

# New Unity Movement



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# Fascism In South Africa: A Looming Crisis?

## INTRODUCTION

***Fascism as a term in common usage today is most readily associated with totalitarianism. It is a term which conjures up images of Hitler and Mussolini, and all that their forms of dictatorship stood for – extreme forms of nationalism, anti-democratic repression of the working class, victimisation of “out” groups, and ready recourse to violence—often by bands of malicious thugs.***

As is well-known, Donald Trump was frequently referred to as “fascist” because of his racist, anti-immigration, anti-Muslim and “make America great, again!” policies—and because his tenure as POTUS was characterised by a significant upsurge of right-wing extremism in the USA.

But various commentators protest that to call Trump a fascist is to misuse (and undermine) the term. “You can be a total xenophobic racist male chauvinist bastard,” says Roger Griffin, a professor of history at Oxford Brookes University, “and still not be a fascist.” He adds:



Basically, I think it matters whether we call Trump fascist or not fascist, not academically or intellectually, but because it’s a red herring — it actually diverts attention from where we should be doing the critique. If all our intellectual energies are, like Don Quixote, jousting with windmills and fascism, instead of actually

jousting with the real enemies of democracy, and using our energies to avert the climate crisis, which is going to engulf us all, if we’re not careful, then we’re wasting our time.

This is to suggest that Trump and his brand of fascism are unrelated to the “real” problems confronting us—but is this so? Are issues like fascism and climate change unrelated? Not according to a Unity Movement article in 2019, which includes the comment:

Even in the absence of revolutionary mass uprisings, it is not inconceivable that fascist tendencies will grow. Thus, if we are currently witnessing an upsurge of crude racism, xenophobia and fundamentalism, this is set to worsen in a world where climate-change is destroying the basis of life on the planet.

## WHAT IS FASCISM?

A cursory search of the web and most bibliographical sources would confirm features such as those referred to above as being “fascist.” The Merriam-Webster “definition” of fascism is probably typical:

Fascism is a political philosophy, movement, or regime ... that exalts nation and often race above the individual and that stands for a centralized autocratic government headed by a dictatorial leader, severe economic

and social regimentation, and forcible suppression of opposition.

Yet, it is lacking in important respects, and would certainly not be very helpful to us if we are to understand whether fascism in South Africa is simply an ever-present nuisance-value, or whether it is a (looming) threat of which the Democratic Left of this country should be vigilant.

## **SOUTH AFRICA AND THE THREAT OF FASCISM**

In his introduction to Trotsky's monumental "*The Struggle against Fascism in Germany*," Ernest Mandel identifies six elements which Trotsky discusses and says should be taken as an integrated whole in the explanation of the emergence of fascism in Germany in the early decades of the twentieth-century. These six elements will form a useful structure from which to generalise in considering the question of fascism as a looming threat in South Africa today.

### **i. The crisis of capitalism**

As Wolfgang Streeck puts it, "Capitalism has always been an improbable social formation, full of conflicts and contradictions, therefore permanently unstable and in flux."

These "conflicts and contradictions" have sharpened in the years since the turn to neoliberalism in the late 1970s. Driven largely but not exclusively by overproduction, we have seen the emergence and consolidation of extreme levels of wealth for the few, combined with extreme levels of poverty for the many. These have been exacerbated by crises such as the 2008 financial collapse and the more-recent coronavirus pandemic. Thus, today in South Africa, we have a scenario where 20 percent of the people control 70 percent of the wealth of the country, where the top 1 percent of South African earners take home almost 20 percent of all income in the country, while the top 10 percent take home 65 percent. The remaining 90 percent of South African earners get only 35 percent of total income. These statistics need to be seen against a

background in which money is the key to everything in a neoliberal world—where social services provided by the state are the barest minimum for survival. And so, poverty does not just mean low or no income, it means a highly deprived life for the vast majority of our citizenry.

And things are not set to change anytime soon. Economists have noted that the real cause of the stubbornly low global demand for labour is the unrelenting "slowdown of economic growth since the 1970s" (Aaron Benanav). As an export-oriented economy, South Africa is critically dependent on global demand to spark economic growth in the country. But, given the highly automated nature of production in the modern era, there is every likelihood that if such growth should eventuate, it would result in disproportionately *low levels* of job creation.

In modern times, South Africa's unemployment rates have almost always been in the upper 20-percents. In the third quarter of 2020 (that is, during the height of the coronavirus pandemic lockdown) the country's narrow definition of unemployment rose to 30.8 percent, and with the broader definition (which includes "discouraged" work seekers) it rose to 43.1 percent. Of interest, is how the profile of the unemployed is changing. Automation in the workplace has always been a threat to jobs, but following the coronavirus pandemic, there is widely expected to be an "automation explosion," which means an acceleration in the loss of jobs, including *middle class* jobs.

Chronic low growth combined with a rapid transition to labour-saving technologies are a toxic mix for those dependent on work to earn a living – which means the overriding majority of people on the planet.

Thus, the prospect going forward in a world dominated by the capitalist system is one of global-wide growing impoverishment of the masses. For Wolfgang Streeck, capitalism is already in its death-throes. He identifies failure of growth, unsustainable levels of public and private

debt, and irreversible poverty as the key indicators of the crisis of capitalism – a crisis that he does not see the system being able to recover from.

Thus, the first “element” in Trotsky’s analysis of the rise of fascism in Germany (that is, the crisis of capitalism) can be seen to apply in the current-day world as well, and in South Africa by extension.

