

“Cape Town’s Political and Democratic Culture: Prospects for the Future”

PANELLISTS

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TRANSCRIPT

Judith February

Tonight’s debate is entitled Cape Town’s Political and Democratic Culture: Prospects for the Future. As all of us living in this city realize, we live in a city and a province with a unique politics - sometimes that politics leads to tension. Some of that tension is healthy and some, we’ve recently seen, is unhealthy and destructive.

We’re very pleased to have Mayor Helen Zille here tonight, together with MEC Essop and the leader of the Independent Democrats for Cape Town, Simon Grindrod. Hopefully we can, as AnnMarie mentioned, live up to the principles of the Wolpe Trust, as well as those principles for which our democracy is known – tolerance and good debate – and start thinking in a serious way, beyond the platitudes and sometimes shallow media reporting, on the democratic discourse within the province and our city. What are the principles and the tensions which underlie that, and what are the impacts of some of the types of discourse that we’re having, whether they’re about name changes or other things, on our young democracy?

I think that these are some of the questions which are really staring us in the face as we start grappling with issues of identity and increasingly, issues of nation-building. Here in our province it seems that we’re at a point where we can actually build something uniquely South African and, indeed, uniquely African. Without further ado, I’d like to invite Mayor Helen Zille to the platform.

Mayor Helen Zille

Thank you Judith, it's wonderful to be here with my two esteemed panelists, MEC Tasneem Essop and Simon Grindrod. Thank you also to AnnMarie Wolpe for her words of introduction and for being the force that drives the Wolpe Trust – it's wonderful to be here with you today.

Cape Town, I believe, is in the vanguard of the process of democratizing South Africa. However, let me start with some broader points. The first proposition I would like to make is that prospects for the future of democracy in South Africa are significantly better today than they were even one year ago; they are several times better than they were 10 years ago, and they are infinitely better than they were 15 years ago. In fact, if you can think back 15 years, none of us would have been able to imagine that we would be where we are today.

South Africa has defied what everyone thought was the logic of history – that was, to end in a race war. But for a whole set of reasons, not one single reason, we did not land up there. The second key proposition I want to make is that although we've made unimagined progress over the last 15 years, we cannot for a moment be complacent about our democracy.

Democracy obviously centres on the concept of choice, and of a people holding government to account. Choice is necessary because no single party or government has the monopoly on wisdom, insight, understanding or competence. They may start out, we probably all start out, with good intentions, but the outcome is often the opposite and that's why people get together to vote us out when they have the choice at the next election. Many outcomes can be precisely the opposite of what was intended – I'm sure Harold Wolpe would have agreed with me that that was the case with much of Marxism.

Now, South Africa is not yet what the academics call a consolidated democracy – that is, an established democracy, a stable and settled democracy in which everyone is sure will still be a democracy in 10 or 20 years' time. One key moment on our path to what I trust and believe will be a consolidated democracy was our first democratic election. A very dramatic moment - perhaps the most dramatic and emotional moment that any of us who has been involved in politics for many years, has ever been through.

And of course, in terms of transitions to democracy from authoritarian rule, that first election is essential. But in fact, there's got to be far more, for a country to be democratic, than simply regular elections. There must also, and this is crucial, be a realistic prospect that the government can change as the result of an election. And some theorists argue that only after you've had two changes of government, through free and fair democratic elections, can a country be regarded as a consolidated democracy.

And in a very limited, but nevertheless very important way, we went through part of that crucial second stage on March 1st and March 15th last year. On March 1st we had our election, in which my party, the Democratic Alliance emerged as the biggest single party, though the overall majority. On March 15th we managed to put together a coalition of several parties that was able to put together a government in Cape Town.

What was very important about that, for our progress toward a democracy, was that that election was the very first time that the ANC had lost power through an election. Obviously there were times before when the ANC since 1994 did not win elections,

but this was the first time it had been taken out of power through an election, and as you know there were many people who didn't like the outcome very much. Some felt that a kind of cosmic injustice had been done, and spent a lot of time afterwards trying to take back power – to manipulate themselves back into power, by various means – usually nefarious means, I may add.

But I would like to put a third proposition down: that it was a very good thing for democracy in SA that those attempts did not succeed, and it would be even better for democracy when the ANC accepts being the opposition and works to become a very good opposition, because playing the role of a good opposition is essential for the consolidation of democracy. I'd like to argue that the outcome of last year's election in Cape Town reinforced the positive cycle of our consolidation, which we all hope will continue.

