



ANC TODAY

ONLINE VOICE OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

GENDER EQUALITY

Criticism of the all men Western Cape provincial cabinet is legitimate



The emancipation of women is not an act of charity, the result of a humanitarian or compassionate attitude. The liberation of women is a fundamental necessity for the Revolution, the guarantee of its continuity and the precondition for its victory. The main objective of the Revolution is to destroy the system of exploitation and build a new society which releases the potentialities of human beings. This is the context within

which women's emancipation arises. Comrade Samora Machel

The aims and objectives of the ANC list - amongst others - uniting all the people of South Africa for the complete liberation of the country from all forms of discrimination and national oppression; end apartheid in all its forms and transform South Africa as rapidly as possible into a united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic country; defend the democratic gains of the people and fight for social justice and to eliminate the vast inequalities created by apartheid and the system of national oppression; and support and advance the cause of women's emancipation.

The ANC's commitment to gender equality is reflected within the ANC itself and in its leadership in society. The ANC sees women empowerment as the continuation of a struggle for equality.

There can be no denying that it is through the deliberate efforts of the ANC that South Africa stands out as a country with a very progressive stance on the representation of women in decision-making structures. We should not allow this important gain to be reversed anywhere in our country.

One of the most significant features of our country's Constitution is that the right to equality is held to be the cornerstone of the Constitution. All other rights are interpreted to give effect to equality. The Constitutional Court has also determined that the right to equality must be substantively, rather than formally interpreted.

The Constitution guarantees the equality of women and allows for affirmative action to address gender and race inequality. To ensure the realisation of this right by women, the ANC government established the National Machinery for the Advancement of Gender Equality and Equity within all spheres of government and in civil society; and it ensured that far more women serve in the post-1994 parliament than any previous South African parliament.

These initiatives have had far-reaching consequences. A report entitled 'Country Gender Profile: South Africa', established that women's participation has meant some changes for Parliament.

We have a Constitution that entrenches equality, and yet we still have attitudes, beliefs, myths and practices that inhibit the freedom of women. The ANC's decision to give effect to the equality clause in our Constitution and to recognise the energy that women bring to development needs to be applauded. That is why the DA approach in Western Cape needs to be seriously considered by all those who are committed to democracy.

WEEK IN REVIEW

President inauguration | ANC
President Jacob Zuma was inaugurated as President of the country. He appointed the cabinet and introduced changes in the structure of government which was widely welcomed by most commentators.

ANC lost a committed cadre |
Member of Parliament Nomvula Khellinah Shoba passed away due to heart failure after returning from President Jacob Zuma's inauguration. Her death robbed the ANC and country of a militant and an uncompromising comrade who advanced women's issues with a passion.

Criticism of all men Western Cape cabinet | DA leader and Premier of Western Cape Helen Zille made reprehensible statements about President Jacob Zuma that were roundly condemned and was also criticised for the unrepresentative composition of her cabinet.



We need to focus on practical and immediate interventions that have to be made now, while at the same time pursuing the strategic objectives of transformation of the status quo.

Commitment to democratic participation has to be accompanied by capacity building programmes. This includes giving women the necessary skills and creating enabling environments in areas where they participate. Affirmative action does not relate to the subjective level of only placing individuals in positions of responsibility. It relates also to the objective level of changing the operations of institutions and rules to ensure that the experience and knowledge of the formerly excluded are brought in, as well as ensuring an environment that is favourable for the entry and operation of women.

It is not simply a numbers game. The practical address of gender needs take place within the overall context of an endeavour to transform the status quo. This means that the voice, knowledge and experience of those previously marginalised must be found at the centre of operations. The values and culture, the attitudes and traditional practices and all the unequal power relations between men and women must be systematically changed.

In November 2005 the African Unions Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa came into force. Not only does it does the Declaration support, the spirit and the letter of the UN Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination Against Women, it endorses the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women. The AU has undertaken to work towards parity between men and women in socio political and economic reality of each country.

All over the world a patriarchal mindset needs sharp challenge. The AU and SADC have adopted declarations and protocols that "works toward parity of women with men in all member states". The SADC Declaration On Gender and Development adopted in 1997, calls for 30 % of women in political and decision-making in the region structures by 2005. Needless to say, South Africa, Botswana and Namibia have to a large degree surpassed the SADC target.

