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## BLACK SKIN, WHITE SOUL: OPPOSITION PARTIES ON THE PAYROLL OF WHITE DONORS

The cat is out of the bag. The secret is out. Democratic Alliance leader John Steenhuisen has threatened parties refusing to join his coalition against the ruling party with withdrawal of funding from the so-called donors.

What does this mean? It means there are parties that are puppets of the propertied class of South Africa. No price for guessing that the colour of the propertied class is white. It means that there are parties that are a creation of big business in South Africa whose main reason for existence is to create a façade of opposition but that are in reality an extension of the interests of big capital in the country.



Even before the dawn of democracy, big business had realised that apartheid as a political system was a burden to the economic growth of the country, but more specifically to the growth of capitalism. Apartheid was just too expensive to maintain and undermined capitalism in South Africa. At some stage, Afrikans, who are the majority of the population, were not allowed to buy certain types of alcohol. Apartheid meant that white

businesses could not operate in major Black areas such as Soweto, for instance.

The captains of industry, who were white, realised that apartheid should be removed in order for capitalism to thrive. And this worked. The property market in the former white suburbs experienced phenomenal growth when the emerging Black middle class were allowed to buy houses in the former whites only areas. White businesses moved into the Black townships such as Soweto, Thembisa and Mamelodi to the detriment of Black business. Suddenly there were malls all over the country in areas populated by Black people. Even the former bantustans were not spared of the invasion of white business.

Now that the white tribe had found a working formula to protect white business, they needed to create a political system that will ensure that their economic interests were secured. They worked behind the scenes to create a supreme Constitution that will have more powers than the elected parliament. Through their tools of indoctrination such as the media and their foot soldiers in the NGO space, they sold us the concept of a constitutional democracy. We were all excited as we were told that we had the best Constitution in the world.

Never mind that the Constitution did not deliver the basic demand of the liberation struggle, the transfer of the land to those who had lost it during colonial conquest and the transfer of the economy and the wealth of the country to the majority. In fact, the Constitution legalised the theft of land in that it assured the private ownership of the land and wealth that had been acquired through a system that had been universally condemned as a crime against humanity. We glossed over the real issues and only focused on the vote.

The defenders of white privileges did not rest. They knew that a white government would not be acceptable in “post-apartheid” South Africa given our history. The plan would be to tame the section of the liberation movement and transform them into advocates of national reconciliation whose primary objective would be to build a “rainbow nation.” The Black government would continue with the program of the previous government of defending the status quo, the current economic ownership patterns.



The white tribe did not mind playing opposition politics for as long as they were assured that the current ruling party remained in power. But they can sense that the ruling party is losing its grip on power, and they are not sure what will happen after the 2024 national elections. They have decided that there should be a coalition of removing the ruling party. They are now unmasking the veil of secrecy on parties that have Black faces but that are puppets of the white establishment. The message is simple: you either join the coalition against the ruling party or your funding will be stopped.

This blatant blackmailing of some political parties that are led by non-whites helps us to understand the mystery of why AZAPO in particular, with its rich political heritage, does not get funding from corporate South Africa. AZAPO has been in the trenches for our liberation for decades. It has a clear political program towards the attainment of total liberation and the re-possession of the land and the wealth to the majority of the people. But the party does not get any funding. This has had a very negative impact on its electoral prospects.

But parties that are off-shoots from the DA get mil-

lions of rands in funding. It is clear what is happening. The defenders of white privileges are acutely aware that the Black majority would not readily support a white party given the fresh wounds of apartheid that have not yet healed. However, if there is a plethora of parties that are led by non-whites, they may offer what appears to be more choices to the Black vote, thus undermining the gains of the national democratic revolution.

Ironically, the DA’s call of a coalition against the ruling party paints the ruling party in glory in that it makes the ruling party revolutionary. But the ruling party’s performance in government suggests otherwise. Whites have thrived under the rule of the ruling party. South Africa has become the most unequal society under the current regime.

Black people must realise that they are on their own. AZAPO is unapologetic about advancing the aspirations and interests of Black people. AZAPO may not get financial support from the liberals but that is the genesis of AZAPO’s independence. The strength of AZAPO is found in the support it should get from Black people. The writing is on the wall. Black people should rally behind AZAPO, or they will continue to be victims of disguised oppression perpetrated by non-whites on behalf of white people.

## INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES ARE NOT THE SOLUTION FOR POLITICAL ACCOUNTABILITY

President Cyril Ramaphosa has signed into law the Electoral Amendment Bill that enables independent candidates to contest national and provincial elections.

The changes in the Electoral Act were a result of a Constitutional Court challenge after some NGOs argued that the current law was unconstitutional in that it only allowed political parties to contest national and provincial elections and not independent candidates.

What is clear is that an increasing number of people has been losing confidence in the political system of the country. More and more people are beginning to disengage from the electoral system. In the last local government elections in 2021, only 45% of the registered voters cast their votes. The voter turnout drops

to about 30% if non-registered voters are taken into account.

Some analysts have argued that the reason more and more people are staying away from the polls is that they are losing faith in political parties as they believe that most politicians only care about themselves and not the average voter. Because of this, some people believe that the panacea of this ill would be to move away from political parties and get independent candidates from communities to stand for elections at both national and provincial level.



