across employers, labour and policy platforms such as NED-LAC.

FROM PERSONAL EXPERIENCE TO SYSTEM IMPACT



What begins as a personal transition extends across the workforce and into the broader economy.

A transition at the peak of workplace contribution

Most women experience menopause between 45 and 55, often at their professional peak. During this period, many hold senior roles, contribute deep experience and mentor younger colleagues.

TIMING MATTERS

Most women experience menopause between 45 and 55 - often at the peak of their careers.

Internally, however, the experience can be different. Energy fluctuates, focus wavers, confidence dips and everyday tasks feel more demanding.

Because menopause is rarely discussed at work, these shifts are often attributed to other factors. A decline in performance may be linked to stress, reduced engagement to indifference and hesitation around career progression to limited ambition.

When menopause is not recognised, a normal life transition can be misread as a performance issue. Over time, this can influence



Pravienna Naidoo | Midlife transition specialist focused on workplace wellbeing, leadership and life-stage change. She is a co-founder of My Second50 | Midlife Reimagined, a South African platform supporting individuals and organisations through midlife and menopause.

For organisations seeking practical ways to support menopause in the workplace, further information is available at www.mysecond50.info, or via connect@mysecond50.info and **084 983 5918** (call and WhatsApp).

Jobs & Notices



GAMAGARA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY ADVERTISEMENT

Gamagara Local Municipality with its head office in Kathu and located in the John Taolo Gaetsewe Region, Northern Cape province, is an equal opportunity employer and invites applications from suitably qualified persons for the following position:

MUNICIPAL MANAGER'S OFFICE

DIRECTOR: CORPORATE SUPPORT SERVICES (PERMANENT)

Salary: All-inclusive negotiable annual remuneration package of: Minimum R1 010, 392 Midpoint R1 ,037, 559 Maximum R1, 150, 465

MUNICIPAL MANAGER'S OFFICE

POSITION : MANAGER PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT
DEPARTMENT : MUNICIPAL MANAGER'S OFFICE
REFERENCES NO. : 2026/134
SECTION : PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT
WORKSTATION : KATHU MUNICIPAL MAIN BUILDING
REMUNERATION : TASK GRADE 15: R708 648. 00 – R817 008. 00 (Plus, benefits: Pension, Medical aid scheme, Group life insurance, Housing subsidy, 13th cheque)

POSITION : MANAGER RISK MANAGEMENT
DEPARTMENT : MUNICIPAL MANAGER'S OFFICE
REFERENCE NO. : 2026/135
SECTION : RISK MANAGEMENT
WORKSTATION : KATHU MUNICIPAL MAIN BUILDING
REMUNERATION : TASK GRADE 15: R708 648. 00 – R817 008. 00 (Plus, benefits: Pension, Medical aid scheme, Group life insurance, Housing subsidy, 13th cheque)

For detailed information regarding the above-mentioned position please visit the Gamagara Local Municipality website. (www.gamagara.gov.za) or contact the HR office (Ms. Kelebileone Setletse 053- 723 6000) for more detailed information. Candidates who previously applied are encourage to apply.

Closing date: 30th April 2026 at 15:00

Notice number 2026/133

15281M&G

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 esahlulweyo seNxalenye eSeleyo yeFama 252, iCandelo

lePeddie, kwiPhondo lasempuma Koloni ukusuka "kwiNdawo eVulekileyo yesi-3" ukuya "kuMandla 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 ezingama-30 ukususela ekupapashweni kwesi saziso.

Mr N. Mgengo - Municipal Manager

NOTICE

OPENBARE KENNISGEWING MOQHAKA PLAASLIKE MUNISIPALITEIT KENNISGEWING VAN DIE WYSIGING VAN DIE MOQHAKA-GRONDGE-BRUIKSKEMA: ERVEN 692 & 693 KROONSTAD

Summit Development Group (Pty) Ltd, synde 'n behoorlik aangestelde agent van die eiendomsienaar, gee hiermee kennis ingevolge Artikel 16 van die Moqhaka Munisipale Grondgebruikbeplanningsverordening, 2015 gelees met relevante bepalinge van die Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act, (Act 16 of 2013) dat ons by Moqhaka Plaaslike Munisipaliteit aansoek gedoen het vir:

Vervydering van Titelbeperrings, Konsolidasie en Hersonerig van "Enkel Residensieel" na "Algemene Residensieel" vir die bou van wooneehede Op Erf/stand Nr: **Erven 692 & 693 Kroonstad, Distrik Kroonstad, Provinsie Vrystaat**

Gelee te: Nr. **19 & 21 King Straat, Kroonstad Central**

Besonderhede van hierdie aansoek kan tussen gewone kantoorure (07h30 tot 16h00) by die kantoor van Munisipale Bestuurder, Moqhaka Munisipale Kan-

tore, Aris Court, Hillstraat 74, Kroonstad, besigtig word.

Datum van publikasie: **29 April 2026.**

Besware of vertoë, indien enige, teen die aansoek, tesame met die gronde daarvan, moet skriftelik by die Kantoor van die Munisipale Bestuurder, Posbus 302, Kroonstad, 9500 ingedien word of kan per e-pos aan buschagnea@moqhaka.gov.za gestuur word nie later nie as 30 dae na die publikasiedatum van die kennisgewing.

Besonderhede van die applikant:

Summit Development Group (Pty) Ltd, No. 5 Ackerman Straat, Emalaheni, 1035, Tel: 079 980 7327, Epos: witness.sdg@gmail.com

NOTICE

Notice in respect of a license application in terms of the Petroleum Products Act, 1977 (Act No 120 of 1977)

This notice serves to inform parties that may be interested or affected that **N34 BUSINESS ENTERPRISE CC**, hereinafter referred to as "the applicant" has submitted an application for a **WHOLESALE** license, application number **E/2026/04/13/0001.**

Road D8991 SUNDUZWAYO RESERVE UMBUMBULU UMBUMBULU

The purpose of the application is for the applicant to be granted a license to undertake petroleum wholesale activities as detailed in the application. Arrangement for viewing the application documentation can be made by contacting the controller petroleum products by:

Telephone: (031) 335 9635; or Fax: ; or Email: Mapholisa.Tsh-iskhawe@dmre.gov.za

Any objections to the issuing of a license in respect of this application, which must clearly quote the application number above, must be lodged with the controller of petroleum products within a period of twenty (20) working days from

the date of publication of this notice. Such objection must be lodged at the following physical or postal address:

Physical address: The Controller of Petroleum Products Department Mineral Resources & Energy Mansion House, 12 Joe Slovo Street, Durban, 4001

Postal address: The controller of petroleum products Department Mineral Resources & Energy Private Bag X 54375, Durban, 4000