## ii. The threat to democracy

1994 saw South Africa transitioning to a liberal constitutional democracy, involving parliamentary elections, an independent judiciary, an executive president, and liberal freedoms, such as freedom of speech and freedom of association. This was the foundation upon which the neoliberal future of the economy was built. As William Shohl put it (in his article in *Africa’s a Country*, January 2020)

On May Day in 1994, a few days after being elected South Africa’s first black president, Nelson Mandela declared to domestic and international capital: “In our economic policies, there is not a single reference to things like nationalization, and this is not accidental. There is not a single slogan that will connect us with any Marxist ideology.”

So, from the very get-go, our economy was a doormat for local and international capitalism. 1995 saw the lifting of decades-old capital controls, and South Africa going on to become “the most financialized economy in the Global South (excluding Asia)” with the chief beneficiaries being the Oppenheimers and Ruperts, along with a host of newly-empowered fellow-travellers, like billionaire Patrice Motsepe.

Ernest Mandel, in his introduction to Trotsky’s book, observes that bourgeois-democracy (including the type we have in South Africa) will

be the preferred mode of social control for as long as it reinforces the power balance in favour of the elite. However, “(W)hen objective developments disturb this equilibrium,” says Mandel, the bourgeoisie “has hardly any alternative but to try to establish a higher form of *centralization of the state’s executive power* (our emphasis) in order to realize its historical interests.”

The conditions for greater centralization of executive power already exist. It matters little whether a Ramaphosa faction or a Zuma faction controls the executive. The rule-making process employed for setting the lockdown rules during the coronavirus pandemic was merely a milder form of rule-by-decree, and amply demonstrates how effortlessly parliament can be bypassed.

## iii. Working class resistance

Centralisation of executive power plus utilisation of the machinery of state would be fundamental weapons in the arsenal of the ruling class, as it turns to more fascistic means of repressing working class resistance.

Currently, the most visible resource at work in the service of state repression against the working class is the armed thuggery of the SA Police Force. The

brutality with which peaceful protests by Wits University students were put down, recently, is but one of a string of examples testifying to the readiness with which these “dogs of war” are unleashed on working class activists and communities.

Not only is South Africa rated the most unequal society on earth, but it is also the protest capital of the world. The working class is active in not only resisting the assault on their already-meagre living standards, but also in defence of their hard-won gains. The ongoing life-and-death struggles of communities such as the shack-dwellers represented by Abahlali baseMjondolo (which receive little media attention) is a case in point.



Today there are millions more people living in shacks than under apartheid. People continue to live in squalor with no refuse removal or drains, no roads and paths, no toilets or electricity and not enough water for everyone. There are regular fires and floods. These are not conditions that are fit for human beings. In fact, people often say that they are treated like animals and not human beings. (Abahlali baseMjondolo, 27 January 2021).

The reality of our country is that if you are poor and black you are ignored by the politicians and abandoned by the state. But when you occupy land, organise or challenge authority you are then attacked with threats, intimidation and violence. Insults, threats, arrests, beatings, torture and murder have all been common forms of repression under the ANC. This is a truth that cannot be denied. (Abahlali baseMjondolo, 28 January 2021).

Apart from the overt violence inherent in policing tactics employed by the state and its agencies is the violence perpetuated on the masses via neoliberal measures such as privatization, austerity, and the casualization of work, in terms of which the terms of employment for more and more workers are being undermined. A critical consequence—apart from growing pauperization of the working class—has been to break their capacity for organisation at a workplace level. And so, trade unionism has been—and continues to be—immeasurably weakened.

#### **iv. Creation of the “third class”**

Mandel (page 20) is worth quoting at this point:

(A class of capitalist collaborationists, as) a mass movement can only arise on the basis of the petty bourgeoisie, capitalism's third social class, situated between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. If this petty bourgeoisie is hit so hard by inflation, bankruptcy of small firms, and mass unemployment of university

graduates, technicians, and the higher salaried employees, that it falls into despair, then a typical petty-bourgeois movement, compounded of ideological reminiscences and psychological resentment, will arise. It will combine extreme nationalism and at least verbal anti-capitalist demagoguery with the most intense hatred for the organized workers' movement ... At the moment this movement begins physical attacks on the workers, their organizations, and their actions, a fascist movement is born ... After such a movement has passed through a period of autonomous development, which it must do if it is to win mass influence, it comes to need the financial and political support of important sections of monopoly capital if it is to carry through to the seizure of power.

Fascism is on the rise, and ideologically underpinned by racist black ethno-nationalism masquerading as Black Consciousness and Pan-Africanism. The opportunistic coming together of the Zuma faction and the EFF is an ominous signal to this effect. Disrespecting their own rule of law and the paralysis of the state to act are sure signs of the danger.

To this grouping can be added the traditional leaders and their hangers-on.

Perhaps the clearest manifestation of the organised existence of a fascist movement (apart from above-board organisations such as the EFF and the BLF) is to be seen in the increasingly audacious xenophobic attacks of late. For example, in November 2020, some 30 trucks driven by foreign drivers were torched, with one driver shot and burnt to death and others hospitalised. This can never simply be dismissed as “spontaneous” violence.

In objective, historical terms, “foreign nationals” have become our version of the “Jews of Nazi Germany”—the target-group for extreme right-wing persecution, just as Black Americans and immigrants are for the American right.

## v. **Crushing of the workers' movement**

In a video clip that went viral on social media in recent weeks, Duduzane Zuma made what could be regarded as a rallying call to the right, which included statements such as the following:

- “Re-set, redistribute and rebuild. That’s all we’re going to do over the next three years, so that when 2024 comes, we’ll be fully in control.”
- “Our destiny is ours—how we want to build policies, in favour of what we believe in ... and how we want to channel and to build this country over the next 20-to-50 years.”
- “One woman, one man, one vote. We’re taking over.”
- “We’re going to pull together and we’re going to make this happen for ourselves, and not be dependent on handouts from anybody else.”
- “We *will* deliver free education, and we *will* create opportunities for each other, as an entire nation, as a whole.”