Going beyond the right to vote and going beyond the ANC decision to have 50% parity in ANC representation between men and women in government structures is the next struggle to be fought. We also have to ensure that women who take on decision-making positions do not close the door behind themselves and create an atmosphere that develops women who may wish to follow in their footsteps.

It is in this regard that the criticism of the composition of Western Cape provincial cabinet is legitimate and it shows how Helen Zille is out of touch with the mood of the nation, the region, the continent and the world. Zille wants to shut the door closed for other women in the Western Cape and in the Democratic Alliance as its leader.

The temptation to respond to Helen Zille in a reactive manner on her backward stance regarding gender parity may cloud the gains we have made as women in this country. She benefited from the struggles of women in this country to the extent that she is a Premier of a province. She now reinforces patriarchy and is taking a step into a history women have fought to undermine.

Meritocracy has always been a clarion call of white liberals to undermine black people and to insist that they are not skilled enough to lead. In her all-men cabinet she has appointed a man with four cases of sexual harassment against him. This shows that Zille is the premier patriarch of our times.

I also wish to reiterate our appreciation to all South Africans for participating actively in the elections. We must emphasise that the responsibility of voters did not end at the polling stations. Working together we must now do much more to build a better South Africa. I thank you all for your confidence in me and in the ANC.

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

19 May 1659: the Khoi started protests against white encroachment This led to the first anti-colonial Khoi-Dutch War.

16 May 1976: pupils at Phefeni Secondary School started boycotting classes in protest against the use of Afrikaans as medium of instruction. The unrest spread to other schools and were a daily occurrence until the reached the breaking point on 16 June 1976.

21 May 1983: the first regional committee of the United Democratic Front was established in Natal. The anti-apartheid organisations united under the umbrella of the UDF had to establish regional committees to consult with organizations in their regions. The Natal was first to launch and was followed by Transvaal in June and Western Cape in July.

19 May 1986: SADF carried out raids on alleged ANC targets in neighbouring states of Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Several people were left dead and injured.

LATEST STATEMENTS

[ANC distances itself from Youth League comments.](#) 13 May 2009

[ANC astounded by Zille attack on Zuma.](#) 12 May 2009

[ANC assures Cabinet of its unwavering support.](#) 12 May 2009

[Statement on deployment of ANC National Chairperson.](#) 8 May 2009

The record of delivery of women who have served our country's cabinet and legislatures is outstanding. Zille is not the calibre of leadership of Baleka Mbete, Lindiwe Sisulu, Naledi Pandor, Bertha Gowa, Barbara Hogan, Susan Shabangu, Sue van der Merwe, Lyn Brown, Zo Khota to name but a few.

Zille is a racist, who supports the patriarchal system that has upheld the subjugation and exclusion of women from participation in the running of the affairs of our country. Her utterances shame all women and bring the record of our country as a leader in advancing gender parity into disrepute.

To date there is no indication of the programme to govern the Western Cape, there is just vitriolic utterances that insult women, the president of our country and undermines the achievements we have made as a nation.

The protocols, conventions and declarations open space for debate but mobilisation of women on particular issues will make a difference. We need to bring the social needs of women to the table wherever we can.

We need to trespass where in areas like Western Cape where we are not invited and table the need for substantive change.

We need to get commitments that are time lined and guaranteed in as far as providing financial resources to women's programmes.

We need a woman's machinery with the instruments, power and resources to make changes happen faster.

The issues of women's emancipation and equality in our country have to find common cause across ideological lines WORKING TOGETHER WE CAN DO MORE.

Please note that the ANC Communications will not be producing ANC Today Daily Update anymore. We will revert to issuing a once a week ANC Today on Fridays

LATEST SPEECHES

[Condolence speech delivered by the Speaker of the National Assembly, M Vuyisile Sisulu, at the Memorial Service of the late Khellinah Nomvula Shoba,](#)
14 May 2009

[Speech by Mathole Motshekga, ANC Whip, at the Memorial Service of the ANC MP, Khellinah Nomvula Shoba, 2009,](#) 14 May 2009

[Address by his Excellency Mr Jacob Zuma on the occasion of his inauguration as fourth President of The Republic of South Africa,](#)
9 May 2009