NOTICE

DEPARTMENT VAN ENERGIE

Kennisgewing ten opsigte van 'n lisensie aansoek ingevolge die **Wet op Petroleumprodukte, 1977 (Wet nr. 120 van 1977)** Hierdie kennisgewing dien om partye wat belangstel / geaffekteer word in te lig dat **MERIN M (Edms) Bpk** hierna genoem die aansoeker, 'n aansoek ingedien het vir 'n **GROOTHANDEL** lisensie met aansoek nommer **H/2026/04/21/0002.**

361 GREEN STRAAT PHILIPSTOWN PHILIPSTOWN

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

*Tel: (053) 807 1700
* Faks: (086) 517 7881
* E-pos: Sebabatso.Mohapi@dmre.gov.za

Enige beswaar teen die uitreik van 'n lisensie ten opsigte van hierdie aansoek, wat duidelik

die aansoek nommer hierbo moet aanhaal, moet ingedien word by die Kontroleur van Petroleumprodukte binne 'n tydperk van twintig (20) werksdae by die ondergenoemde fisieke op posadres

Fisiese adres
Die Kontroleur van Petroleumprodukte Department van Energie 41 Schmidtsdrift Straat

Telkom Gebou Kimberley
Posadres
Die Kontroleur van Petroleumprodukte Department van Energie Privaatsak X 6093 Kimberley 8301

NOTICE

Notice in respect of a license application in terms of the Petroleum Products Act, 1977 (Act No 120 of 1977)

This notice serves to inform parties that may be interested or affected that **WANDAMSEBENZI HOLDINGS (PTY) LTD**, hereinafter referred to as "the applicant" has submitted an application for a **WHOLESALE** license, application number **E/2026/04/20/0003.**

WARD 02 DIBHASE ESHOWE

The purpose of the application is for the applicant to be granted a license to undertake petroleum wholesale activities as detailed in the application. Arrangement for viewing the application documentation can be made by contacting the controller petroleum products by:

Telephone: (031) 335 9635; or Fax: ; or Email: Mapholisa.Tsh-iskhawe@dmre.gov.za

Any objections to the issuing of a license in respect of this application, which must clearly quote the application number above, must be lodged with the controller of petroleum products within a period of twenty (20) working days from the date of publication of this notice. Such objection must be lodged at the following physical or postal address:

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Postal address:
The Controller of Petroleum Products Department Mineral Resources & Energy Private Bag X 54375, Durban, 4000

AFRICA'S ENERGY OPPORTUNITY IS HERE

Global demand is driving new momentum. Can Africa deliver at scale?

CONTACT US TODAY!



MOHOKARE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

OUR MOTTO: *Re Aha Motse*

A Performance-driven Municipality that responds to Community Needs

PUBLIC NOTICE CALLING FOR INSPECTION OF THE GENERAL VALUATION ROLL AND LODGING OF OBJECTIONS FOR THE PERIOD 1 JULY 2026 – 30 JUNE 2031

Notice is hereby given in terms of Section 49 (1)(a)(i) of the Local Government: Municipal Property Rates Act, 2004 (Act No 6 of 2004), hereinafter referred to as the "Act", that the valuation roll for the financial years **1 July 2026 until 30 June 2031** is open for inspection at the following pay points: Zastron municipal offices at Hoofd Street, Rouxville municipal offices at Church Street and Smithfield municipal offices at c/o President Hoffman & Voortrekker Streets from 02 April 2026 to 10 June 2026. In addition the valuation roll is available at municipal website www.mohokare.gov.za

An invitation is hereby made in terms of section 49(1)(a)(ii) read together with section 78(2) of the Act that any owner of property or other person who so desires should lodge an objection with the municipal manager in respect of any matter reflected in, or omitted from, the valuation roll within the above-mentioned period.

Attention is specifically drawn to the fact that in terms of section 50(2) of the Act an objection must be in relation to a specific individual property and not against the valuation roll as such. The form for the lodging of an objection is obtainable at the following addresses: Zastron municipal offices at Hoofd Street, Rouxville municipal offices at Church Street and Smithfield municipal offices at c/o President Hoffman & Voortrekker Streets or website www.mohokare.gov.za

The completed forms must be returned to the following at address: Mohokare Municipal offices – Hoofd Street, Zastron.

For enquiries please telephone 051 673 9600 or email rannetlad27@gmail.com adrifenwick@gmail.com

Mr M. Mohale - Acting Municipal Manager

MG 15283

SALE IN EXECUTION

43 HOUGHTON DRIVE JOHANNESBURG



3 bedroom,
Double Story, Grande
Dame 1930s Gothic Style
House including 2 lounges,
a family room,
dining room, study,
kitchen, scullery,
2 bathrooms, dressing
room, patio, swimming
pool, two garages
and storeroom

Subject to reserve price of
R4,000,000.00

**SALE IN EXECUTION
TO TAKE PLACE AT**
10:00 28 May 2026 by the
Sheriff Johannesburg North
Address: 117 Beyers Naude
Drive, Franklin, Roosevelt
Park, Randburg.

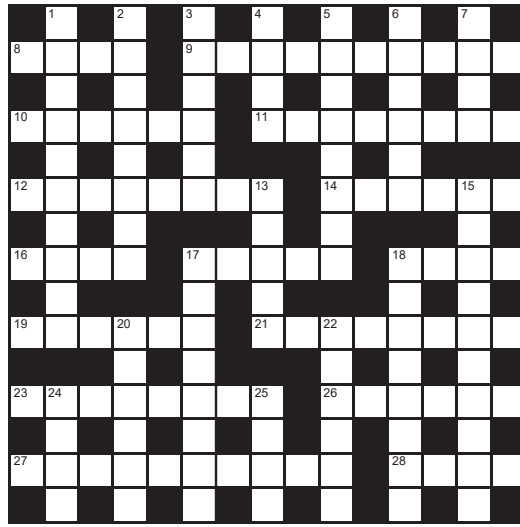
Puzzles

THE ORIGINAL SOUTH AFRICAN CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

