



WE ARE AFRIKANS, PERIOD!

It appears like a caucused position among journalists. The mainstream media has consistently described Sarah Khumalo as “the first black African woman” to summit Mount Everest.



Like a scratched record, every news reader talks about “the first black African.....”

Imagine the following description: Theresa May is the second white European to become the British Prime Minister, after the first white European woman, Margaret Thatcher. That sounds odd, right? Yes. Do we ever see the need to put a pronoun before European? Have you ever heard of anything like Frank Bruno is the first black European to fight Gerrie Coetzee? Ridiculous!

As much as we all know that Europeans are Europeans and they are white, we also know that Afrikans are Afrikans and they are black. Pan Africanist revolutionary leader Kwame Ture offered a helpful description in this regard. “We are tired of being described as African American, or African Caribbean. We are Africans, period! And in case you were wondering who is an Afri-

can, by African we mean those who look like us.”

Words are powerful. Words are not neutral. They have meaning. This is why we should be careful in how words are used. In the context of the anti-colonial struggle, which AZAPO is waging, we should always remember that the biggest struggle is the struggle against forgetting. Over the passage of time, those who control the tools of indoctrination, such as the media and even formal education, use language to re-write history and shape our thoughts according to their preferred narrative.

In their early days of their arrival, the Europeans referred to themselves as settlers, or voortrekkers. Later they referred to themselves as Europeans and referred to Afrikans as non-Europeans. They then called themselves whites. Now that they have realised the need to exploit Afrika and to give us a false belief that they are loyal to the Afrikan continent, they prefer to be called Afrikans. Because everybody who is in Afrika has become known as Afrikan, the real Afrikan must have a new label - black Afrikan.

It does not end there. Because of their cultural dominance, white people have convinced many of us that insisting on referring to Black people as the only Afrikan people is racist. And hence everybody is now an Afrikan.

It gets more complicated. The primary objective of the liberation movement – AZAPO, the Pan Africanist

Congress of Azania (PAC) and the African National Congress (ANC) – was the return of the land from the European land thieves and their descendants to the Afrikan people. But with the corruption of the language, there are people who say categorisation of the people as Afrikans and non-Afrikans is racist and divisive.

In fact, the Freedom Charter, which was adopted by the ANC in 1955, which triggered the split by Africanists led by Professor Mangaliso Sobukwe to form the PAC, goes a step further. The Freedom Charter says the land shall belong to all those who work it. Essentially, the Afrikan who was dispossessed of the land by the European settlers has no special claim to the land, according to the Freedom Charter doctrine. This is why exponents of the Freedom Charter such as Terror Lekota repeatedly ask: “When you say you are going to expropriate land and give it to our people, who are these people who will lose land? And who are your people to whom land shall be given?”

Those who control tools of indoctrination have not only convinced a section of the liberation movement of the inappropriateness of describing Afrikans as Afrikans but are steadily making progress into making many people doubt the appropriateness of some of the remedial actions designed to deal with the legacy of colonialism and apartheid such as Black Economic Empowerment (BEE), Employment Equity (EE) and Affirmative Action (AA). Increasingly, Affirmative Action and Employment Equity are seen as racism in reverse. There is no acknowledgement of the past and the fact that Afrikans were robbed of their land and also denied economic opportunities that were made available to white people. Apologists of colonialism and apartheid hype up the merit aspects and totally ignore the reality that Afrikans and white people are not starting from the same position.

We should always remember that ours is a struggle against colonialism and for the repossession of the land from European settlers. We should resist the temptation of politically ambiguous words designed to foster artificial unity between Black people and white people with the sole purpose of diluting our quest to attain the land and economic liberation as

Black people. That is why we should be Black Conscious. This would require that we actively expose the fake rainbow diet that we are being fed by those who would like us to believe that 27 April 1994 marked the end of our political oppression and economic exploitation.



Words are powerful. If you hunt a rabbit and bring it home, and give it to your daughter as a pet, she would be traumatised when one day you slaughter the rabbit for a meal. Although we should aspire to live in a country that has attained racial reconciliation, we should not pretend that we are not different people, with different fears and aspirations. We are not black Afrikans, we are just Afrikans!

THE MYTH OF THE REDUCTION OF MINISTRIES

President Ramaphosa stuck to his promise and reduced the Ministries from 36 to 28. He deserves a thumbs-up for keeping his promise on that one. The promise was based on the claim that the reduction would help the country save money that could be used on more important areas towards developing South Africa.

For the record, former President Thabo Mbeki had 26 Ministers and 10 Deputy Ministers in his second Cabinet in 2004. Ramaphosa had 36 Ministers and 34 Deputy Ministers, which he inherited from Jacob Zuma. If you include Ramaphosa and his Deputy David Mabuza, that means you had 72 members in the national executive. For the 2018/19 financial year, Mabuza earned R2.8 million per year, while each

Minister earned R2.4 million and R1.97 million for each Deputy Minister. That adds up to R156.5 million that was drained by the national executive from the fiscus on salaries alone.



If you consider 26+10 Mbeki had in his second Cabinet, Ramaphosa only made a shy gesture cut, which now stands at 28+34. After his much-talked about reduction, the number of Deputy Ministers remains the same at 34. AZAPO is therefore adamant that this is not a cut but a scratch. There is really not much to be excited and shout about from the rooftops of the ruling elite's mansions.

