



ASPECTS OF POLITICAL LEADERSHIP SERIES

Leadership and Vision

Cape Town

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1. OVERVIEW

The Catholic Parliamentary Liaison Office (CPLO) and the Hanns Seidel Foundation, in association with the Goedgedacht Forum for Social Reflection, are hosting a series of roundtable discussions entitled “Aspects of Political Leadership in South Africa”. The first of the series was held at Garden Court Holiday Inn, Cape Town, on the 15th March 2013.

Roundtable 1: Leadership and Vision

It is widely held that South Africa needs strong and visionary political leadership. Opposition parties and some civil society organisations claim that the Zuma administration is failing to give direction to the country. Even within the ANC, critical voices have been raised, as was seen at the ANC Policy Conference in Mangaung at the end of last year. On the other hand, many will defend the present government’s record, pointing to such initiatives as the *National Development Plan*. Either way, as we begin to move towards our fifth general election in 2014, the issue of leadership assumes ever greater importance.

2. INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

Mike Pothier, Research Co-ordinator for the Catholic Parliamentary Liaison Office (CPLO) gave apologies for director Peter-John Pearson, who was supposed to be facilitating the discussion but was unable to attend. He gave some background to the organisations which were involved in organising the event:

“The CPLO has existed as a channel of communication between the Catholic Church, parliament and government since 1997. It is currently one of the last surviving organisations dedicated to parliamentary liaison, with other similar civil society organisations, such as the Institute for Democracy in Africa (IDASA) and the South African Council of Churches (SACC), having either scaled down or closed down due to funding and other restraints. One of the things that the CPLO does is fill the gaps that have been created by the demise of other organisations with a similar function.

A core function is making submissions to parliament commissions on policy, as well as researching and publishing briefings on key issues. The CPLO tries to work with other organisations, such as the Goedgedacht Forum, to build public participation and engage a wider audience. Goedgedacht’s core function is to run broader, longer debates, often at their farm in Malmesbury. These high-profile, two-daylong seminars are followed up with substantial reports, which elevate the kind of debate that is essential for good policy and the deepening of democracy.

The Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF) is the Christian Social Union party in Bavaria, the dominant party and Bavarian equivalent of the Christian Democratic Union in Germany (however, they do things differently in Bavaria). The HSF has partnered with the CPLO for the past three years, providing funding for roundtable discussions. This time the idea is to hold a series rather than a once-off event, with *Aspects of Political Leadership in South Africa* as the theme.

The first roundtable will explore overarching issues of leadership and vision: What is the state of political leadership? Where we are going and do we still have a vision? Do we need to have a vision? The roundtable will not just focus on political heavyweights, point fingers and complain, as this will not be constructive.

The second roundtable will look at the perennial question of corruption and accountability and how this is undermining what good leadership being is being offered in the country.

The third will focus on institutional leadership, such as parliament, court and Chapter 9 Institutions. These institutions are tasked to provide leadership - constitutional, legal and parliamentary -from public representatives. The discussion will create an overview of their performance, failures and recommendations.

The fourth in the series will look at the service of church organisations, which are underpinned by gospel values - the social teachings of the Catholic Church on how society ought to be ordered to promote common good, solidarity in society and the interests of the poor. Another value is servant leadership in any walk of life; we want to unpack that level of leadership.

Finally, and maybe most importantly, roundtable 5 will address the overlooked aspect of the amount and value of leadership emerging from civil society, where an empowered constituency can set the pace. For example, civil society work on the Secrecy Bill made a real impact, as did the Treatment Action Campaign's ground breaking work on generic medication.

Biographies of the presenters:

Prof Steven Friedman is the director of the Centre for the Study of Democracy at the University of Johannesburg and a visiting professor at Rhodes University. He is a public intellectual, former trade unionist, journalist, academic and newspaper columnist. He is the author of ***Building Tomorrow Today***, a look into the South African trade union movement and its effects on democracy. His interests are varied, but lie close to the heart of South African issues such as democracy, social inequality and citizen action in strengthening and sustaining democracy, with a focus on the activism of people living with HIV/AIDS.