In addition, Duduzane has a message to the MK Military Veterans Association about “sitting down and discussing how to be moving forward.”

Mandel warns that

If the fascist dictatorship is to fulfil its historic role, the workers' movement must be ground down and beaten back before the seizure of power.



But this is only possible if, prior to the seizure of power, the scales have tipped decisively in

favour of the fascist bands and against the working class. The rise of the fascist movement is like an institutionalization of civil war, in which either side, regarded objectively, has a chance of success.

The Democratic Left of this country needs to connect up the dots ... we are seeing a “creeping fascism” at work.

## vi. **Consolidation of capitalist class power**

There is a view that Big Capital (the Oppenheimers, Ruperts, etc) would prefer conditions of economic, political and social stability, since these are “good for investment.” This is in line with Trotsky’s insight that capitalism’s first option is always bourgeois-democracy; if the workers can be cajoled into accepting promises and petty piece-meal reforms, then there is no need for the iron-heel. However, stability is far from being the current reality. On the contrary, with falling profit levels and worsening crisis for both capital and labour, the class struggle is set to intensity.

Thus, the scene is set for fascist mobilisation.

## **CONCLUDING COMMENT**

The purpose of this brief article is to raise a red flag to the impending danger that converging social forces are leading to. Mandel’s analytical framework has served us well in demonstrating that, against the global background of a falling rate of profit, capitalist overproduction, growing working class militancy and alarming, runaway climate-change, there is a rising tide of fascism across the globe. This is the sign that global capitalism is preparing to “grind the working class movement underfoot” rather than give way to socialist transformation.

Now more than ever, the unity of the working class is demanded. Now more than ever, the call should be for workers of the world to unite.



## **WILVAN SCHOOL OF BALLET – VERONICA WILLIAMS**

**The life story of Veronica Williams is a truly inspiring one. At the age of 77 years, her contribution to performing and teaching Spanish Dance was acknowledged by the International Board of the Spanish Dance Society in November 2020. She received the President’s Award from Dame Marina Keet De Grut, the Hon Life President. Veronica was one of three South Africans who received the award.**

When we heard of this award, we realised that whilst congratulating her for this rather belated accolade, we should take the opportunity to highlight the role she has played as a dedicated member of the Unity Movement in promoting the teaching and performing of Dance amongst the disadvantaged communities of Cape Town.

Veronica was born in Maitland. She spent her early childhood in District 6 where she started dance classes at the Eoan Group, from the age of 3 years until the age of 12. When the family was forcibly removed in 1955 from District 6 under the Group Areas Act she no longer continued with her classes at the Eoan Group. She is married to Michael Williams, a leading founder member of the New Unity Movement (NUM). They have two sons. Brent and Jay.

She completed her schooling at the Athlone High School and was a student at the UCT Ballet School (1971-1973) where she obtained a Teacher’s Certificate in Ballet under the tutelage of amongst others, the famed Dukie Howes and David Poole, principals of UCT Ballet School. She went on to complete her studies in Spanish Dance under luminaries like Marilyn Sher and Mavis Becker (Dame Mavis Becker in 2000). Veronica later also became a substitute teacher at UCT Ballet School in the Spanish Dance Department. In 1994 she was invited to become an examiner for the International Spanish Dance Society. She held this position for 16 years until 2010 when forced to step down due to ill-health.



**Veronica and Michael Williams**

During the time of her involvement with Wilvan, she also worked as the secretary at Livingstone High School from 1979 - 2008.

Veronica is a highly principled person. Her opposition to the system of Apartheid was manifested when she started her studies at UCT. She was offered a Coloured Affairs Department (CAD) bursary by Dukie Howes which she refused to accept on principled grounds, much to the chagrin of Miss Howes.

### **ESTABLISHMENT OF THE WILVAN SCHOOL OF BALLET**

It was in 1968 that Veronica, together with the Van Staden sisters, Lola and Eunice and the Parker sisters, Aisha and Ghairu, founded the Wilvan Ballet School, the name being derived from the surnames, Williams and van Staden. Later the name was changed to “The Wilvan School of

Ballet". It also became known as "The Wilvan Dance Theatre" when after more than twenty years the school held its first performance in a proper theatre. However, it is better known by most people as "The Wilvan School of Dance"

The school was based at the Methodist Church Primary School (later known as Gateway Centre), Bunney Street, Kensington. The school put on performances mainly in municipal, school and church halls.

In 1969 the five founding members were joined by the Brown sisters (Elaine Cloete and Shirley Willenberg) who lived in Kensington. These two sisters soon became involved in the organising and teaching of Classical Ballet classes there. In 1971, Spanish Dance classes were introduced followed by Classical Greek, National and Contemporary Dance classes.

The Wilvan School of Ballet closed its doors in 2013 after it had established itself as a part of the artistic and cultural milieu in Cape Town. Its closure was largely due to a lack of funding. The high regard in which the School was held and its successes are largely attributable to a dedicated band of women namely, Elaine, Shirley, Veronica; as well as the support they received from parents, community members and friends of Wilvan. Since the closure of the school, Elaine Cloete and Shirley Willenberg have continued teaching Classical Ballet, Classical Greek and National Dance classes at Gateway Centre.