JDE 528
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*

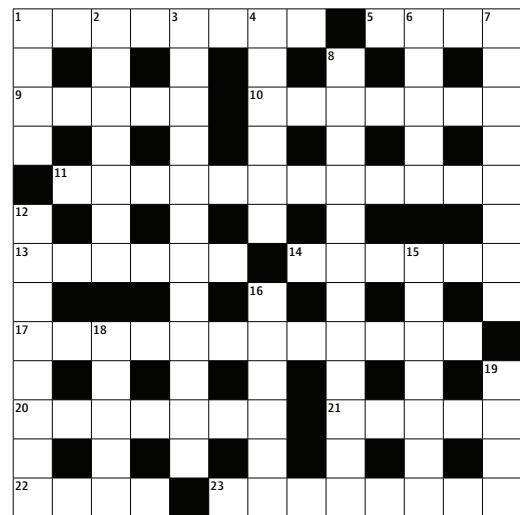
- Across**
- 1 Gees is very important before event starts (4)
- 9 Touched up a broken rib in a hurry (10)
- 10 Watch EFF and get angry (3,3)
- 11^X Crooked attempt, therefore repeat (8)
- 12 Work very hard in breast area to draw back (4,1,3)
- 14 Fool — regular dunce, and husband in that capacity (2,4)
- 16 Chirped back at these animals (4)
- 17 Influenced by speech on leather (5)
- 18 Go to students' hotel (4)
- 19 Create popular opening (6)
- 21 Let Pam have it for organising seizure (5,3)
- 23 Slate tubes as instruments (8)
- 26^A Black yoke thrown over one
- young chap (6)
- 27 Directly aggressive about place for solver's cheek (2-4-4)
- 28 One smuggled in this country (4)
- Down**
- 1 Essential crime to almost match no-no (4,3,3)
- 2 Sends out hidden drugs (8)
- 3 Friend gets up to follow chihuahua (6)
- 4 Dress up as crow (4)
- 5 Smear car disrupting Gun Run (4,4)
- 6 Customs (American) take a long time (6)
- 7 Zzzzz — Hormuz finally gets journalist starting to sleep (4)
- 13 Prepare to drive to set-up around Riebeek-Wes centre (3,2)



- 15 American celebrity in endless cocaine debacle (5,5)
- 17 Separate separate time for energy production (3,5)
- 18 Nipped x-piece incrementally (3,2,3)
- 20 Hire English politician — large, old and unknown (6)
- 22 Submitted to Board with opening defence (6)
- 24 Spots odd man can bet (4)
- 25 Go for small cost (4)

QUICK CROSSWORD

- Across**
- 1 Puts forward (8)
- 5 Author of Lucky Jim, d.1995 (4)
- 9 Aviator (5)
- 10 Chanticleer (7)
- 11 Immediately (4,3,5)
- 13 Someone choosing not to wear clothes (6)
- 14 Polish composer and pianist, d. 1849 (6)
- 17 Alcohol taken as a hangover cure (4,2,3,3)
- 20 At a great rate (7)
- 21 Betray (3,2)
- 22 Amounting to nothing (4)
- 23 Rushed (2,1,5)
- Down**
- 1 Drains energy from (4)
- 2 Noblest of King Arthur's knights (7)
- 3 Retract what one has said (3,4,5)
- 4 Capital of Albania (6)
- 6 Bevelled joint that forms a corner (5)
- 7 Gets near (anag) — NCO (8)
- 8 Was very expensive (4,3,5)
- 12 Trying to avoid capture (2,3,3)
- 15 Conspirator (7)
- 16 Remain after others have left (4,2)
- 18 Force into action (5)
- 19 At most (4)



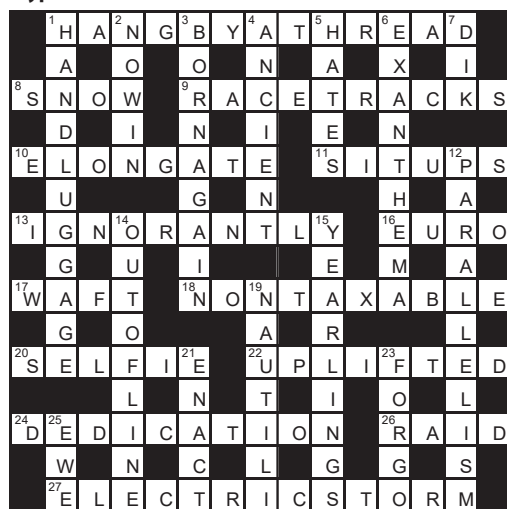
Quick Crossword courtesy of ©The Guardian 15 009

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS

Quick Crossword 15 008



Cryptic Crossword JDE 527



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

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

SUDOKU

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

What's Up



National Team: Trevor Noah (left), is the captain of the SA National Team of Comedy, Eugene Khoza (centre) the vice captain and Ntosh Madlingozi the coach. Photo: Supplied

Game on for Savanna Festival of Comedy

Savanna is taking comedy off the stage and into stadium-level territory with the launch of South Africa's Festival of Comedy, #SavannaSAFC.

The bold, gig-style tour treats stand-up like sport, with all the energy, rivalry and national pride to match.

Curated by Trevor Noah, who steps in as captain of the SA National Team of Comedy, the line-up also features vice captain Eugene Khoza and coach

Ntosh Madlingozi.

Kicking off at SunBet Arena in Pretoria on 5 September before heading to GrandWest Casino in Cape Town on 26 September, the tour builds momentum through a series of nationwide "call-ups" and pop-up moments from May.

Expect press-conference theatrics, squad reveals and comedy that spills into the streets and timelines.

Tickets drop 29 April at 9am via Quicket.

Reassuring message: 'Your Presence' by Dominica

Rising gospel artist Dominica returns with a stirring new single, *Your Presence*, a spirit-filled follow-up to her debut anthem *Siyakhudumisa*.

Featuring celebrated vocalist and pastor Buhle Thela, the track leans into contemporary gospel with vibrant rhythms, rich harmonies and an uplifting spoken-word moment that lands with purpose.

Rooted in Joshua 1:9, *Your Presence* is less a song and more a declaration, a reminder of faith, courage and divine

assurance in uncertain times.

Born from a deeply personal season, Dominica channels her own need for

reassurance into a message that resonates far beyond herself.

Equal parts worship and affirmation, the single carries a feel-good tempo that invites both reflection and celebration.

As she builds towards her upcoming EP, *Your Presence*

signals an artist grounded in testimony and intention, one to watch on the local gospel circuit.



Santu Mofokeng's 'Rumors/2026' — a living conversation

Memory doesn't arrive whole, it flickers, circulates and settles over time.

It is in this register that Standard Bank Art Lab presents *Rumours/2026*, a reactivated exhibition by Santu Mofokeng.

Co-curated by Lunetta Bartz on behalf of the Santu Mofokeng Foundation, the show revisits three bodies of work drawn from Mofokeng's engagement with Bloemhof between 1988 and 1994.

Anchored by *The Black Photo Album/Look at Me: 1890-1950*, alongside *Concert at Sewefontein* and *Labour Tenancies*, the exhibition moves through intimacy, labour and collective memory. Less a fixed archive and more a living conversation, *Rumours/2026* invites viewers to sit with what is unresolved, to look again and more carefully.

Catch it at Nelson Mandela Square (Shop 33-34). Open daily, with free entry.