Father Smangaliso Mkhathshwa is a Catholic priest known for his anti-apartheid activism, for which he was "banned" for five years (from 1977) and detained without trial for various periods. He was Secretary-General of the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference in the 1980s. From 1988 to 1994 he was Director of the Institute for Contextual Theology. Fr. Mkhathshwa entered parliament as an ANC MP after the 1994 election and served as Deputy-Minister of Education from 1996 to 1999. Thereafter, he became executive mayor of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality, a post he held for six years.

Dr Alex Boraine, a former President of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, was an MP for the Progressive Party from 1974 to 1986, when he resigned and became a founding director of the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA). In 1995 he was appointed by Nelson Mandela as Deputy-Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, serving in that capacity until 1998. He has held various visiting professorships and is currently a member of the Advisory Board of directors, and a Global Visiting Professor of Law, at New York University. He is the co-founder and former president of the International Centre for Transitional Justice.

3. PRESENTATIONS¹

3.1. Professor Steven Friedman

My job is to be the “party pooper”. I argue that the continent-wide preoccupation with leadership is problematic and our fixation in mainstream debate on leadership is an obstacle to progress, leading South Africans away from democratic values and an understanding of democracy.

Democracy is based on the idea that every adult individual has an equal right to an equal say in all decisions that affect them. In principle, this means that we shouldn’t have leaders at all (at an abstract level). The community that first practiced this model was in ancient Greece (of course, hardly perfectly because they had slaves, but the idea of no-leadership was deeply entrenched). This model is difficult to apply in a complex society where we must delegate responsibility for decision making and implementation. In ancient Greece, public officials were designated by lot. That’s not to say that political representation is not important – it should remain so - but the interesting idea here is that these positions are not an honour or exultation, but a responsibility that should be distributed randomly across society. Individuals chosen by lot will have a tough time arguing that they are superior in any way. Public officials are meant to be people who serve us; this is central to the democratic idea.

In Joseph Schumpeter’s formulation of democracy, people get together sometimes to decide on who in the elite will lead and the only role for citizens is participating in the election. This view of democracy flows out of a focus on leadership. Complex society must go beyond electing leaders to finding ways to ensure that decision-making happens from generation to generation and democratic principles endure. This leads us to institutions – a set of rules and ways of implementing rules; for example, the judiciary to protect rights and rules on how judges do that. Parliament is another such democratic institution, among others. The quality and health of a democracy depends on healthy institutions rather than its leaders. It has been said that “all democracies are started by visionaries and presided over by mediocrities”. This is actually as it should be - once institutions and regulations are in place, the question of who is in charge becomes less important. The more we talk about leaders, the less we focus on building effective institutions.

This is true not only of political organisations and governments. Byway of illustration: recently the department heads at the University of Johannesburg were called together and given a lecture on leadership. Something felt wrong with this idea because being a leader implies having followers. The reality is that I as a department head do not have followers; I have colleagues. In my own experience the benefits of treating those with whom I work as colleagues rather than followers is real. One of our most important projects was developed in my absence and this probably would not have happened had I been the “leader”. In terms of my relationship with students: they are also not followers. In my engagement with the public I am also not a leader, but rather engaged in conversation to which I contribute and learn from. What we have here are relationships between people who are fulfilling certain roles. This is not a plea for some romantic, participatory democracy; I am not unaware of the realities of complex societies. I argue that it is important to acknowledge the role of those that take on responsibility through active citizenship. The reality is that many citizens are living in poverty, making it difficult to engage in active citizenship. There are serious constraints on their time and energy. In order for their needs to be expressed representative democracy is needed. I argue that democratic institutions must be built and those who implement are not leaders.

¹Please note that the presentations are a report on what presenters said and are not their verbatim presentations.

Focusing on leadership is a way of ducking problems rather than confronting them. At one stage it was an entirely predictable lament that Africa's curse is bad leaders. Is the assumption that Africans suffer some genetic problem that produces bad leaders? What we should be asking is, if it is the case that African leaders don't serve their citizens, why is that? This is similarly problematic in South Africa – the cry for leadership is a cry for help; it indicates a problem but does not lead to a solution because the problem is not diagnosed we point to leadership.

On the continent, I argue that we have an historical and structural context that must be taken into account. In principle, a democratic society starts to emerge when people demand accountability. In any society, unless sufficient pressure is applied to bring leaders to account, there will be no democracy or leaders that serve citizens. During colonisation, the colonisers were accountable to Europeans and after liberation they were replaced by unaccountable local leaders. In key societies on the continent, two things have been happening. One, a significant increase in associational life, and two, more pressure for accountability. The two go together - growth in citizen's organisations has led to growth of pressure for accountability. If this analysis is right, the issue in Africa is not how to find better leaders, but how we empower citizens and strengthen institutions to hold leaders to account.