We need to go further and evaluate how the reduction promise was implemented. The immediate striking thing is that the reduction was done mainly through the merging of some Ministries like, for instance, Higher Education and Science & Technology. There should still be some technical explanation that should follow because the merging of Ministries is not necessarily the same as merging Government Departments.

For instance, it is possible to merge the Ministries of Higher Education and Basic Education and still maintain the two Departmental streams under different Directors-General (DGs) with some minor restructuring here and there where there might be duplications in those Departments. While we know that, constitutionally speaking, Deputy Ministers are not part of Cabinet, but their increase does have structural and budgetary implications.

The mergers, which can hardly be viewed as serious reduction, raise eyebrows when it comes to the Ministries of Higher Education and Science & Technology. The reason is that the departmental stream of Sci-

ence and Technology developed in the womb of the then Department of Arts and Culture in the 1990s. The 1996 White Paper on Science and Technology, plus the 2002 National Research and Development Strategy strengthened the national paradigm that South Africa had to follow the development path of shifting from a mineral resources-based economy to a knowledge-based one.

The thinking above led to a move where Science & Technology was freed from the Department of Arts and Culture once it was effectively incubated. In 2004 a stand-alone Department of Science & Technology was established under the leadership of Minister Mosibudi Mangena, who was AZAPO President at the same time. There was full appreciation of the fact that Science & Technology was a crosscutting Department, that could not be expected to achieve its mission and focus if it was submerged under another and bigger Department.

We have to explain that we are not making a case for the Department of Science and Technology, but merely examining the strength of the reasoning of some of the mergers in the light of what we were told as a nation. We say this knowing that bundling and unbundling is a perpetual yoyo toy of the ruling party. They seem to specialise in blowing dust into the house and then promise to sweep the dust after the citizens have suffered and died from the hazardous effects of the dust.

The nation is still waiting for the promised unbundling of Eskom. Of course, that does not mean the unbundling, which may amount to the privatisation of Eskom, is welcome. This point is made to show that there was a time when the nation was told the solution was the bundling of Eskom. And now the nation is told the solution to the bundling is the unbundling. Who can forget the bundling, and unbundling of the universities at a huge waste of resources and time of the nation?

In a nutshell, AZAPO is not excited by the mergers because they are not what the nation was told they would be. Far from being a reduction, they are mergers that achieve nothing tangible in terms of saving the purse of the nation.

The citizens should never forget that the increase in the ministries was never done to address the developmental changes of the country. The increase happened because the ruling party leaders and their factions wanted to deliver patronage to their factional mercenaries. The money of the taxpayers was used to thank those who fought on the side of the winning faction. Redundant ministries were created to give employment to factional “chiefs”.

Despite his initial good intentions, Ramaphosa was confronted by the same need to thank those who fought on the side of his faction. That is the reason why his reduction amounted to mergers that maintained the status quo he had promised to correct.

AZAPO has always maintained that the structural duplication that requires urgent attention is the abolition of Provincial Governments where substantial saving would take place. Also, expertise would be redirected to the Local Government where they are needed most. Azanians should never forget that the Provincial Governments were also created to appease the white minority interests and keep the enemy and its puppets safe in their racist and apartheid jobs, which had become irrelevant and repugnant in a constitutional democracy.

ON THE MEND

The AZAPO Standing Committee met immediately after the announcement of the 2019 Election Results to reflect on the organisation’s performance. The Provinces, Regions and Branches were also directed to meet and do a critical appraisal of the organisation’s performance.

On 6-9 June 2019 AZAPO will convene its Central Committee session where all its Structures will meet and chart the way forward. An undertaking has been made that this will be a gloves-off session where difficult questions will be asked and answered.

The foremost question that arises from the reflections is why it is that Black Consciousness is gaining popularity and momentum, yet this does not translate into votes for AZAPO? BC’s ascendancy in all spheres of society dismisses the malicious doubt of the rele-

vance of BC. There is also no doubt where the seeds of the BC come from. It is the hard work of AZAPO and the Black Consciousness Movement over the decades of the liberation struggle. Significantly, such hard work and contributions came at a high price and sacrifice to the members of the BCM. Some lost their lives and homes, while others found it difficult to practice and grow their careers by reason of their association with AZAPO.

Many more reflective questions are being asked by the members. Is the problem with the strategies of AZAPO in the era of electoral democracy? Could it be that AZAPO needs to reconfigure itself from a liberation movement organ into a modern parliamentary party? What about abandoning parliamentary politics and concentrating on the political, cultural and spiritual development of the Azanian people? There are those Comrades who say all the mentioned things cannot happen if AZAPO does not ascend to State power, because you need that power and resources to realise the aspirations of Black people and ensure that Biko and millions others did not die in vain.

A more radical call has come from the women and young people who push for a takeover by women and young people into the leadership of AZAPO. Women worry that the last time women were Presidents in the BCM was Cde Winnie Kgwere in the first leadership of BPC in 1972, and Cde Nombulelo Kobus (now Mkefa) in the 1979 AZAPO leadership. They say AZAPO needs youthful energy and drive. They have come to believe that the leadership is conservative and not brave enough to try new and fresh ideas. Some Comrades call the bluff of young people and ask what have they been waiting for all along? Do you really have to be in the leadership of a mass organisation to do the right thing?

The Central Committee will be the one to answer these difficult questions.