Classes were offered to children and adults from all over Cape Town. It is estimated that hundreds of children and adults received lessons at the school over the 45 years of its existence. The school successfully entered most of its students of all ages for internationally recognised examinations, trained many qualified teachers and staged numerous dance productions.

It is said that dance is the oldest creation of human imagination and is the oldest art form along with music. Dance has also been described as being part of the history of human communication, human movement and human culture.

This idea is well captured in the stated vision and mission of the school which was set out as follows: "Our vision is social justice through dance. Our mission is to be a school of dance that nurtures

self-expression, creativity, critical thinking and excellence".

Veronica was forced to stop teaching and examining in 2010 owing to her ill-health. She has borne her debilitating illness with great courage and fortitude such that one has always been impressed by her great fighting spirit in dealing with it.

#### UNITY MOVEMENT INVOLVEMENT

Around about the time of the establishment of Wilvan, Veronica, together with her husband, Michael, became steeped in the principles and policies of the Unity Movement through their membership of organisations that adhered to the principles and policies of the UM.

Thus they became members of the Cape Flats Educational Fellowship (CAFEF), associate members of the TLSA, founding members of the Ward 16 Civic Association (1974) which was one of the founding civics of the Federation of Cape Civic Associations (FCCA) in 1979.

Whilst she devoted most of her time and energies to teaching, performing and examining, she still made the time to attend meetings and functions of the above-mentioned organisations.

Veronica and Michael as well as their older son, Brent, became founder members of the New Unity Movement (NUM) in 1985. Veronica, Michael and their younger son, Jay, are currently members of the South Peninsula Branch of the NUM.

Veronica gratefully acknowledges the strong influence that UM stalwarts like Leslie and Pam Jacobs, Victor and Daphne Wessels, Kathy and Ernie Steenveld, R O Dudley and Maureen Adriaan had on her at the time that she started the Wilvan School of Ballet.

By her admission, she used her involvement at Wilvan as a vehicle to promote the principles and policies of the NUM.

That the NUM had a major influence on the outlook and ethos of the school is borne out by the fact that the late Maureen Adriaan who served as an official of the TLSA and the Cape Town branch of NUM was the Chairperson of Wilvan for more than twenty years.

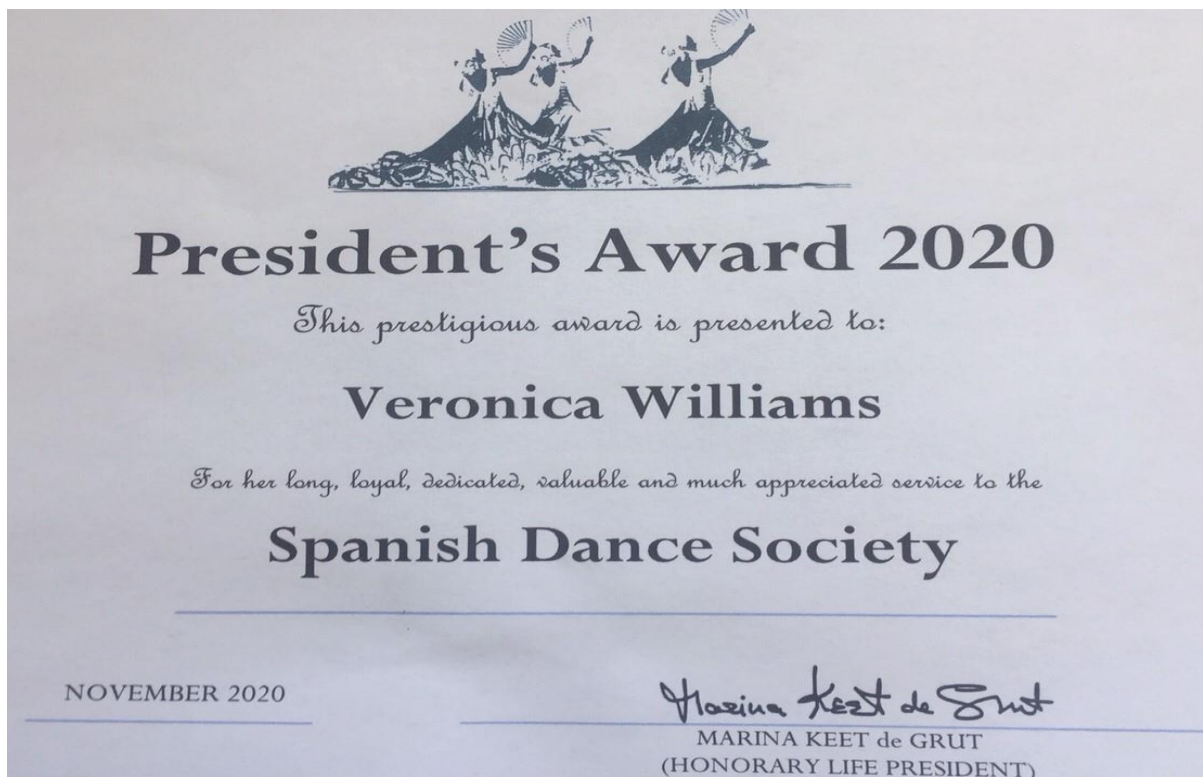


Elaine Cloete is also a loyal member of the NUM, serving as the current secretary of the Cape Town branch.

Despite being afflicted by a chronic, debilitating illness for the past eleven years, Veronica remains a true stalwart of the UM and her adherence to its policies and principles remains undiminished.

We salute her as a truly remarkable cadre of our movement and for her indomitable spirit.

May the legacy left behind by Veronica Williams and her associates, in the form of the Wilvan School of Ballet, be taken up by a new generation of socially-aware young performing artists.