Exhibition: Rumours/2026 invites viewers to sit with what is unresolved, to look again. Photo: Supplied



Afro soul star: Berita will be holding a special Workers' Day performance at The Market Theatre. Above right: With late musicians Oliver Mtukudzi and Zahara. Photos: Supplied

Fezokuhle Mthonti

In 1960, 17 African countries won their independence from colonial rule. National liberation struggles on the continent cohered around a set of political objectives which included justice, equality, freedom and the affirmation of a total humanity.

The objectives required many political actors, cultural workers, coalitions and varied tactics throughout the years. Many of the political interventions were undergirded by a strong sense of pan-African unity and collaboration.

Despite the displays of African collaboration and solidarity in the broad-based liberation struggle, the post-apartheid era has had an alarming number of periodic incidents of anti-foreigner antagonisms.

In her book *Female Fear Factory*, Pumla Gqola notes that "in both 2008 and 2015, violence chose pathways of race, gender, class and nationalist power in ways both obvious and blurred.

"The obvious ways lay in what was rendered visible in the media idiom and public talk: the race, class and gender of the perpetrators posited against the origins of class of those attacked and/or displaced.

"On television and in print media, young black men were shown as the perpetrators, going on rampages through economically marginal zones, although occasional images of women and children displaced were briefly flighted".

She says "the assailants were represented toyi-toying and singing liberation struggle songs as they attacked, killed and displaced those they had previously lived amongst. Obviously, this was about the intersections of nationalism, gender, race and class as all xenophobia is".

The intimacy of the violence is chilling given the way in which South Africa and Johannesburg in particular were built. The history of Johannesburg is a history of migrant labour.

As Anne-Katrin Bicher notes: "For most of the 20th century temporary

Reclaiming migrant histories through music

A meditation on South Africa's paradoxes, where Berita's music becomes an echo of pan-African solidarity amid rising xenophobic tension

labour contracts were the dominant pattern of workers' employment in the South African economy, which was based on the country's mineral resources."

She says workers from "South Africa's rural areas, as well as from countries like Mozambique, Botswana, Lesotho, Eswatini, Zambia, Tanzania and Zimbabwe were brought to Johannesburg by recruitment agencies like the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association and later the Native Recruiting Corporation under the Chamber of Mines".

"South African workers were offered contracts of between six to 12 months while migrants from beyond South Africa's borders were given up to 24 months.

"During this time, the men were not allowed to settle permanently with their spouses in the urban areas. Women thus played a major role in running rural homesteads.

"They supplemented their husbands' meagre earnings through subsistence farming, pottery, beadwork and crafts in order to secure the family's survival.

"Later women became migrants

in their own right, often finding domestic work in the cities or jobs on plantations."

The story of how South Africa, Johannesburg and Newtown were built is embedded in the lives of the migrants who were brought to build our country as we know it.

But through systemic political chauvinism and populism, this history is eroded and echo chambers of ultra-nationalism and xenophobia are sown into our social consciousness.

The histories that might move us closer to the truth might lie in the creative expressions of oral history.

As Anne Karpf posits, oral history, in its earliest iteration, was understood as a history from below that sought to correct the formal written archive that had histories of colonial conquest which were histories of disinformation.

The oral dimension of theatre and music bring to the fore raw histories from below which have been "alchemically transformed", as Karpf would suggest.

Cue multi-award-winning Afro-soul star Berita's special Workers' Day performance at The Market

Theatre. The Zimbabwean-born songstress and music producer is a household name in South Africa despite, in her own words, being "an outsider for most of her adult life".

Born Gugulethu Khumalo, Berita spent her formative years in Zimbabwe and New Zealand. The pace of her family's farming lifestyle made it possible for her to cultivate stillness, calm and an awareness of her interiority from a young age.

The practices of tranquillity would become important to her artistic practice as a young woman in the Eastern Cape, forging her identity as a singer-songwriter in a scene suffused by delicate expressions of Xhosa indie and soul music.

Berita gently recounts the story of how a cab driver in KuGompo City saw her carrying a guitar on her way to her university residence. Immediately the cab driver associated her with Spinach who later became the mega superstar Zahara to the rest of the country.

Zahara had just moved to Johannesburg, had a promising record deal and the likelihood of

imminent fame. The story of a girl with a guitar and a dream became a recognisable signifier in the Eastern Cape and so he offered her immediate support.

Not long afterwards, Berita would become a prominent musical figure in her own right. In 2012, she released her debut album, *Conquering Spirit*, which peaked at #1 on iTunes and earned her Gold Status on Risa and won the Best African Pop Album award at the 2013 Metro FM Awards.

In 2014, she collaborated with Hugh Masekela and fellow countryman Oliver Mtukudzi on the single, *Mwana Wa Mai*. The following year she collaborated with Black Motion on the *Mwana Wa Mai* remix.

These are some of the accolades that brought Berita's star into sharp focus. Her gentle meditative voice became important in the South African Afro-jazz lexicon. Berita's sound also transcended genre as she collaborated with Oskido on a house remix of her song *Thandolwethu*.

Fourteen years into her career, Berita has sustained her place in the industry with songs such as *Jikizinto*, *Siyathandana* and her most recent release, *Namhlanje*, which hit the airwaves last month.

This Workers' Day, Berita will be presenting a concert experience titled *Echoes of the Soul* in its second edition and presented in partnership with the Sampra Development Fund.

The first iteration in 2024 "came from a place where my soul and spirit was yearning to come home musically. I felt like I would do shows and concerts but I would not really present fully who I was to the audience", Berita says.

This is a poignant reflection given the long-standing histories of song, memory and meaning-making in the cultural life-world of Newtown in general and in The Market Theatre in particular.

Berita's show promises to reckon with her contemporary musical oeuvre in a site suffused with the histories of the workers, women and migrants that shaped our conception of Johannesburg.

Friday

Rolland Simpi Motaung

A baby's initial understanding of safety is in their mother's womb and her warm, loving hands.

But when that sanctuary is abusive and chaotic, the effects can be dire for the child all the way into adulthood.

As a toddler, bestselling author Moshitadi Lehlomela sucked her thumb thin and dry as a self-soothing mechanism in response to her mother's hostile energy.

"Her body, my home, was in distress. My first taste of toxicity," she writes in her latest book, *Healing the Mother Wound*.

Growing up, Lehlomela didn't understand why her mother's behaviour was erratic and unkind.

"On some days she would rage at even the smallest mistakes and inconveniences, physically and verbally abusing us," she writes.

By age six, the author began to develop self-protective, regulating and soothing strategies to cope with her mother's wrath — tools she shares in books and her coaching courses.

Confronting the mother wound with care

The mother wound, often called "mommy issues", is a psychological trauma resulting from maternal neglect, abuse, abandonment or emotional unavailability.

