



ANC Whip

The bi-monthly newsletter of the ANC Caucus

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Politics and religion in SA

Throughout its 97 years of existence, the African National Congress has always celebrated and supported diverse beliefs in its broad membership and support base. The history of the ANC and the church in South Africa is inseparable. The ANC derived its moral vision and values from the church and other spiritual sources. The interactions amongst political activists, church and cultural leaders gave birth to the ANC and its moral vision. These church leaders included missionary, independent and indigenous African faith leaders. Our icon and founding President of the democratic Republic of South Africa uTata Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela traces the relationship between the ANC and the Church to the 1870s when the Ethiopian Church Movement was formed as a response to the rapid land dispossession from the 1800s. The African Clergy sought to free themselves from the fetters of the missionaries by establishing African Independent Churches that came to be known as Ethiopian Churches. The leaders and products of these churches were among the founders of the various Native Congresses which were formed during the first decade of the twentieth century. These congresses culminated in the formation of the South African Native Congress (SANNAC) in 1912 which was renamed the

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African National Congress (ANC) in 1923.

It is in this sense that uTata Nelson Mandela traces the seeds of the formation of the ANC to the Ethiopian Movement.

The founders of the Congress Movement also equally received spiritual support and guidance from Zionist and Apostolic churches founded during the beginning of the twentieth century.

All major religions including Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Rastafarianism, etc, have their saints or icons.

In the ANC we also have leaders who are saints or icons.

The founding President of the ANC, Dr John Langalibalele Dube was a Priest and self-confessed Ethiopian Christian who was profoundly influenced by the African American leader Booker T Washington. Reverend Henry Reed Ngacayiya, the first Chaplain General of the ANC and Charlotte Many-Maxeke, a lay preacher in the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, were amongst the founders of the ANC.

In 1906, Sefako M. Makgatho, who became President of the ANC in 1917, founded the United Native Congress Church.

When agreement was reached to form the ANC in 1912, the founders spontaneously sang “God of truth

fulfill your promise (Lizalise indinga lakho Thixo Nkosi wenyano)”. The ANC National Anthem, which was composed by Reverend Enoch Sontonga and is shared with other countries in Southern Africa, is a prayer.

The historical association of the ANC and the church cannot be doubted and so are the roots of the ANC moral vision in the Church. One of stalwarts for liberation and freedom, Oliver Tambo captured this association of the ANC and the church in the following remarkable words:

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It is this historical association that enabled the church to contribute to the development of the ANC moral vision and values. Addressing the National Presidential Religious Summit in November last year, President Jacob Zuma called on faith communities to structure themselves in all Provinces so as to be inclusive, service-oriented partners with government.

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The President openly embraced religious faith and proceeded to invite faith communities to join hand with the government in its sense of urgency in tackling service delivery issues that have been prioritized.

The introduction of the National Interfaith Leaders Council (NILC) is one of the offshoots of this historical relation between the ANC and the religious sector.

Its formation follows a long process of consultation, which culminated with religious leaders and workers from all Provinces meeting at O.R Tambo International Airport on 27 July 2009 to adopt a motion to pave way for its formal foundation. This was in response to the call by President Zuma to the religious community to partner with Government to establish a cohesive and caring society including an enabling environment for sustainable development.

The NILC met again on 10 August 2009 to prepare for a meeting with the President.

At the meeting between the President and NILC delegation at the Union Buildings on 11 August 2009, the President welcomed the formation of the NILC and was very

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pleased with the appropriation of the interfaith concept as it denotes inclusivity and co-operation amongst the people of faith.

Religious leaders also agreed to continue to mobilize all the faith-based groups and communities to join the NILC at all levels.

The NILC will become a true engine of service delivery and resist the temptation of reducing itself into an unproductive talk shop.

Religious infrastructure will now also be utilized for public education and social development and places of worship will now be used as community spaces during the week to address illiteracy and promote educational programs for the common good to all.

In pursuit of partnerships for reconstruction, development and

progress called for by the President during his inaugural address, we believe that the NILC is well-placed to be the key driver for social education and moral regeneration for sustainable development.

We wish to join the President in welcoming the NILC as a non-partisan interfaith structure which is rooted amongst the people and represented by substructures at provincial, regional, local and ward levels.

We believe that the NILC will be the best custodian for Moral Regeneration Movement programmes.

Accordingly, we hope that this activist Parliament will evolve formal mechanisms to interact with the interfaith sector in general and the NILC in particular as part of its machinery on the promotion of moral regeneration, social cohesion and religious tolerance as well as the creation of cohesive, caring and sustainable communities.

CONSTITUENCY WORK

Inculcating positive, constructive values in our society

On 3 June 2009, the President of the Republic, Jacob G. Zuma, appealed to all people of South African and the world to support the Nelson Mandela Day and ensure its success by taking part in various noble causes within their communities on the 18 July, which is the birthday of the country's first democratically elected President. Addressing the joint sitting of Parliament on the occasion of his state of the nation address, the President said:

“(The Nelson Mandela Day) will give people in South Africa and all over the world the opportunity to do something good to help others.