## 'WHAT'S IN A NAME'

**This phrase comes from Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet: "What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet".**

**This quotation suggests that names themselves do not hold any value or significance. Names simply act as labels to distinguish one thing or person from another. Juliet is applying this metaphor of a rose to Romeo: even if he had a different name, he would still be the man she loves.**

Whilst this may be true in most cases, history and ancestry do however play an important part in the bestowing of names.

One can support the recent name changes, of the towns and cities; they are at least non-partisan and not linked to any person.

Of course, several other changes ought to have been done, either concurrently or prior to the name changes; in a democratic South Africa, the townships need to be bulldozed and planned free housing for all had to be structured. Free education up to University level, (the need for protest-action such as at Wits would be obviated) free health care, transport and all services had to be provided.

It is becoming increasingly clear as people hurl the allegations of "not the right time" or "can you imagine the cost involved" or "why don't they attend to service delivery first", that folks do not know a fig about what name-changes mean to the

disadvantaged majority. They do not really know the history of the present names. The name changes have been a long time coming and is there ever going to be "a right time"?

Most do not even seem to know or even care about the present names of our cities.



We have at least got rid of the derogatory (in public at least) K-Word, or hotnot/coolie or such-like terms. Now we have to rid ourselves of the names of cities that honour those that have caused us tremendous hardships in our colonial past.

This may seem trivial to a few but to most, it is a matter of recognition of their origins, their ancestry. Why would the Port Elizabeth be named after a woman who had never been in this area? In the two years of being Governor of the Cape, Sir Rufane Donkin had organised the area up until the Great Fish River and the Zuurveld (the area around Makhanda). This area, formerly known as Grahamstown, was named after Colonel Graham

who forced military rule on those who were considered as “intruders” into the Cape Colony.

To some South Africans, the descendants of these colonisers are considered to have brought English and Dutch development and civilisation to the area, but in this period of building a nation should we be celebrating or lamenting their arrival and legacy? Are we thereby not celebrating South Africa’s history of inequality, degradation and subjugation – and by extension, entrenching apartheid?

Many of the names of cities, towns and dorpiess still need to be changed – Durban, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Harrismith and particularly in the Eastern Cape, Cradock, Somerset (East/West), Cathcart, Mt Ayliff, Lady Grey, and the like – these names are all associated with those that oppressed the majority, those who grabbed our land without compensation. The missionaries were just as culpable – they came with the Bible in one hand but were supported by the soldiers.

Jomo Kenyatta is quoted as having said the following, “When the Missionaries arrived, the Africans had the **land** and the Missionaries had the Bible. They taught us how to pray with our eyes closed. When we opened them, they had the **land** and we had the Bible.”

The Democratic Republic of Congo (previously known as the Belgian Congo), Zimbabwe, formerly known as Southern Rhodesia, Zambia, formerly known as Northern Rhodesia, Mozambique and Maputo, formerly known as Portuguese Guinea and its oft-visited Lourenco Marques – and their capital cities are today as commonplace as the names of the present South African cities.

Of course, many of the conservative elements in society, the apartheid die-hards will never change their attitude towards the new ruling elite. These people with their laager mentality stay in areas where they would like to keep an apartheid-style laager such as at Orania and the like.

Then, we have another group of people whom one could classify as those with a “reluctance-to-change” (RC) factor. Many are ostensibly against the previous regime and many even claim to have been “*part of the struggle*”. However, when one scratches under the surface, a thick layer of conservatism is revealed.

We have to rid ourselves of the colonial names of the oppressors



**PE BECOMES GQE-BE-RHA**



## Cde Mda Mda – A National Treasure

Mr. Mda turns 98 in March this year. He is a South African treasure and an unparalleled orator. He suffers no fools, but is a charming and engaging opponent in terms of discussion and debate – Mr. Mda uses the ‘Queens language’ in a manner that would turn her biographers green with envy.

On the 4th of May 2019, I took some students to the Mthatha campus of Walter Sisulu University, for the launch of Mr. Mda’s book “Struggle and Hope - Reflections on the recent history of the Transkeian People”. The students were excited to get out of East London for a while, but none of them knew anything of Mr. Mda.

They spoke about their own social politics and ‘influencers’ all the way to the venue. Mr. Mda immediately had them sitting bolt-upright the minute he stepped up to the podium and said: “I am 96 and I have never voted, and I don’t think that I ever will.” Mr Mda was expressing his dismay at the relatively low political and historical IQ of South Africans. As he clearly stated: (paraphrasing) “The past is the past –

there is nothing we can do about it except try to understand it, to avoid making the same mistakes”.

On page 174 of his book, Mda writes: “Instead of attending to the issues afflicting the country, the powers that be are engaged in a vanity fair of celebration after celebration, extolling the virtues of countless ANC leaders. We are treated throughout the year to a nauseating chorus of self-congratulation and ANC achievements, viz, ‘sacrifices in the struggle’, ‘liberating the country’, ‘defeating apartheid’ etc. The monotonous theme of these sermons is that we are beholden to them and, therefore, must suffer their sins of commission and omission. If we are unhappy or discontented, we must not forget that apartheid was far worse. Talk of poor service delivery and corruption is disloyalty. They can do no wrong.”