Locally, we tend to wish away as leadership problems those which are structural; for example, corruption. The impression of lousy leaders who are a bunch of grubby pirates is a fundamental misunderstanding. When trying to deal with corruption you come up against lots of points of resistance because it is deeply embedded in our society and the context of the relationship between the private and public sector, the role of inequalities and patterns of behaviour due to our apartheid past, the relationship between government and business. These things must be understood, acknowledged and used to strategize.

More broadly, what can this preoccupation with leadership possibly achieve? How does gathering in meetings like this change it? Our problem is not lack of leadership or the quality of leadership, but a range of difficulties in our society, such as our inherited focus on race instead of quality of character.

To conclude, I'm not suggesting that we pretend we live in ancient Greece or that the question of people taking responsibility is irrelevant. What is important is what is this conversation around bad leadership a symptom of? What do we do about building a stronger democracy, where we have inherited inequality, without destroying the economic basis? Centuries of racial division, rather than conversation, divide us. Our preoccupation with leadership leads us away from these discussions.

3.2. Father SmangalisoMkhatshwa

I took the trouble to prepare a speech but am going to depart now in light of the professor's presentation. My comments on the opening remarks regarding too much emphasis on leadership are that thereality in Africa is the "big man/woman" syndrome. Office bearers occupy a position in society which is out of all proportion of what they were elected to do. They take advantage to engage in actions that are not always in best interests of society. Corruption is rampant. Many leaders are interested in enriching themselves rather than serving. Ok, SeekMoutonssomething else, but this syndrome is still present!

South Africa is unique in that our Constitution and the way we handled governance set a shining example. Recently a friend asked, "What is wrong with you South Africans now? You were a shining example in what it meant to serve, sharing, tolerance, real democracy. But now there are stories of corruption and dishonesty and you seem to be following the path that some of us have experienced". For example, in

Nigeria, if presidents, mayors, etc. are unable to accumulate more than a million dollars a year, they're regarded as a failure. We loot the state; that's how we do it.

It is important to bear in mind that we are beginning to see good leadership in Africa. I was in Ghana in 2008 for general elections and it was a marvel to see democracy in action. Now in Kenya, Botswana and a few others we see the same happening. The point is that you can't talk about leadership outside the context of the social and political situation. A leader only exercises his or her powers to respond in line with the needs of a particular community or nation.

In 2009 the South African President listed five national priorities: education, health etc. When we talk about leadership in South Africa we would expect to identify those people who are best qualified to deal with these priority challenges effectively. Hitler and Mussolini were leaders, but they were not good leaders. When we talk of leadership, we are looking for someone, or a collective, who will prioritise the interests of the people.

In 1983 the United Democratic Front (UDF) came into existence. I was one of the founders and present at the launch of the UDF. It was unique, that kind of coming together. It brought a whole range of people together: religious leaders, students, business people and more. We identified priorities and basic values that bound us. It was very democratic and accountable and a culture of robust debate characterised the organisation. Comrades were real comrades; there was respect, trust and dedication, a sense of responsibility for one another's well-being and respect for decisions taken by leadership. All wanted to see the country free and democracy being accessible to all people; this brought us together and we were united. It was always taken for granted that you had to be a hard worker -the work ethos was special. There was a spirit of sacrifice and sharing, protecting and solidarity. That was how we ran our struggle. During the struggle we set up street committees and the beauty was that it brought democracy to people where they were, where they lived. Leaders were elected and regular meetings were held to share information and enhance the struggle for freedom. That was what gave that movement the power to make the country ungovernable.

When 1994 came, active people were elected to parliament to represent the masses, not because we were extraordinary but because we came from a culture of active participation in struggle on the ground. Since 1994 we have seen a wide gap develop between political leadership and people on the ground.

In South Africa the issue of education is most critical. Not just to achieve good matric results but to have more and more youngsters doing well in a quality education system. We now have two systems of education – a minority going through university and a majority battling in dysfunctional schools. This leads to joblessness, not because there is discrimination, but because the majority are unemployable. This is a form of injustice. Good leadership means paying attention to education. The other critical area is health provision.