“Madiba was politically active for 67 years, and on Mandela Day people all over the world, in the workplace, at home and in schools, will be called upon to spend at least 67 minutes of their time doing something useful within their communities, especially among the less fortunate.

Let us wholeheartedly support Mandela Day and encourage the world to join us in this wonderful campaign”.

This appeal by the President, which sought to respond to the global campaign initiated by the Nelson Mandela Foundation and the 46664 Campaign, was immediately heeded by Parliament.

Our support for this initiative was motivated by our endeavour to build a caring, cohesive and sustainable society that is



characterised by the Ubuntu values and principles. Working in partnership with the government (through the Department of Arts & Culture), our Members of Parliament, under the leadership of the Office of the Chief Whip, galvanised various sectors in society, such as civil society formations, non-governmental organisations, religious, faith-based and traditional leaders, to ensure success of this inaugural annual Nelson Mandela Day. Working together with Members of Parliament of all political parties in various constituencies, all sectors in our society threw their weight behind this international movement for good and led various communities the length and breadth of South Africa in volunteering 67 minutes of their day in emulation of Madiba's many years of great service to humanity.

Throughout the week leading up to the main event on the 18 July, the great majority of our people engaged in numerous activities and programs aimed at benefiting the poor, children, women, people with disabilities, the elderly and all those in need within our communities. Public facilities such as schools, hospices, clinics, hospitals and correctional service centres were painted and refurbished while basic necessities such as food and blankets to the poor, orphans and the elderly were donated. Our call to action during the Nelson Mandela Day was indeed received well by the great majority of our people. In the course of our engagement with the public through our constituency work, television and radio talk shows as well as the print media, our people demonstrated an exciting enthusiasm around this crucial

day. The great attendance of the national celebration at the Mary Fitzgerald Square by thousands of the people from around the Gauteng province also marked the success of our campaign to conscientise the people on the objectives of this campaign. We wish to extend our deepest gratitude to all South Africans of every colour, creed and race for coming out in their numbers and working together with Members of Parliament in demonstrating support to this important day through concrete actions. We also wish to thank President Zuma for his leadership in this campaign, ensuring that we continue to inculcate positive and constructive values in our society, consistent with that which Madiba did for the past 67 years.

WOMEN'S MONTH:

Saluting the women of South Africa

August is a month for all of us to recall a very important Day in the history of our struggle for liberation and freedom. In 1956 women from all races and walks of life marched to the Union Buildings in protest against oppressive apartheid laws. This historic march was led by gallant freedom fighters such as Lillian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Sophie de Bruyn and Rahima Moosa. This was a turning point in our history because women have since become equal partners in all aspects of our lives, at home, in church and within the public service and private sectors. It is therefore not by coincidence that the ANC has made the 50% representation of women an

important part of its deployment policy.

The fourth democratic government has given the agenda of developing and empowering women in our country much impetus by establishing a fully-fledged Ministry of Women, Children and Persons with Disabilities. On this note, we wish to acknowledge and appreciate the leadership role played by the newly created Ministry of Women, Children and Persons with Disabilities in partnership with the Department of Arts and Culture as well as the ANC Women's League in organizing activities for the celebrations of August as the Women's month this year. Celebrations this year began with a National Consultative Meeting with

Women's Stakeholders in Pretoria and other pre-events which culminated on the successful National Celebration of Women's Day which was addressed by President Jacob Zuma in Vryheid, KwaZulu Natal on 09 August 2009. We wish to join President Jacob Zuma in honouring, remembering and saluting women who made historic contribution to our struggle against oppression including Charlotte Maxeke, Albertina Sisulu, Florence Mophosho, Ellen Khuzwayo, Dulcie September, Adelaide Tambo, Ruth First, Getrude Shope, Ida Mtwana, Dorothy Nyembe, Ruth Mompati



and many others who left a mark through various contributions. When putting emphasis on the theme for this year "Together, Empowering Women for Development and Gender Equality", President Zuma reminded us this theme acknowledges that while measures have been taken to generally impact positively on the lives of women and the girl-child, a number of challenges still remain, especially with regard to the implementation of programs to transform societal attitudes and harmful practices that manifest themselves against women and the girl-child. President Zuma further urged us to look beyond our leaders and appreciate the role of ordinary women who are never in the news, but who make South Africa succeed. These include the working class women in the factories who work for long hours to support their

families, rural women and farm workers who toil the soil for food and shelter, women who run households and raise children single-handedly in difficult socio-economic situations and grandmothers who look after orphaned and vulnerable grandchildren under conditions of extreme poverty. The President reminded us to also honour and empower these women whose silent contributions on the social stability of our country are often taken for granted. Since the national event, other governments departments such as Rural Development and Land Reform, Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Public Service and Administration, Trade and Industry, Minerals and Energy, to mention but a few, have also organized a variety of programs and functions to celebrate and empower women across the country.

Comrades are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the Women Month Calendar, which details a number of very interesting national and provincial programs by government, non-governmental organizations, private sector, communities and civil society, so that we may all join in and play active roles in these celebrations. It is worthwhile to note that our Parliament is not left behind in these celebrations as the Multiparty Women Parliamentary Caucus is also planning to hold a Joint Sitting Debate on Women's Month which will take place next week.