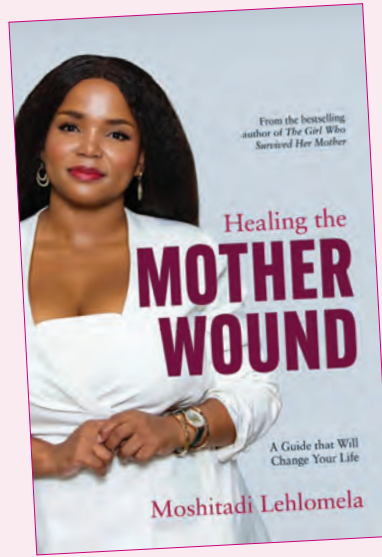
Drawing from her work as a mother wound recovery coach, Lehlomela offers a compassionate approach to the often-unspoken topic in many families.

In her first book, *Girl Who Survived Her Mother*, Lehlomela writes from a survivor's perspective. In the much-anticipated follow-up, she offers a transformative guide to healing one of the most complex forms of trauma — one caused by harmful mothering.

The book is based on her online

Raised by pain, rewriting the story

In 'Healing the Mother Wound', Moshitadi Lehlomela blends personal narrative, psychology and African wisdom to guide readers towards self-healing and emotional freedom



course, "The Self-Mothering Care Practice", grounded in the idea of reparenting one's unresolved mother wound.

Divided into five parts and structured around bite-sized but profound chapters, the book explores definitions of the mother wound, re-parenting the inner child, grieving and learning to thrive.

The book, like many in the self-help genre, borrows from psychology and neuroscience, often from a Western lens.

Lehlomela's work also uses ancient indigenous knowledge and spirituality in pursuit of African-centred approaches to healing.

The accessible writing style attempts to give language to the agonising emotions.

"I am a firm believer that language plays an important role in healing and that, when used intentionally, it can empower people."

When something is easy to under-

stand, she adds, "it feels more doable and taking that first step becomes less intimidating".

Lehlomela says she doesn't have the power to heal others.

"Instead, I see my role as an educator who has gained tools through education and experience and can share them so people can heal themselves."

The relationship between mother and child is sacred. Yet many people, the author says, relate to their mothers as though they are helpless children who did not yet have the tools to process their emotions.

Thus, the thought of confronting unresolved mother wounds can be daunting and overwhelming.

"This is why I make it a point to gently guide readers first into the realisation that they are adults now, with a nervous system capacity to feel without being consumed by their emotions."

"This book is designed to support

readers through the healing process in a way that is careful and compassionate, helping them engage with their pain without re-traumatising themselves."

One of the major steps discussed in the book is acknowledging the mother wound.

Whether the harm was done intentionally or unintentionally, the book argues that the wounds cannot simply be explained away or avoided if one wants true healing.

From this acknowledgment, healing can begin to take shape through self-care activities, establishing boundaries, therapy and finding nurturing communities.

Healing through the African lens

Weaving in traditional Bapedi wisdom, *Healing the Mother Wound* also explores cultural concepts of healing as Africans — a contextual element often missing in most self-help works.

'She often took it upon herself to tell me that I could never be better, smarter or prettier than her'

In part two of the book, for instance, Lehlomela writes about *Go ikelele*, meaning "to abstain", "detox" or "fast". The idea is essentially the need to practise self-care and self-preservation as part of recovery and wellness.

"It is a practice people in my culture observe during various life events, including sickness, pregnancy, postpartum recovery and mourning," explains the Limpopo-born author.

For a long time, many Africans, Lehlomela says, have felt alienated from therapy and inner-child healing work.

"When the language used in these spaces does not feel familiar or culturally grounded, people struggle to see themselves in the concepts being presented. This disconnect can make healing feel foreign and inaccessible."

Introducing the concept of *Go ikelele*, a universally African practice, helps bridge that gap. Through the cultural lens, notions of self-care are also reframed. This is to show, the author says, that they are not new trends but practices African communities have long understood and embodied through rest, connection, ritual and collective care.

Using the cultural practices therefore demystifies and confirms that healing work is not something new or imported.

"It acknowledges that boundaries as a tool for self-care have always existed within African cultures, even

if they are expressed differently. It affirms that those ways are valid and not wrong."

Traumatic cultural and social norms

While some cultural practices are an essential part of the healing process, Lehlomela is not blind to the harm the practices could cause.

The author, for instance, challenges cultural practices such as *Lebollo la Basadi* — initiation for girls. At nine years old, the author was taken to such a school by her mother and grandmother.

In what was supposed to be a rite of passage to womanhood and motherhood, young Lehlomela felt abandoned and rejected — a trauma she carried into her adult years. Often viewed as sacred practices, the author argues that initiation schools are "a product of cultural motherhood steeped in patriarchy".

Other cultural expectations, such as a child's absolute obedience towards their parents, especially the mother, could cause childhood trauma. Lehlomela's pen questions the fallacy of growing a thick skin, developed by victims in order to endure a mother's abuse and not go against culture.

"Because you are being good to your abusive mom, her body is relaxed in the safety of your kindness. This creates a parasitic relationship where you are her supply and she is the energy vampire. This is the dynamic of every abusive relationship. The abuser glows while the victim withers."

Due to her own insecurities, inadequacies and jealousy, Lehlomela's mother carried a sense of darkness that dimmed the author's light as a child.

She writes: "I learned very early in my life that it was unsafe to outshine my mother and that she saw me as her competition as opposed to just her daughter. I wasn't supposed to be better than her at anything and although I never thought of myself in that way, she often took it upon herself to tell me that I could never be better, smarter or prettier than her."

"My accomplishments were always met with criticism, dismissal and animosity."

The author's mother was, however, not born abusive and depressed. Poverty and an abusive home run by relatives due to her own absent mother defined her childhood. As an adult, the author's mother was faced with an abusive mother-in-law and a distant husband — factors further contributing to her distress.

In turn, the book shows how a parent's unresolved wounds get passed on to their children — a vicious generational cycle that haunts many families and relationships.

Based on the cultural, religious and social conditioning, Lehlomela says our noble intentions to show love and kindness towards an abuser can be self-abandonment. Thus, awareness of the wound, creating boundaries and self-care become vital parts of inner-child healing.

Avoiding confrontation with the mother wound might feel like an easier approach when we are children. As adults, however, we are no longer the anxious and helpless boys or girls we were. Now older and wiser, we can try to confront the traumas that dictate our behaviours.

If unresolved, we risk forever being stuck in a loop of toxicity — leading to shattered families and relationships.

"When we focus on individual healing, we begin to cease harming others. Healing awakens our nurturing spirit and helps us become better parents, friends, partners and simply better fellow human beings."

"The world is better for it if we all commit to doing the inner work."