After 1994 we used to speak about the values of the struggle. We became an example to the world because of those values. Not only political, but to think and express and do what is in the best interest of country as a whole. Our Constitution is one of the best in the world. We want leaders that will make sure that everything we do is in accordance with the Constitution. In addition, all people should understand the contents and implication of that wonderful Constitution. We do not want single leaders, but a collective leadership at all levels which has to do with accountability and respect for people.

Where is South Africa right now and where do we want to go? The National Development plan is there and the developmental state project is being worked on. The government has identified critical problem areas

that we are facing and in choosing leadership and evaluating performance we must be guided by these principles and who is best qualified to take the country forward (both individual and collective). I want to highlight the importance of the context in which people lead, the shared vision and values that underpin our society must inform our actions.

The work of the organisations that have brought us together today is very important - we need to dialogue and agonise together. We have a new context but should not lose our values which brought us our freedom. This is not leadership in the narrow sense of the word, a vibrant civil society means identifying the ideal leaders were all looking for.

3.3. Dr Alex Boraine

I was asked to focus on vision and leadership. I almost also put my prepared material aside as I have strong views about the argument made by Professor Friedman, but will return at the end to that. Let me start by reminding us that the Bible says that 'without vision the people perish'. There have been moments in our recent history where people have produced vision.

Kliptown, 26 June 1955, saw the adoption of the Freedom Charter². The preamble goes as follows:

We, the People of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know:

that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people;

that our people have been robbed of their birth right to land, liberty and peace by a form of government founded on injustice and inequality;

that our country will never be prosperous or free until all our people live in brotherhood, enjoying equal rights and opportunities;

that only a democratic state, based on the will of all the people, can secure to all their birth right without distinction of colour, race, sex or belief;

And therefore, we, the people of South Africa, black and white together equals, countrymen and brothers adopt this Freedom Charter;

And we pledge ourselves to strive together, sparing neither strength nor courage, until the democratic changes here set out have been won.

The Charter was signed by 3700 delegates and 10 000 observers were present. Heavy police presence made it almost impossible for the Charter to be endorsed.

There are many exemplary clauses in the Charter. I highlight but a few: "The police force and army shall be open to all on an equal basis and shall be the helpers and protectors of the people". In the Charter the state recognises the right and duty of all to work. It also points to the importance of education, saying that "Education shall be free, compulsory, universal and equal for all".

² See <http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=72> for the Freedom Charter in its entirety.

The Charter set out a remarkable vision. Within five years of this vision being made known, many organisations were banned, and then came Sharpeville and later, Rivonia. In very a short space of time that vision was smashed to the ground.

By 1979 the ANC was in exile, a different time, a different mood. A quote from the authoritative source, *The Green Book*, written in that year³, is illustrative:

“The strategic objective of our struggle is the seizure of power by the people as the first step in the struggle for the victory of our national democratic revolution. Seizure of power by the people means and presupposes the all-round defeat of the fascist regime by the revolutionary forces of our country. It means the dismantling by the popular power of all the political, economic, cultural and other formations of racist rule and also necessitates the smashing of the state machinery of fascism and racism and the construction of a new one committed to the defence and advancement of the people’s cause”.

The question today is: where do we stand now? The seizure of power or sharing responsibility?

Cyril Ramaphosa has been known to say that the Constitution should be our bible. I wish indeed that all South Africans would read it, that it was accessed at schools and universities⁴. It contains a remarkable vision for South Africa.

The Preamble of the Constitution says:

WE, the people of South Africa:

Recognise the injustices of our past;

Honour those who suffered for justice and freedom in our land;

Respect those who have worked to build and develop our country; and

Believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity.

We therefore, through our freely elected representatives, adopt this Constitution as the supreme law of the Republic so as to

- Heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights;*
- Lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by law;*
- Improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person; and*
- Build a united and democratic South Africa able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations.*

The government has produced the *National Development Plan*⁵, in which it visualises what the country would look like in 2030 if this plan is followed. The Plan is set out in almost poetic language, as visions are.