Mark Fredericks  
2021/03/19



Cde Usuf Chikte, Thobeka Mda (daughter) and Cde Mda Mda at Cape Town launch of his book, *Struggle and Hope*



Cde Mda Mda with Phyllis Ntantala

19 February 2021

## AB AHLALI BASEM JONDOLO MOVEMENT SA PRESS STATEMENT

### COLLECTIVE READING OF THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO

**On the 21 February 1848, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels published the first edition of the Communist Manifesto. Progressive movements and organisations around the world are holding workshops on the Manifesto, and as part of this global project our movement will hold a political education workshop at the Frantz Fanon school at the eKhenana occupation in Durban from 21 February to 1 March.**

Our members in eKhenana have faced with brutal armed attacks from the state through evictions. In most cases these evictions were carried out by the city's Anti-Land Invasion Unit. They have also come under serious pressure from ANC thugs. On 22 December 2018, when the occupation was in its early stage, Senzo Gumede was murdered after he was threatened by the local ANC councillor and the taxi association.

Despite all this the comrades on the occupation have developed a democratically managed vegetable farm, as well as a poultry project, built a youth centre and a community hall, and built and established the Frantz Fanon Political School to enhance knowledge of Ubuhlalism and socialism. All of this has been planned, developed and run by the community. This is self-management. It is also important to note that in eKhenana there is no selling or renting of shacks. Land and housing, as well as food production, have been decommodified.

Fanon had a very clear understanding of political education. He argued that:

*To educate the masses politically does not mean, cannot mean making a political speech. What it means is to try, relentlessly and passionately, to teach the masses that everything depends on them; that if we stagnate it is their responsibility, and that if we go forward it is due to them too, that there is no such thing as a hero that will save them with his*

*magic hands, that there is no famous man who will take the responsibility for everything, but that the hero is the people themselves and the magic hands are finally only the hands of the people.*

In our movement we are clear that it is only by building the democratic power of the oppressed that the world can be humanized. Ubuhlalism is the philosophy that we developed in our struggle. It has carried us through fifteen years of struggle, and enabled us to organise many land occupations, win many victories and build a membership that now exceeds 80 000 people.

When our movement first started there were discussions about how Ubuhlalism, the philosophy of humanism, community and struggle that we had built, and the living politic that we had built as a form of praxis, could lead to something like a living communism, a democratic communism of the people, by the people and for the people, built from the ground of the occupations upwards and outwards.

Today our movement is no longer on its own. We have comrades around the world. The seeds that were used to start the planting by the co-operative that runs the farm on the eKhenana occupation were given to us by the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST), the Landless Workers' Movement in Brazil.

Our struggle has led us from the shacks of Durban to the world, and ubuhlalism – which has always held that land, wealth, cities, power and, indeed, the world, must be shared - is leading us into a ongoing engagement with communist ideas in conversation with comrades around the world.

Our struggle is against the colonial way of thinking that still means that we do not count as human beings – that we can be left to live like pigs in the mud and be murdered when we organise to defend our humanity. It is also against the political gangsterism of the ANC. And it is against capitalism.

Ubuhlalism, which draws a lot from African ideas and practices, has always said that land should not be bought and sold, and that it should be allocated on the basis of human need rather than private profit. This idea connects very well to communist thought. So does the view of Marx that communism is an expression of humanism at the global scale.

Theory does not lead to struggle. The insistence on human dignity in the face of oppression leads to struggle, and struggle leads to theory. At this point theory can change struggle and struggle can change theory.

In our movement we believe in building the democratic power of the oppressed, which is why we work to try and ensure that the people on the ground are able to engage in constant political discussion. We need to work together – to think together - to become more fully aware of the systems of oppression. This is revolutionary work.

The political education workshop that will run from Sunday will include performances by the Abahlali Choir, a discussion on Ubuhlalism, a discussion on the thought of Frantz Fanon and then a close and collective reading of the Communist Manifesto over several days. We have

an isiZulu translation of the Manifesto and we will be reading and discussing it in isiZulu.

Just as Ubuhlalism connects to communist ideas, it also connects us to thinking about political education in terms of Paulo Freire's theories, theories which have grounded the MST political school in Brazil, which a number of our comrades have attended. Our political education workshops are run on Freirean principles, principles that are very similar to the ideas that we developed about living learning as a part of Ubuhlalism.

Capitalism, which is always a racial system, allows a small elite to become rich while making the majority poor. It is an economic system that developed from slavery and colonialism. It continues to put private profit before the needs and dignity of the people. The struggle against the gangsterism in the ANC is a local and national struggle. But the struggle against capitalism has to be global. We need to ensure that we all are armed with the knowledge of how to deal with capitalism.

The great African leaders like Patrice Lumumba, Amilcar Cabral, Kwame Nkrumah, and then later Thomas Sankara, accepted the mission that confronted their generations. Every generation must do the same. We cannot rest until the working class and the poor in our society receive full emancipation. Economic emancipation cannot mean the replacement of one elite by another. It has to mean the end of poverty.

The close and collective reading of the Communist Manifesto over the coming week will happen on the ground where the people are, and where the people are in struggle. It will happen on a land occupation that is also a democratically and self-managed community, a community with elected leaders subject to the right of recall and where there are twice weekly meetings to discuss issues together. The land occupation is a commune.

It is often said that Marxism is an ideology that is too complicated for an ordinary person from the shacks. This is because those who are regarded as scholars are often detached from the people on the ground. They often want to think for the oppressed instead of humbling themselves to think with the oppressed. They fail to understand Marx's point that 'communism is the real movement that abolishes the present state of things'. Theory without struggle does not change anything. Struggle without theory can easily be co-opted or settle for local gains. Genuinely radical thought must be worked out in struggle, in the movement of the oppressed.

Comrade S'bu Zikode, a founding member of our movement and our elected President, often says, "We must break down the complicated politics so that even an old Gogo from the rural areas can understand". Theory must enable people to understand the world and their struggle better. It must never be used to make the people seem ignorant and to monopolise knowledge just like how land, cities, wealth and power are monopolised by a small elite under capitalism.