The argument has some merit. For instance, in a particular community, a political party may field a party candidate who is highly compromised but who is popular within his party. The community might have a more credible candidate who they believe can best represent the interests of the community without tying them to the party-political issues.

The option of independent candidates may work at local community level where the issues are really about the provision of water, electricity, roads, refuse removal and other basic services. There can be consensus that the majority of local residents would agree that these services should be provided to all residents. These are not policy issues.

But at national level, things may be more complicated. For example, one political party may campaign on the introduction of the National Health Insurance (NHI) and a host of other policy related issues. These issues will be clearly articulated in the election manifesto of

a political party. But how will voters evaluate an individual candidate? Once this individual is voted into parliament, where does he or she get the mandate to vote in favour or against a particular motion in parliament?

With regards to political parties, they hold national congresses where their members agree on policies that the party should advance. When the parties are in parliament, members of the party have a party caucus where decisions are taken on how to vote on a particular issue. There are rules on how decisions are taken in political parties.

But independent candidates will be on their own in Parliament. Once they are voted into parliament, how do they get the mandate of those who voted for them to support or reject a motion in the House?

The new Electoral Act may be peddled as a solution to enhancing democracy, but it may actually achieve the opposite. It may create politicians who are accountable to no one. It may also have unintended consequences. The country has not fully dealt with the demon of tribalism. Many independent candidates may unwittingly revive regional and by extension, tribal affinities in their campaigns at community level.

The independent candidates may further fragment the national politics, thus undermining the project of building a united nation.

The new electoral law may allow independent candidates to contest but that may not be the solution to enhance democracy and get accountability from elected public representatives. As imperfect as they are, political parties appear to be better placed for the promotion of accountability than independent candidates. But time will tell.

## BC STALWART BOKWE MAFUNA IS FINALLY HONOURED

AZAPO Voice congratulates Black Consciousness stalwart on his honour to be bestowed the Order of Ikhamanga by the President of South Africa in recognition of his excellent contribution to journalism and political activism.

A statement released by the Presidency stated: "His

work is a perfect example of the intersection between journalism and scholarship on the liberation struggle.”

Mafuna is arguably one of the most unsung heroes of our liberation struggle. Mafuna was a journalist working for the liberal Rand Daily Mail in the early 1970s. On one occasion, he was on an assignment for the newspaper working with Patrick Lawrence covering a South African Students Organisation (SASO) conference in Hammanskraal.



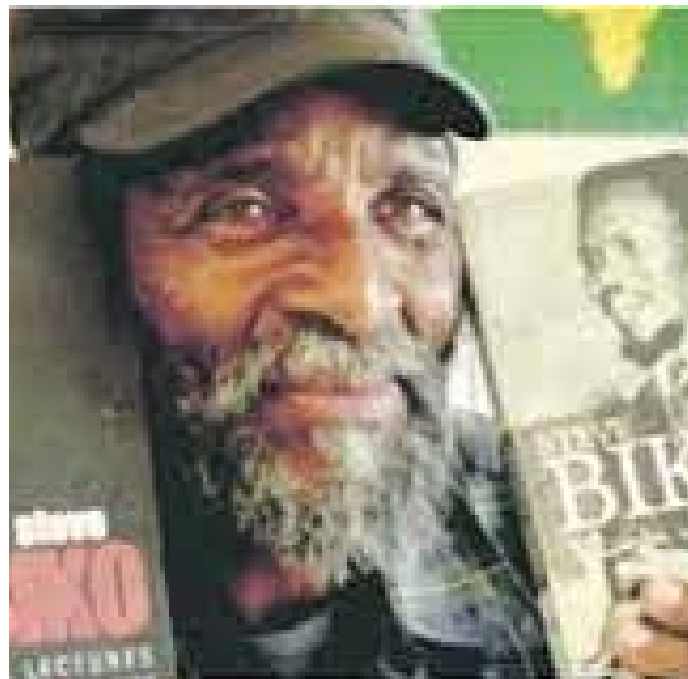
SASO conference delegates protested to Lawrence who had referred to Black people as non-whites in his reporting. Delegates wanted Lawrence to be ejected from the conference, but Bantu Biko intervened. He spoke to Lawrence and there was an understanding that the correct term for Blacks is not non-white. Biko pleaded with the delegates that there was no need to expel Lawrence from the conference as the matter has been explained to him.

However, the following report that Lawrence had written still referred to Blacks as non-whites. The delegates were outraged and Biko washed off his hands on the matter. Lawrence was ejected from the conference. Mafuna resigned on the spot and became a conference delegate. He was protesting against the white arrogance of referring to Blacks as non-whites.

Since then Mafuna worked closely with BC leaders such as Ranwedzi Nengwekhulu and Mosibudi

Mangena in advancing the cause of liberation.

For Mafuna and his generation, it was important for Black people to be referred to as Black people and not non-whites because the latter meant that they did not exist on their own but could only be described in terms of what they are not. The description of being Black was the first step towards liberation. That is why Mafuna sacrificed his career as a journalist. There was no price he was not prepared to pay for our liberation. He deserves the honour.



AZAPO Voice also pays special homage to former BPC leader Cde Moki Bonisile Cekisani for receiving the Order of Luthuli in silver.

In a statement announcing the honour, the Presidency said Cekisani was being honoured "for making a significant difference in our society by providing an indispensable bridge between the struggle for liberation and post-apartheid community development."