³ See <http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=79> for The Green Book

⁴ Access the South African Constitution at <http://www.info.gov.za/documents/constitution/index.htm>
Recommendation from the floor - access “Know your rights claim your rights” published by the Institute for Accountability in Southern Africa at <http://ifaisa.coffeecup.com/forms/Know%20your%20Rights%20Form/>. Their website is <http://www.ifaisa.org/index.html>

When we have a vision we must go beyond to actualising, not merely mouth the words but move beyond into practical areas. The Development Plan begins with a vision statement –

We began to tell a new story then. We have lived and renewed that story along the way. We, the people of South Africa, have journeyed far since the long lines of our first democratic election on 27 April 1994, when we elected a government for us all.

Now in 2030 we live in a country which we have remade. We have created a home where everybody feels free yet bounded to others; where everyone embraces their full potential.

We are proud to be a community that cares. We have received the mixed legacy of inequalities in opportunity and in where we have lived, but we have agreed to change our narrative of conquest, oppression, resistance.

Despite the poetic language of the Plan, the *Diagnostic Report* of 2011 puts our feet firmly on the ground, acknowledging the weaknesses that need to be overcome to make the vision true. Trevor Manuel and Cyril Ramaphosa (chair and vice-chair, respectively) and other distinguished people wrote the 2011 Diagnostic Report, which set out achievements and shortcomings to date. Nine priority challenges are laid out:

1. *Our first challenge is that too few South Africans work.*
2. *The quality of school education for most black people is sub-standard.*
3. *Poorly located and inadequate infrastructure limits social inclusion and faster economic growth.*
4. *Spatial challenges continue to marginalise the poor.*
5. *South Africa's growth path is highly resource-intensive and hence unsustainable.*
6. *The ailing public health system confronts a massive disease burden.*
7. *The performance of the public service is uneven.*
8. *Corruption undermines state legitimacy and service delivery; and*
9. *South Africa remains a divided society.*

The real test will be implementation; we have enough visions and dreams, so how do we get beyond vision and make it real? There is responsibility on leadership as well as the role of citizenship. It is important to recognise that everyone has a place and part to play. We must also recognise that poor citizens struggle with daily life and therefore don't have time and energy to give energy to participate. Others, both private and public, need to take that up.

In his presentation, Steve argued that the stress on the quality of leadership is too great. I buy into his major point but am uncomfortable with his framing. Citizenship and leadership are not incompatible, not contradictory; institutions and leadership belong together. We do need good, positive, caring, skilful institutions but it is not an either/or [situation]. His right [correct] tendency is that our leaders must get on with the job and it should be a shared responsibility, but we have not dealt with the power equation. There will no doubt be brilliant ideas and resolutions flowing from this series, but at the end of day we don't have the authority or power to put them into practice. There are however people who have that power and we must recognise this and reckon with the question of power.

⁵ The National Development Plan can be found at <http://www.info.gov.za/issues/national-development-plan/index.html>

The leadership question is important; I prefer Obama to Bush, Mandela to Zuma. Leaders can make a difference. There are ministers with capacity and power and responsibility that can transform South Africa, the fact that they don't do it is a different matter. There will be good and poor leaders and we should do our best to ensure that the leaders we choose are good. Politics is the art of the possible – the kind of president and cabinet ministers with this enormous responsibility matters. We need good leaders that are caring and accountable. How can we deal with corruption if we have leaders that have been charged themselves with corruption? That is where it starts. It does not start with merely emphasising our institutions, which is vital, but must include leadership at every level. Political leadership is critical if they have the capacity, will and accountability to change this country. The *National Development Plan* will never be implemented without skilful compassionate and powerful leadership.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. Summary

A set of questions helped to frame the discussion. These included:

- Do we need new leaders?
- Why do current leaders seem to pay only lip service to our Constitution?
- Why is police brutality rampant and why does corruption flourish?
- Do our leaders lack vision?
- Are they the wrong people?
- Do we need younger, fresh leaders?

One view advanced in the discussion was that leadership will always act against the system and that our focus on leaders is misplaced. Instead, we need to shift the emphasis to building strong democratic institutions and ensuring that they serve as many citizens as possible. Healthy institutions (rather than the current leadership) are a benchmark of a healthy democracy. Healthy institutions are built through active and organised civil society, which is where we should focus our efforts.