This workshop will take place at a very difficult time when our country is faced not with only the pandemic, but also with an economic crisis where the unemployment rate continues to rise. Many people have been retrenched and as a result many households are without a bread winner. We are in a state of social disaster.

We are urgently in need of a way to lift us out of this situation. The ANC is a mixture of political gangsters and neo-liberals. Both of these factions

are anti-poor, and can only make the poor even poorer. There has to be a democratic and radical alternative.

This is why we are embarking on a programme to learn and discuss together. We need to understand how the capitalist order operates so that one day we can, working with movements around the world, be able to overthrow it and build an economy and society that starts and ends with human dignity.

In South Africa the people that call themselves communists have been captured by the ANC. They have become part of the system of oppression. We do not see them on the ground and in struggle.

This is why a new communist politics has to be built from the ground up, and in struggle. We all need to be able to understand and analyse politics in the languages that we speak in ways that make sense to us and fit with our lives.

The programme for Sunday – which deals with Ubuhlalism, Frantz Fanon and radical pedagogy will run from 8:30 to 17:00. The programme from Monday to Sunday the following week will run from 8:30 to 15:00. The close reading and collective discussion of the Communist Manifesto will take place every day from Monday to Friday.

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**Land & Dignity!**

**Published in Solidarity**



*Now we maintain that in politics there can be no such thing as a compromise between oppressors and oppressed. There can be a compromise only when the contracting parties meet on a footing of equality. The so-called "Compromise" under the conditions of such gross inequality as between White ruler and Black oppressed could only be tantamount to a capitulation or a political "sell-out".*

*The only compromise possible between a wolf and a lamb must be at the expense of some vital limb. And that is not the end of it. The lamb, thus incapacitated, lies helpless before the inevitable onslaught that must follow. For, with his appetite whetted by the first morsel, the wolf will not be satisfied till he has swallowed the whole of his victim.*

**IB Tabata** – *"The Awakening of a People" March 1950*

## ***From the Archives – TLSA Educational Journal, June 1986.***

### ***"On Negotiations – the Road Back"***

*"Almal het gedog dat  
apartheid on the way out is, en hier  
het ons hom weer in so 'n nuwe  
gedaante, met 'n splinternuwe  
army-jas aan"*

**Breyten Breytenbach**

**At this stage there can be no doubt in the minds of men and women that the Botha government has become disenchanted with the very plans it has proposed to 'normalise' conditions in a turbulent South Africa. In his address to the President's Council in May, Mr Botha made it clear that he would deal with the 'radicals' and that, if necessary, the full might of the army would be used to bring 'order' to South Africa. Even while he said that, his armed units were planning their aggressive military invasion of Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe; the police were beating up school children in many parts of the country; breakdown in location control was spreading to the 'homelands', and unemployment, starvation and homelessness were driving thousands more to the brink of utter destitution.**

The Minister of Education and Training – or of Bantuised schooling to give it its plain title – declared in Natal that the formation of national states – euphemism for rural labour reservoirs – was an 'irreversible step'. At the same time he, and other government spokespersons, made it clear

that the 'racial' integration of schools would never be allowed. As noteworthy has been the effect of the announcement that pass laws and pass law arrests have been stopped. So relentlessly has the ruling class pursued the regimentation of labour during the past 100 years – 1986 is the centenary



year of Johannesburg, the gold mining capital – that the removal of the pass laws has produced very little visible effect on the country. Other laws continue just as effectively to maintain the *status quo*.

On May 1 this year, more than 1.5 million workers stayed at home. This alone gave notice of the immense growth of power among the oppressed in a relatively short time. All the violence that there was on that day was triggered off by the police and army units piling into groups of workers at the May Day meetings. On the other hand, the Heunis Constitutional Factory has produced its Regional Services Councils and hastily contrived new-style provincial administrations, both of which have the built-in capacity to fail in an economy racked by acute paralysis. These two events also indicate the changing balance of power between labour and capital in South Africa.

It is against this general background that *negotiation* has become a word bandied about with as much freedom and regularity as rugby and similar magical terms. What, in fact, is this negotiation? For that section of the ruling class sheltering behind the army and the national party it means reaching an agreement by which the oppressed accepts the multi-national structures with their thirteen racist oppressive machineries called parliaments and all the rest of the panoply of laws to buttress apartheid by which the rulers deny all but the 4.5 million “whites” full citizenship and maintain iron-fisted total control over the boer-republic and its satellite labour reservoirs. To another section of the ruling class it means something little different. Perhaps a discriminatory law or two fewer, with concessions that can postpone the granting of fundamental rights, and a bigger and more bogus parliament with Bills of Rights *ad nauseum*, but no common citizenship in an undivided, non-racist South Africa. A South Africa where international capital can peacefully exploit the human and material wealth of the country, yes – much as it has done

before – and place the controls in the hands of a white minority backed up by a black minority bought over with a greater stake in the existing order. And the overwhelming majority will wait in vain for their rightful share in the wealth they produce and their right to peace and the enjoyment of life. They will continue to wallow in what has been described as a ‘sodden mass of misery’ in a locationised society.

Of democracy, the potential negotiators know nothing, they speak nothing, nor will they hear of it. As Simon Brand has bluntly put it: South Africa cannot afford democracy. Negotiations is the mouth-to-mouth resuscitation of the old order to a new guise, fitted perhaps with new educational, political and economic pace-makers controlled by the military to keep South Africa alive. Negotiation will, we repeat, studiously ignore the two central issues on which the liberation of South Africa turns: the extension of full citizenship rights to all South Africans in a non-racial, undivided country and the elimination of poverty and exploitation.