Bestselling author: Moshitadi Lehlomela. Photo: Supplied



Friday

LRNCE and the politics of crafting slowly

Lesego Chepape

There are designers who follow trends and then there are those who shift the terms of the conversation entirely. LRNCE belongs firmly to the latter.

For more than a decade, the Marrakech studio has built a practice that resists speed, resists polish and resists the flattening gaze of global design. In its place, it offers something slower, more attentive: an insistence on process, on material and on the human hand.

In 2026, that insistence finds a new kind of visibility. Named Decorex Africa Designer of the Year, LRNCE will exhibit across both the Cape Town and Johannesburg editions of the fair, an unusual scale that signals not only the brand's reach but its relevance within a broader continental shift. This is not simply recognition; it is positioning — a statement about where design, particularly African design, is headed.

Founded in 2013 by Laurence Leenaert and run alongside her husband, Ayoub Boualam, LRNCE has evolved from a small ceramics practice into a multidisciplinary design studio that moves between objects, interiors and immersive spatial experiences. Its language is immediately recognisable: playful yet grounded, raw yet deliberate. Clay, plaster, iron and wood are not just materials here; they are collaborators.

But before the exhibitions, before the international collaborations with Maison D'ORSAY and Parilio Hotel, before the creation of Rosemary, their riad in the Marrakech Medina, there was something much quieter: a beginning that did not announce itself.

"Making," Leenaert recalls, "was about understanding and discovering materials with my hands, experimenting. There was no pressure, just curiosity and giving myself the freedom to create."

This origin point matters — not because it is sentimental but because it continues to shape the work.

LRNCE's relationship with Moroccan craft is often read as

Marrakech design studio reshaping global interiors through slow craft, LRNCE, brings its quietly radical world of making to both Cape Town and Johannesburg

foundational but it was never a singular encounter. No neat beginning. No moment of revelation. Instead, it was something that accumulated over time.

"It was not a moment but rather a slow process and realisation," Leenaert explains. "Spending time with the craftsmen and learning the techniques they inherited and translating this with my drawings."

What emerges here is not a borrowing but a conversation — a back-and-forth between tradition and interpretation, between inherited knowledge and contemporary form. The artisans she works with do not simply produce; they hold histories of technique, of patience, of a different relationship to time.

"The patience the artisans have," she says, "and the time in Morocco there is for family and each other ... that was something I discovered and really appreciate."

In many ways, LRNCE is as much about time as it is about material. It adopts a pace that runs counter to the urgency of contemporary production. It insists that making cannot be rushed without losing something essential.

When Leenaert started LRNCE in 2013, she was not responding to a clearly identified gap in the market. There was no grand positioning strategy. Instead, there was instinct.

After studying fashion in Ghent, she rented an atelier shared with other artists and began working. A trip to Morocco shifted something — not in a decisive, life-altering way but in a quieter, more persistent pull.

"I decided to move temporarily and give myself the freedom to explore," she says. "It was more a feeling, intuition than a strategy. It was about building a bridge between my own visual language and the richness of Moroccan craft, without overthinking where it would lead."

That bridge, fragile at first, has since become a defining structure.

Being named Decorex Africa's Designer of the Year situates LRNCE within a larger conversation about design on the continent. But Leenaert is careful not to centre herself within that recognition.

"This feels less like a personal milestone," she says, "and more like a signal of a broader shift — not a trend or a reference but a leading voice."

What is shifting is not only aesthetic preference but value systems: a move towards work that foregrounds process over product, collaboration over extraction, specificity over generalisation. In this context, African design is not emerging; it is asserting itself.

LRNCE's practice, rooted in Morocco yet globally legible, becomes a case study in how local specificity can travel without losing itself.

Expansion, however, comes with its own risks. As LRNCE's audience grows, so too does the possibility of dilution. "Growth naturally brings dilution if you are not careful," Leenaert admits.

The response is not to retreat but to stay close — close to the artisans, to the materials, to the rhythms of Marrakech. "My home, the place that inspires me, that's Marrakech," she says. "The work has to remain anchored, even as it travels."

This anchoring is both practical and philosophical. It is about ensuring that the work remains accountable to its origins, even as it circulates globally.

One of the most striking aspects of LRNCE's work is its refusal of perfection. Surfaces are uneven. Edges are soft. The trace of the hand remains visible. "Yes," Leenaert says, "imperfection is a form of resistance."

Resistance to the polished anonymity of mass production. To the idea that objects should appear untouched, unmarked by labour.

"Showing humanity," she adds, "making one-of-a-kind objects ... and also not taking everything too seriously. Let things breathe."

In this way, imperfection becomes a quiet politics: a way of reintroducing the human into objects that might otherwise be stripped of it.

Decorex Africa's 2026 theme, "The Soft Life", could easily slip into aesthetic cliché — another visual trend divorced from lived experience. LRNCE approaches it differently.

"It is about creating space for slowness, for sensitivity," Leenaert explains. "Choosing materials that age, spaces that invite rest."

Softness, here, is not about surface-level comfort. It is structural. It asks how design can reshape the conditions of living — not just how spaces look but how they feel and hold.

In a world organised around productivity, softness becomes radical. It insists on rest, on care, on time.



Rooted in Morocco: Laurence Leenaert and Ayoub Boualam, the husband and wife team behind LRNCE. Photos: Supplied

If the materials LRNCE works with — clay, plaster, wood — could speak, they would probably resist urgency. They would remind us that drying takes time, that shaping cannot be accelerated without consequence, that endurance is slow work.

LRNCE's expansion into interiors and spatial design was not a calculated pivot. It happened gradually, almost inevitably.

"The language we were developing couldn't stay contained within individual pieces," Leenaert says.

What began as objects became environments — worlds that could be entered and experienced.

The shift is perhaps most fully realised in Rosemary, their boutique riad in Marrakech, where every element, from floors to textiles to furniture, has been designed in-house. "We created our own world," she says simply.

It is a world where coherence is felt rather than imposed.

Exhibiting at both Decorex Cape Town (25 to 28 June 2026 at the Cape Town International Convention Centre) and Decorex Joburg (30 July to 2 August 2026 at the Sandton Convention Centre) offers LRNCE a rare opportunity to engage two distinct audiences.

"Each city has its own energy," Leenaert reflects. "It's about telling a story in different tones."

The core narrative remains but its

articulation shifts. This approach mirrors the brand's broader philosophy: consistency without rigidity.

Collaborations have become an important part of LRNCE's expansion, from Maison D'ORSAY to Parilio Hotel. Each partnership requires a form of translation.

"You have to find your language, your way, without losing yourself," Leenaert says. "It's about identifying what is essential in your work."

The process of adapting without erasing becomes a site of experimentation — a way of testing the limits of the brand's language. "It's very interesting and fun to go out of your comfort zone," she adds.