However, many participants felt that the quality of our leaders is indeed important - that we need competent, compassionate and skilful leaders in service of the people - and that our current leadership must be renewed. It was noted that a wide gap between leaders and people exists for a number of reasons, resulting in a lack of accountability and chaos. It was suggested that this gap has been partly created by the annihilation of the United Democratic Front, and its deeply democratic spirit, by those that took up leadership in the new South Africa. Another challenge is that the electoral system does not allow citizens to directly choose leaders and make them more accountable. This feeds corruption and undermines good institutions. There was a strong feeling that electoral reform is necessary.

There was much discussion about the key role that citizens play in a healthy democracy. Active citizenship is needed to ensure that we have quality leaders backed up by strong institutions in the service of people. Informed, active and organised citizens can claim the rights and fulfil the responsibilities laid out in our excellent Constitution. The majority of participants believed that on the whole, South Africans are passive, ignorant of their rights and regard themselves as "subjects" rather than citizens. This was challenged with an argument that South Africans are aware of their rights; however, power relations are stacked against them. If this is indeed correct, organisation is more urgent than awareness-raising.

Good examples of active citizenship were cited - such as the Social Justice Coalition (SJC), which is not focusing on single issues, but rather educating and mobilising around day to day geographic challenges as they arise. It was felt that political structures need to be created to deal with realities on the ground and interact with organised, local groups such as the SJC.

Other issues that arose included: the urgent need to upgrade South Africa's education system; the need to acknowledge the apartheid past and the wounds that remain; corruption; the break-down of law and order; the lack of focus on rural needs; the need to start from ourselves; and the issue of lack of disclosure around party funding.

DISCUSSION, ARRANGED THEMATICALLY

4.2. Focus on institutions, not leaders

Power holders will always act against accountability demanded through the media, voters and the law. This is normal and expected. Democracy deepens when battles are fought in a way that institutions are strengthened. We should not judge the health of our institutions by the attacks made on them by those in power, but rather on how they survive those attacks. At the moment, our institutions are not actually doing so badly – the judiciary and the media are operating and these must continue to be defended. Unfortunately, these are only working for 30% of the population because of the current power relations. The challenge is to strengthen them to serve more people.

Institutions will endure while leaders come and go; this is an important focus. It is not an either/or situation, but good leaders and good institutions must go hand in hand. The South African Public Protector is an example of a gutsy public official working for the good of the people, using a good institution to make an impact.

4.3. Quality leadership is important

Our current leaders are legitimately elected officials by the majority of the country and these political structures bring about leadership. For this reason, it is crucial that quality leaders are in place, ones who are listening to and serving the needs of the people. This is a quality of servant leadership. However, it became clear that the perception is that our leaders are not connected to the electorate and have become seduced by power. This manifests in the "big man/woman" syndrome, with leaders taking advantage of their position for self-enrichment, collective corruption, lack of integrity and a lack of commitment to the values embodied in our Constitution. Much of the population remains loyal to "liberators", making change difficult.

Leaders need to be listening to the people, acting on behalf of the people – be skilful, compassionate and qualified to tackle identified priorities. But servant leadership doesn't necessarily mean fence-sitting or being a push-over – servant leaders can also "take the country by the scruff of the neck", as President Lula did, setting a strong agenda to turn the country around. Another example of the importance of the quality of leadership is the type of leadership exhibited by Mandela on his release from prison. His stance as "Mr Reconciler" reduced the possibility of violent conflict at the time. These are dynamic responses to current contexts from servant leaders.

Civil society has a role to play in identifying these kinds of leaders and ensuring that we have strong institutions to hold them to account.

4.4. Electoral reform and party funding

Although it may be said that our current leadership was legitimately elected in free and fair elections, our electoral system undermines our good institutions and excellent Constitution as we may not directly elect our leaders and hold them accountable.

The list system made good sense in the first elections because there were so many white constituencies. Everybody had the right to vote where they lived but their vote was not related to an MP, but to a party. The Van zyl Slabbert Electoral Reform Commission report was well founded. It argued that at least 50% of MPs must be voted for by constituencies. There remain strong objections to change the list system because it gives parties total control and this is great tragedy and weakness. The Mampela Ramphela manifesto argues for reform and many others are pleading for it but the incumbent powers are reluctant to let go.

The lack of transparency around party funding further muddies the water, making parties accountable to unknown benefactors rather than the electorate. The gap between leaders and the people they represent is ever-widening.