And what of the negotiators?

Much of the political blabbermouthing has involved the hapless person of Nelson Mandela, languishing in jail – under life imprisonment – for his role in the struggle for democracy. As this editorial is being written an Eminent Persons Group (EPG) of the dilapidated British Empire has been moving between the ANC executive, settled in Lusaka for the purpose, and various groups in South Africa. Its avowed purpose is to negotiate a peaceful settlement in South Africa. The first of the visitors to Lusaka, however, was Prof. H.W. van der Merwe of the centre for Inter-Group Studies based at UCT. He proudly claimed that he was warmly welcomed in Lusaka with the words: “*Jy is mos een van ons!*” He was followed by Piet Muller of *Beeld* newspaper. Big Business led by Gavin Relly of Anglo-American, van Zyl Slabbert of the Progressive Federal Party (PFP), Enos Mabuza and a 21-man party from KaNgwane, and several other delegations of students, religious groups and political people have beaten the trail to

Lusaka. Helen Suzman of the PFP has paid yet another visit to Nelson Mandela in Pollsmoor. And they all assure the world that the ANC is ready to negotiate, ready to sit down with Botha at a National Convention to reach an agreeable settlement. Other observers comment that the economic pressure through disinvestment, trade boycotts, internal strikes and the blocking of bank loans, armed propaganda conducted by means of selected military strikes and the process of making the country ungovernable are intended *primarily* to make the bargaining power of the ANC match that of the beleaguered Botha, in the effort to prevent civil war and revolution which might destroy the country's physical means of production – the mines, factories, farms and transport, the necessary infrastructure and leave no more than smouldering rubble and millions of dead. Yet, if the illusion is being created that the release of Nelson Mandela and negotiation can initiate a process to put South Africa on the road to democracy, the negotiators have lots of guesses coming their way. Negotiations, or the road to neo-colonialism – the road back to imperialist domination and betrayal of the mass of workers and the rural poor – means a step back, back into an unwanted past. On the South African rulers' side, Botha has re-emphasised that his faction does not want any international interference. On its return to London shortly before the bombing of Gaborone-Harare-Lusaka the EPG laid down for negotiation conditions surprisingly similar to those peripheral demands being made by populist organisations within South Africa. From an earlier meeting arranged by businessmen and conservative politicians in London the ANC withdrew at the last minute, perceiving the powerful non-collaboration, anti-negotiation current among the unfranchised, and AZAPO was prevented from attending (to which it had agreed!) by the refusal of a passport to its president. The SA Foundation and Jan Steyn, seemingly contrary to the Botha stance, has expanded offices in many more countries to solicit support for their initiatives and Prof van der Merwe has arranged an internal campaign to

secure 'negotiation and mediation in community and political conflict' by way of a National Conference to be held in July of this year. And so, once again the oppressed find themselves with so many friends of this kind that they certainly do not need any enemies.

Against the background of poverty, hunger, endemic unemployment, dreary social repression, rampant disease, crisis-ridden schools and a sense of hopelessness the masses have struggled to organise, organised to struggle. They have evolved *their own* political and economic vision of a new South Africa, free of the horrors of 'race', colour and sex discrimination, free of oppression and exploitation, free of institutionalised violence, of inhumanity and the kind of evil misanthropy that makes hordes of 'men' whip schoolchildren as no civilised or even barbarous group has ever done in all history. *That* South Africa, *these* demands, *those* visions are *not negotiable*. We demand nothing less than full democratic rights in an undivided nonracial South Africa. Such a South Africa cannot be negotiated with the Bothas, Rellys, Slabberts, Suzmans, Treurnichts, Buthelezi, Mabuzas, the Tutus and the Boesaks and others of their ilk.

From the ranks of the oppressed it is all too plain that negotiation is collaboration with the machinery that is being contrived to regenerate a South Africa – free of violence, maybe – fit for a new round of exploitation. Whether that collaboration occurs at international level with the USA, the pedlars of constructive engagement, the EPG and the émigré leadership, a Kaunda (Imperialism's longest serving broker), or a peripatetic van Zyl Slabbert or at a national level with Reddys, Buthelezi, Mangopes, Hendrickses, or Mofutsunyanes and others of similar ilk, it is unacceptable to the oppressed masses of South Africa.

*Negotiation* is the route map for the way back. Our road is forward. The liberatory movement now more than ever needs to close its ranks and assert the priority of *its* plans for the democratisation of South Africa over the schemes of the negotiators.

Phyllis Ntantala Jordan on negotiations:

*In a searing comment, Phyllis Ntantala (mother of former ANC stalwart, Pallo Jordan) had the following to say: "The Agreement cobbled by the South African regime and the ANC at Kempton Park is one of the biggest frauds that was ever sold to a people . . . It was agreed to give the reins of power to the ANC on condition that . . . the Economic Structure was left intact. This meant that besides the conglomerates that own the wealth of South Africa, the 11% of South Africans would still control 80% of the economy.*

*From NTANTALA, PHYLLIS: (2003) Mistakes and Miscalculations: The Agreement, (unpublished article)*

**IB Tabata – In a letter to President Kwame Nkrumah, 1964**

... Our people suffered from a slave mentality which was a barrier to all progress. Slaves cannot conduct a protracted struggle against their masters until they begin to see themselves as human beings. In our approach to this problem we had to show them that without their consent and participation it was not possible for the master race to keep them in bondage, and that they, particularly the black intellectuals, were the necessary cogs in the machinery for their own oppression. It was out of this that arose the policy of non-collaboration.

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