LRNCE is less interested in being understood than in being felt. If a visitor walks into one of its Decorex exhibitions and leaves with anything, it is not necessarily knowledge.

It is a shift — a slowing down and a heightened awareness of material.

And if Leenaert could return to her younger self, just beginning in Marrakech and guided more by instinct than certainty, her advice would be understated.

"That things take time and that this time is necessary," she says. "And that the joy in making is everything."

In a cultural moment defined by acceleration, this feels almost radical: to trust time, to trust instinct, to make without knowing where it will lead.

Things take time and ... this time is necessary. And ... the joy in making is everything



Patience: LRNCE is as much about time as it is about material. It adopts a pace that runs counter to the urgency of contemporary production.

Friday

Internationally celebrated dancer Mamela Nyamza returns home with two powerful productions interrogating identity, colonial legacies and belonging through bold, deconstructed movement



Toeing the line: *The Herd/Less* is an uncomfortable interrogation of collective behaviour and the social structures that govern us.

Deconstructing ballet, reclaiming identity

Unathi Kondile

In isiXhosa, *mamela* means to listen, focus, take heed or simply “look here!” It is also the name of a globally recognised performance artist Mamela Nyamza.

True to its etymology, the name functions as a directive for the world to attend to Nyamza’s narratives of dance and theatre.

An unending stream of accolades serve as evidence that the world is indeed listening. *Bamamele* (“They are listening”).

Nyamza was recently awarded the 2026 Biennale Danza Silver Lion and the Stand Foundation’s Mohlopi Award.

In 2022 she won the Marraines Fiddo Award at the Festival International de Danse de Ouagadougou. She is an international top-five finalist for the prestigious 2026 Salavisa European Dance Award.

When I spoke to Nyamza last week, she had just touched down in France, where her team were preparing for a sold-out week’s run of *Hatched Ensemble* at the Maison de la Danse in Lyon. Performing for 1 800 people a night, as part of the Dance Reflections festival by Van Cleef & Arpels.

“*Hatched Ensemble* premiered in Makhanda, Grahamstown, at the National Arts Festival in June 2023. It was an expansion of my 2007 solo work, *Hatched*. Today, I am no longer on stage.

“I remain in the wings as choreographer, presenting an ensemble of dancers I handpicked in 2023. The oldest is 46, the youngest 14. This piece has matured and it has travelled the world quite extensively,” Nyamza said.

The production has toured internationally to more than 17 countries and festivals, among them the UK, Italy, Russia, Germany, The Netherlands, Canada, Norway, Mozambique, the US and most recently France.

The cast includes opera singer Litho Nqai and African Instrumentalist Given Mphago.

“*Hatched Ensemble* features 10 ballet-trained dancers from different ethnic backgrounds. On stage they convey deeply personal and challenging issues of tradition



Deconstructed ballet: *Hatched Ensemble* speaks to anyone who has felt conflicted about their own identity and where they belong in the status quo. Photo: Val Adamson

and their evolving experiences of gender norms in dance classics, until they ultimately realise their own respective true identities.

“The production speaks to anyone who has felt conflicted about their own identity and where they belong in the status quo.

“The ballet shoes worn in this piece represent colonialism, the Western world, confinement — they are like tools of oppression.

“The white tutus represent marriage and the ballet world in general — how black ballet dancers could not fit in on that ballet stage. I wanted

to show that anybody can dance, regardless of the production they want to be a part of.”

Hatched Ensemble is a blend of history, song and dance. Ballet. Deconstructed ballet to be exact.

Despite international acclaim, Nyamza remains focused on a South

African audience. Hence, through her Artistic Movement NPC, she was able to raise funds to do two runs of *Hatched Ensemble* at the Baxter Theatre in Cape Town.

“It is vital for South Africans to see this. Our work is celebrated abroad but I want South Africans to experience this work on their home stages too.”

Nyamza is aware of the history that rendered theatre an inaccessible luxury for most South Africans. Nevertheless, she believes a culture of theatre-going can be engineered.

“It starts with the younger generation. My own family bought tickets; they told me: ‘*MaZaba, siwathengile amatikiti siyokubukela* (MaZaba, we bought tickets to watch)!’ Now their friends and fellow church-goers are following them to the Baxter this Wednesday and Thursday! They want to see *lo mzikukwana kaMaDlamini* [MaDlamini’s grandchild] on that stage. That is how you shift the status quo!”

Born in Gugulethu, Cape Town, in 1976, Nyamza dreamt of becoming a teacher. Her path shifted at the age of eight when she discovered dance at Gugulethu’s Zama Dance School. It was love at first dance. She never looked back and in 1994 she graduated with a national diploma in ballet from Tshwane University of Technology.

In 1999, she won a scholarship to study at Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre School in New York, where she co-created and performed *The Dying Swan*. The work earned her the Dance Umbrella Award for Outstanding Performance by a Female Dancer in Contemporary Style in 2000.

This week, the very same Nyamza of international acclaim brings two trailblazing productions, *Hatched Ensemble* and *The Herd/Less* to the Baxter in Cape Town for only two performances each.

The Herd/Less is yet another contemporary dance-theatre production by Nyamza.

Though she played her cards close to her chest on the upcoming two-day world premiere, she shared that *The Herd/Less* is an uncomfortable interrogation of collective behaviour and the social structures that govern us.

It essentially plays on the linguistic duality of the word “herd” to explore the thin line between community and conformity.

The *Herd/Less* interrogates the fallacy of a “beautiful world” while exposing violent realities of vulnerability. The performance is also an opportunity to see Nyamza’s stage-directing skills.

This one is a more intimate and physically demanding work. The cast takes on the immense physical and emotional labour of representing both the individual and the “herd”.

The power of the piece, it is said, lies in its ability to use their own bodies to mimic the movements of a collective; oscillating between the grace of a community and the rigid, mechanical movements of a controlled group.

The *Herd/Less* has generated much interest from various festivals and dance platforms.

It has been invited to a season of the 2026 JOMBA! Dance Festival and been short-listed for the National Arts Festival in Makhanda this year. It will also make its European debut at the Venice Dance Biennale in Italy in July.

● *Hatched Ensemble* will be staged on 29 and 30 April from 8pm at The Baxter. *The Herd/Less* world premiere will be staged on May 1 at 8pm and again on May 2 at 2pm also at The Baxter. Bookings are open on Webtickets and at Pick n Pay.

Friday

Angélique Kidjo, still unstoppable at 65

Kibo Ngowi

It's on songs like *I'm On Fire*, an uptempo dance tune in which Angélique Kidjo evokes the spirit of Fela Kuti with the help of Nigerian highlife duo The Cavemen, that you appreciate the breadth and depth of Kidjo's musical palette.