4.5. South African citizens need to be politically engaged

For some, the most critical emphasis for a healthy democracy is on active citizenship, even more so than the quality of our leaders or health of our institutions.

South African citizens need to be educated about their rights within our democracy and the excellent Constitution that underpins it, so that they may hold power to account. The Institute for Accountability in Southern Africa (IAISA) is an organisation that is popularising the Constitution and doing awareness-raising in this regard. South Africans are not politically engaged for various reasons, ranging from ignorance to apathy, time and energy constraints as a consequence of poverty and regarding themselves as “subjects rather than citizens”, who do not have the authority to oversee leadership. Another factor that could cause political apathy is the reliance on social grants, as necessary as they may be. Our poor voter registration and turn-out in local elections is evidence that South African citizens do not engage politically (only 38% of registered voters voted). In addition, there seems to be a dearth of student activism and debate. Regular writers and commentators seem reluctant to enrich all of us with debate without fear of favour.

Citizens may become momentarily active on key issues that are unacceptable to them but are not actively engaged otherwise. This is in contrast with the kind of political engagement that epitomised the struggle, where critical mass was built from the bottom up through street committees. Leadership and the people were in true collaboration. We need to learn how to interact in the process, not burn tyres. Who listens to people who burn tyres?

The endemic violence against women in South Africa could provide the kind of campaign that unites South Africans to campaign together and could be used to build broader and more sustained political engagement. Contrary to some of the views expressed by some of the participants, a number of people

present believed that South African citizens are not “subjects” or unaware of their rights. The activism of our rich political past remains in our life blood. The problem is not ignorance but that power arrangements are stacked against people and they don’t have the information regarding how to claim their rights. Our challenge, therefore, is to enable them to speak. Rights must be claimed and people must be organised in order to do so.

There was a challenge to the idea of “the tyranny of the poor”; that is, that people who are struggling with daily survival do not have the time or energy to participate in civic groups. The solidarity and the new-found power when participating in such groups can give people energy and they can find the time to participate and empower themselves.

The Social Justice Coalition, based in Khayelitsha, is a good example of the above. It is a people’s organisation that raises awareness and mobilises and is organised geographically (rather than issue-based). Government structures are needed to respond to this kind of organisation and create programmatic strategies to deal with day-to-day problems rather than the strategy that is set out in the *National Development Plan*.

4.6. The past is still with us

The past lives just here. In South Africa, the wounds of the past have not necessarily healed and we remain a deeply divided society. Reconciliation needs to be revisited and on-going. There is still much forgiveness that needs to happen. This past and these wounds must be taken into account in our discussion around leadership.

There is also the issue of competition for influence in the early ‘90s between exiles, Robben Islanders and insiders. While the three groupings each had their critical roles to play during the struggle, it was the exiles who took on the mantle of power. Those who experienced working within the UDF experienced democracy at work, the building of critical mass from the ground-up. This conflicted with the style of the exiles, which was characterised by secrecy, corruption and elitism. The disbandment of the UDF was a crime and resulted in a ruling elite that does not entertain debate or know how to serve the people.

4.7. What vision guides our leaders?

We have one of the best constitutions in the world, which is a strong hand to begin with. But our leaders are not guided by it. Citizens need to be aware of the Constitution and the rights and obligations which flow from it. In order to claim rights, education and civil organisation is needed. The *National Development Plan* is a clear path for us to follow. The document would not deal with the local daily challenges that the majority of South Africans struggle against.

4.8. Starting with ourselves

Leadership is not only about the qualities and practices of our elected leaders; our own values and actions need to be scrutinised. How are we personally corrupt and how are our social institutions corrupt? We also need to look at how those of us with means are contributing to the up-liftment of those without, how we are sharing our resources. Unfortunately our legal system does not always make it easy to do the right thing, instead creating legal hurdles and red tape e.g. trying to purchase land for someone else is extremely difficult. Adjustments could be made to incentivise and assist citizens to play a role in up-liftment.

When the new government came into power it promised many things to people; for example, to build houses. This has resulted in an attitude that “only government can build houses”, so people now wait for their hand-outs. In South America there were programmes where people built their own houses, with assistance. The quality of those houses is better and the process built communities and self-confidence. A culture of helping ourselves needs to be enabled (psychologically and structurally). While this is valid, the impact of abject poverty and unemployment and how this robs people of energy and self-worth can't be underestimated. A certain amount of state assistance is still necessary.