The argument is simple: if one party grows more and more powerful with every election, it completely undermines the checks and balances that can hold that party to account, and we know that in all places and at all times, everywhere in the world, power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Not just in South Africa, not just in Africa, but everywhere in the world.

And so, it was crucially important in that incredible moment after our first democratic election, and perhaps *because* it was so emotional, that many of us became extremely rational as well, and ask ourselves, from South Africa's perspective, what this watershed meant, what the new direction of politics had become, and what action of ours would be in the best interest of South Africa in the next decade, in the next two decades.

And while it was essential to have a strong party, a strong victorious party to guide South Africa through a very difficult transition, it was equally essential to avoid a fundamental risk, which was that one party would simply become more and more and more powerful to the point where checks and balances and accountability vanished. And so it was a valid choice that some decided to turn the ANC into a governing party from a liberation movement, but it was equally important that some of us chose to build an opposition to hold the ANC to account and that over time would have the chance of becoming an alternative government.

I made the latter choice and I think it was the right choice for a whole range of reasons. Let me now focus on Cape Town. If we accept the thesis that it's incredibly important to prevent too much power from accumulating, over time, in fewer and fewer hands, then we also have to accept that it's important that one party should not dominate every local government, have more than two thirds of national and nine out of nine provinces, and all of the major cities.

And so it was important that a coalition government took power in Cape Town as the start of a process of providing the possibility of an alternative government. But being mayor of Cape Town has also given me a whole new set of insights into how we can take democratization and the process of consolidating democracy further within South Africa.

Everyone knows that I didn't want to stand as the DA's mayoral candidate – I was only inveigled into standing because I was given the assurance we wouldn't win! Famous last words! I was very happy in National Parliament, because there I was dealing with my first love – education. I think the future of SA will in large measure be determined by how we build our education system. Nevertheless, there we suddenly were in power.

And now I'm very glad that that happened, because I've gained two crucial insights into the future of democracy in South Africa. The first insight I've had is the importance of coalition-building in the process of democratization in this country. It is very unlikely in the near future, that one party, on its own, is going to be able to defeat the ANC. It's simply true that the opposition is far too fractured and is likely to remain so, despite our best efforts, for a while. The importance of coalitions in terms of providing an alternative is absolutely critical in terms of checks and balances that we're trying to develop.

However, coalitions are crucial for another reason: Judith mentioned the concept of identity, and one thing I think that many of us, certainly I, have always underestimated in South African politics is the power of identity – the factors that bring individuals together as groups and give them a common sense of belonging together. Race is one; language is one, religion; culture; all of those factors. The power of identity is so strong that nowhere in any developing democracy has a party been able to rise above the power of individual group identities to try and form a common vehicle for the values and aspirations of people from different backgrounds.

We simply have to succeed in that in SA if we want to be a democracy, for the reason that if we all fragment into small race-based and identity-based parties, we will never have a democracy, because we will have excluded the possibility of government changing, simply because of demographic factors, and that will fundamentally undermine the prospects for democracy.

In coalitions, parties that are there because of an identity power-base are learning to work together, powerfully, across those barriers, and are learning to govern together at local government level which is by far the easiest level to govern together, because you're dealing with practicalities and challenges that you have to face on a day by day basis.

And the third key insight I've had is how important cities and towns will be for the future of South Africa's democracy. You see, cities and towns are more amenable to the formation of coalitions which can bring the all-powerful governing party below fifty percent, and cities and towns are also the places where we can start winning elections; for example, the DA got 27% in 2004, we actually got 42% in 2006 in Cape Town, and managed to get together a governing coalition. In Johannesburg we got 27% in 2006, and in Tshwane, the combined opposition was 44%, so with coalitions, even the smallest shift politically creates the prospect of alternatives – alternatives being absolutely critical.

We'll be able to work together well in the cities. And if we manage to bridge those identity gaps, we also lay the foundations for a fundamental re-alignment of South African politics, so that we can establish the alternative to the closed-patronage society based on race that, unfortunately, there are major indications that the ANC may be becoming – that alternative being an open-opportunity society that gives opportunity to all South Africans. I'll leave it there; those are my introductory remarks on prospects for the future of democracy through the cities and through Cape Town. Thank you.

Judith February

On that note, I'll call on MEC Essop. Thank you.

Tasneem Essop

Thank you very much Judith. I would like first to apologize for the Premier's absence tonight, he expressed much regret that he couldn't be here. I have been asked to stand in for him on very short notice, but perhaps, after being characterized as his ally in the media on Friday, I was his natural choice! (laughter). So here I am. What I would really like to do is share some thoughts with you about issues that relate to the topic for this evening. Helen has dealt largely with the issue of the democratic possibility and the future of democracy – I'd like to talk a bit about the political culture.

