



SAtoday



A WEEKLY NEWSLETTER FROM HELEN ZILLE

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Welcome to the latest edition of **SA Today**, the weekly newsletter from the Leader of the Democratic Alliance, Helen Zille.

SA Today
Helen Zille, DA Leader

We must honour Mandela by upholding his values

Today we join the rest of the world in wishing Nelson Mandela a happy 92nd birthday. Many will celebrate his legacy by devoting 67 minutes of their time to serving others.

Former President Mandela sacrificed a great deal during his life in service to all South Africans. We should honour his example every day by striving to do the same. And we should be mindful that service in South Africa is grounded in values of selflessness, integrity, non-racialism and freedom for all under the law.

While Nelson Mandela symbolises these values, the ANC has long ceased to do so.

Selflessness? Not when R1,5 billion of taxpayers' money is spent on cars, ministerial stays in five-star hotels, World Cup tickets, self-congratulatory advertising and lavish parties.

Integrity? Not when senior ANC politicians can avoid justice by manipulating institutions of state and undermining their independence.

Non-racialism? Not when ANC youth leaders describe anything they oppose as a "white tendency" and sing about killing 'boers' without rebuke from the party leadership.

Freedom for all under the law? Not when there is one law for ANC leaders and another for their political opponents.

The great irony is that the more the ANC diverges from Nelson Mandela's vision, the more the ANC seeks to own it.

Today, a rally is being held in Mvezo village to honour Nelson Mandela in his

place of birth.

The ANC issued a press release about this rally which reveals its lack of respect for the essence of Madiba's legacy. The ANC press release announces that the event is *"organised jointly by Parliament and Government"* and that it is *"aimed at celebrating the noble values and virtues that Madiba embodies."*

The drafters of the ANC press release ironically demonstrate just how far that party has strayed from Nelson Mandela's legacy. They reveal the ANC's conflation of the party and the state. Parliament does not belong to the ANC. But it is clearly convenient for the ANC to brand the rally as its own, while Parliament and the National Government pay. It is, in essence, an ANC event being funded by the taxpayer (despite a slot for *"messages of support from political parties"*). Six ANC leaders are on the programme, including Jacob Zuma who will give the keynote address.

This rally is the most recent example of the ANC's determination to link Jacob Zuma and Nelson Mandela in the public mind. Another was the scheduling of Zuma's State of the Nation Address this year on the date of Mandela's release from prison. The occasion was themed 'Celebrate the legacy of Mandela - Contribute to Nation-Building'. And who can forget the sight of a frail-looking Madiba being rolled onto stage at the ANC's final election rally in 2009?

The ANC is doing all it can to create the illusion that Jacob Zuma is the custodian of Madiba's legacy.

He is not.

We must remember that former President Nelson Mandela was a constitutionalist. He believed, in his own words, that the Constitution was a *"sacred covenant"*. As he said when our interim Constitution was adopted:

"We enter into a covenant that we shall build a society in which all South Africans, both black and white, will be able to walk tall, without any fear in their hearts, assured of their inalienable right to human dignity - a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world."

Like all true democrats, Mandela knew that real liberation requires the powerful to be bound by a constitution that limits their power. Without his leadership, our nation's founding compact - which puts power in the hands of the people instead of the politicians - would never have emerged.

Jacob Zuma and his clique on the other hand believe that liberation means unfettered power for the ruling party to impose its will. As ANC Chief Whip Mathole Motshekga said earlier this year, *"Jacob Zuma has a mandate from 11 million people, so he can do what he likes."* More and more, elements in the ANC are openly attacking this *"sacred covenant"* as they look for a scapegoat to blame for their own delivery failures. Their approach scorns the legacy of Nelson Mandela.

A commitment to the Constitution is the key difference between the ANC today and the ANC under Nelson Mandela. It is also what distinguishes free and prosperous societies from those that are not.

Free and prosperous societies around the world don't have much in common. Some cover huge geographic areas, others are small principalities. Some are islands, others are land-locked. Some are ethnically diverse and others are not. Some were colonisers and others were colonised.

But, whatever their differences, all free and prosperous societies are

constitutional democracies. They are open, opportunity societies where people are free to be who they want to be and free to become the best they can be. This was the society Mandela described from the dock in 1964:

"I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."

Nelson Mandela's grandson Mandla Mandela MP has said: *"the legacy of Madiba belongs to his family first and to the ANC."*

I disagree. The ANC does not own Mandela. The ANC gave up its claim to Mandela's legacy when it diverged from the values he cherished. Instead, Mandela's legacy belongs to all those people in South Africa, from all backgrounds, who still value selflessness, integrity, non-racialism and freedom for all under the law.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Helen Zille".

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