The song comes roughly halfway through *HOPE!!*, a 16-track album that sees the Beninese legend going everywhere from Atlanta to Kinshasa and Rio de Janeiro to Johannesburg in search of sonic building blocks.

At the age of 65, you'd be forgiven for thinking Kidjo might feel she's said and done enough but the acclaimed singer shows no signs of slowing down.

She has performance dates lined up across Europe with stops in England, France, Germany, Italy, Ireland, Poland and Switzerland between May and November. I first got the chance to see her perform at the Culture Summit in Abu Dhabi last year where she turned a formal TED-styled conference into a Coachella-esque concert in the desert.

HOPE!! is an album that comes four decades deep into one of the most decorated careers of any African musician and contains much of the grounded versatility that has taken Kidjo to stages across the world. It also arrives at a moment shaped by personal loss and reflection, with the death of her mother becoming a quiet but persistent presence throughout the project.

"This album was in the making since the release of *Mother Nature*," she says, referring to her 2021 album. "And I haven't done anything because in the meantime, my mom passed away. So I paused a lot of things to grieve."

Creating the album became part of the grieving process for Kidjo: "I promised my mom I would record my own version of *Malaika* because she would always ask me to sing it for her before she died, but for a long time I couldn't do it," she explains.

"So I said I have to do a whole album to fulfill this promise that I made to my mom. And somehow I did with this album. She has been somehow all the way guiding me to everything that I do. That's the feeling that I have because I felt her presence completely throughout this album."

That sense of presence is most clearly felt on the album's closing track, a sweeping orchestral version of *Malaika* featuring French singer Florent Pagny. The song itself carries a long history. Written by Tanzanian composer Adam Salim in 1945 and later recorded by Kenyan musician Fadhili William, it has become closely associated with Miriam Makeba, whose rendition introduced it to global audiences.

Kidjo's version honours that lineage while adding her own emotional imprint, moving between the original Swahili lyrics and a new set of lyrics in French.

Elsewhere, the album moves with a restless sense of curiosity. Its collaborations stretch across continents and genres but they are held together by a clear sense of purpose that Kidjo returns to repeatedly when she talks

The Beninese legend discusses the inspiration behind her latest album *HOPE!!*, honouring her mother while continuing a decades-long journey of musical exploration and connection



about her work.

"For me, it's always about the song. I'm always at the service of the song," she says. "My music is not for me to keep. I grew up with the philosophy from my parents that when you surround yourself with people to talk about something that is meaningful, it's more powerful. The message is delivered more powerfully."

That philosophy runs through the album's extensive list of collaborators, 15 featured artists in all, across the album's length of just under an hour.

The opening track *Bando* brings together Pharrell Williams and Quavo, formerly of the Atlanta trap trio Migos. It's a surprising collaboration that turns a word for an abandoned house used for cooking and selling drugs, into an upbeat anthem about

overcoming struggle. Pharrell no doubt brought some of the sensibilities he used to produce *Clipse's* *God Sort Em Out*.

On *Aye Kan*, Ayra Starr adds a contemporary Nigerian pop sensibility, while *Fall On Me* pairs Kidjo with PJ Morton for a more soulful exchange. Each collaboration is shaped by the question Kidjo poses to herself in every creative encounter. "What can I learn? What can the person learn from it and how and why are we telling this story?"

The answers shift from track to track. *Oyaya* brings together Nile Rodgers and Brazilian artist IZA, creating a groove that feels at home in both Lagos and Rio.

Superwoman with Dajou carries a smoother, more melodic energy, while *Kakua* featuring Diamond Platnumz leans into the rhythm of Tanzanian Bongo Flava. There's a

sense that Kidjo is intentionally drawing unexpected connections between people, locations and musical styles.

That instinct is perhaps most evident on *Sunlight To My Soul*, where the Soweto Gospel Choir provides a powerful choral backdrop and on *Joy*, where Davido brings a buoyant Afropop energy. Even the inclusion of *Jerusalem*, originally by Master KG and Nomcebo Zikode, feels like a continuation of a song that has already travelled far across the world.

Kidjo's ability to hold all these threads together speaks to a career built on consistency and a refusal to be confined by expectations. That consistency was recognised last year

when she became the first Black African artist to receive a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

"I think that it means my consistency in my work and forecasting the richness of the culture of this continent has resonated so far that I am able to be there," she says. "So it means the door is open now to all of us. So let's get to it."

The statement carries the same sense of collective thinking that defines her approach to music. Success, in her view, is something that gains meaning when it creates space for others.

It's a perspective shaped by the artists who came before her, figures like Miriam Makeba and Hugh Masekela, whose careers unfolded in far more restrictive circumstances.

"We paid a huge price for the youth today to be able to put out their music and deliver it instantly," she says. "It was a battlefield filled with a lot of bombs."

Her advice to younger musicians reflects that history: "Today is easier. And easy means you have to be more aware. Don't take anything for granted because things that are easy are the most complicated. Be strategic. I've never thought of my career being a fashion or being something of the moment."

"And AI is going challenge authenticity today. Be authentic. Speak up for yourself. Be consistent in your work. Be a hard worker and don't settle for less. And be respectful of yourself and others."

She continues with a clarity that comes from experience. "Music is a very possessive mistress. I mean, there's no compromise there because if you start compromising, you fool only yourself. You don't fool the public but without the public, you don't exist."

The emphasis, once again, returns to the relationship between artist and audience, a dynamic that cannot be sustained through shortcuts.

"You can be pretending and getting millions of likes and clicks but where you can actually make a difference is on stage in how you perform and how you're there on time to do what you have to do."

That commitment to performance remains central to Kidjo's identity. It is also where her seemingly boundless energy becomes most visible. When asked where that energy comes from, she doesn't hesitate.

"The energy comes from my mother," she says. "She raised 10 children. And my mom, from the moment she woke up at five o'clock in the morning everyday she was on her feet and she was always the last one to sleep."

The memory is vivid, almost cinematic. "As a little girl, I was looking at her like, on what battery is she running?"

It's a question that still lingers, even as Kidjo mirrors that same pace in her own life. "I have that energy because I know it's possible to have the energy to do so many things during the day. And if it makes you happy, why should I stop doing it?"

That sense of joy is embedded throughout *HOPE!!*, even in its quieter moments. It is there in the rhythmic pulse of *Nadi Balance* with Fally Ipupa, in the warmth of *For Me* featuring Charlie Wilson and in the expansive closing gesture of *Malaika*.

Kidjo herself seems content to let listeners find their own path through it. "It's no longer in my hands anymore once it's released. It's in the hands of everybody. So just feel free to do whatever you want and have fun with it."

'We paid a huge price for the youth today to be able to put out their music and deliver it instantly'

Friday

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Angélique Kidjo

is still
moving
the world