4.9. Further issues

Our current education system is creating huge injustices – seriously compromising the futures of millions of poor, black children. This urgent issue should be the centre of a sustained campaign.

Recent mining and farm-worker strikes were based on legitimate grievances but broke down into violence and lawlessness. These are historically exploited and oppressed groups who still live in appalling conditions. The use of foreign labour has played a big role in these strikes. Trade unions have major responsibility to ensure demonstrations are non-violent and represent worker's rights. Captains of industry must face up to their responsibilities, too.

Representation at the meeting is almost exclusively urban. Rural voices must be included in political decisions and debate. No women were on the panel of the first Roundtable or on any to follow in the series⁶.

Director of the Goedgedacht Forum, Felicity Harrison, closed by thanking all the panellists for the way they set the tone and expressed heartfelt thanks for participation, enthusiasm and insight of all present.

“This Roundtable marks the beginning of a conversation, not the end of a process, and it is hoped that the discussions will be taken forward in your work.”

Felicity thanked the organising partners, the Hanns Seidel Foundation and the Catholic Parliamentary Liaison Office, and wished all a safe journey home.

END

⁶ Mike Pothier responded that CPLO were acutely aware of this issue. In fact, the organisers had approached a number of women to participate but none so far had accepted. They are continuing their efforts to include women on the panels of the next four Roundtables.

5. PARTICIPANT LIST

Mr	Tyrone	August	Freelance journalist
Mrs	Marlene	Bernard	HSF
Mrs	Naomi	Betana	WRDC (Human Rights)
Ms.	Li	Boiskin	Cape SA Jewish Board of Deputies
Dr.	Alex	Boraine	Formerly of the TRC and IDASA
Mr.	Dan	Brotman	Cape SA Jewish Board of Deputies
Ms.	Marjon	Busstra	The Office of International Diplomacy Africa
Mrs	Westley	Cesar	WRDC (Human Rights)
Ms	Samukelisiwe	Coka	Inkanyezi Foundation
Mr.	Aaron	Daviet	
Mr.	Colin	Eglin	Retired MP
Ms.	Mary	Fawzy	Ndifuna Ukwazi
Prof.	Steven	Friedman	Centre for Democracy, University of Johannesburg
Rev	Gilmore	Fry	Des
Ms	Emmerentia	Goliath	WRDC (Human Rights)
Ms.	Zonimar	Granger	WRDC
Ms	Biddy	Greene	Catholic J&P
Ms.	Andiswa	Hala	Ndifuna Ukwazi
Ms	Felicity	Harrison	Goedgedacht Forum
Ms	Eva	Hendricks	
Adv.	Paul	Hoffman	Institute for Accountability in Southern Africa (IFAISA)
Mrs	Annabel	Horn	UCT
Mr	Boetie	Jacobos	Politiek
Ms	Desire	Jackson	Goedgedacht Forum
Sr.	Margaret	Kelly	
Dr.	Lionel	Louw	Independent
Dr	Nomfundo	Mali	PanSalb
Ms	Claire	Mathieson	Southern Cross
Fr.	Smangaliso	Mkhatshwa	
Ms.	Karen	Morris	CPLO
Ms.	Amarone	Nomdo	CPLO, UWC
Fr.	Peter-John	Pearson	CPLO
Ms	Nicolette	Peters	UWC
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Mrs	Palesa	Siphuma	CPLO
Mr	Peter	Soal	Private
Mr.	Gregory	Solik	Ndifuna Ukwazi
Rev	Alan	Storey	Central Methodist
Mr	Kenneth	Sturgeon	RET City Planner
Mrs	Shona	Sturgeon	UCT

Mr.	Nkosikhona	Swartbooi	Ndifuna Ukwazi
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Mr	Zukile	Tom	CWD
Ms	Judith	Turner	Catholic Welfare & Development (CWD)
Ms	Christal	van der Merwe	WRPG
Mr	Abraham	van Santen	Drakenstein Municipality Forum
Rev	Richard	Verreynne	Consultation of Christian Churches (WC)
Ms.	Zukie	Vuka	Ndifuna Ukwazi
Mr	Jasper	Walsh	Goedgedacht Forum Board Chairperson
Rev	Godfrey	Walton	Anglican Church