Before I get to that, however - on the topic of the nature of coalitions, I think that Helen raised a fascinating perspective on the matter. I also think at the level of governance we have to consider the challenges that coalitions represent, particularly in terms of the stability of government. I'm not saying that coalitions are bad or a bad thing, but after having gone through a couple of coalitions we need to consider the impact of coalitions on the stability of government. So perhaps that is a point we could get into more later.

So, political culture: I think it's important for us to be frank, in this discussion. When we look at Cape Town in its current context, we have to be honest about the political culture that dominates. We clearly are still witnessing the remnants of the past. We can deny this, we can get into the mode of denialism, but we are experiencing, very sharply in the Western Cape, but critically in Cape Town, the remnants of the past. There is social disintegration, social division, largely along the fault-lines of race. There is a very clear divide still between rich and poor, and often people speak of the gap widening. We are dealing with issues of social exclusion, economic exclusion and spatial exclusion.

So we are essentially dealing with a divided society. If you read the sms columns in the Argus, you will know that not one of us can sit in this lecture theatre and say: we have no problems. The undertones of those smses are largely racial – let us not deny this. I'm putting this on the table because I think all of us have to deal with this. We can't ignore this challenge in Cape Town. If there's going to be any future for a healthy political culture or for democracy, not just democracy in terms of elections, and opposition, but true democracy that talks to empowerment of people on the ground, so they can make decisions and affect government. That deepened sense of democracy is going to be under threat if we live in a fractured society. In Cape Town and the Western Cape, unfortunately, those fractures are sharply drawn – right here, on our doorstep.

This is an area that we have to deal with frankly, and take on the challenge very critically. And of course, we do experience a certain kind of negative ethnic mobilization. This is not helped at all by any of the political parties – when we get into election mode, we get into a hectic mode in which we are all doing our thing. Unfortunately, the remnants of ethnic mobilization used in electioneering get carried through to post-election periods, with negative results. We have to address this.

So fundamentally: how can we, as Capetonians, including but not only the political leaders, how do all of us, as leaders in whatever context we find ourselves, whether as academics, in the media, in business, how do we start addressing the fractures in our society so that we can in fact build the political culture that is the basis for a strong democracy?

One of the questions that was posed to us during the briefing for this debate was whether this is having an impact on government. I believe that the way that we've gone about dealing with our relationship, especially at the level of governance in this

country has put us on a path that I think institutionalizes a positive co-operative relationship. The Constitution enshrines the principle of co-operative government – the three spheres of government are acknowledged as independent and autonomous, but there has to be the principle of co-operation.

This has been strengthened by the enactment of the Intergovernmental Relations Framework. And so that principle of co-operative government has been legislated for and institutionalized. Very clearly then, intergovernmental relations between national, provincial and local government have been placed on a solid footing. There is a common vision for the country which is being delegated downward and there's a common strategy for the country. All of us work to that, at whatever level of government we are, and whatever political party we happen to find ourselves in. So I think that in the political discourse, the to-ing and fro-ing, the fire and brimstone – all of that must happen and it must happen healthily. It has to be robust.

But when it gets down to government, we need to understand our role and responsibilities as a government. We cannot be in the position of government and play an oppositional role as a government. Because now we are governing in the interests of everybody. We are governing on behalf of all citizens, all the people, at whatever level they represent. So it's critical that government remains stable, that government remains focused, and that we actually work to this common programme to deal with the challenges facing our society. Poverty is a key challenge, but over and above that, critically, the issue of social cohesion. How do we build a nation? And we are still a society in transition; we are still having to deal with the remnants of the past, and in all of this, we are going to have to start putting our minds together to grapple with those particular challenges.

I really don't think that if we put aside the 'hoo-ha' that happens, what gets covered in the media, all the opinions that we share in the letters column – if we set aside all that, then in fact we have a very good foundation for a strong democracy, and that democracy in my opinion is not under threat. We have a strong Constitution; we have strong institutions in this country. We have an independent judiciary, we have the Gender Commission and similar Constitutional bodies, which have to form the basis of protecting and promoting a strong democracy.

What we need are active citizens; active and united citizens. We can't deal with simple matters, like building a stadium for the World Cup, Helen, without it becoming a racial issue. We can't deal with fish dying in a river without somewhere, somehow, the issue having racial undertones. So how do we grow up in Cape Town? How do we mature beyond the remnants of the past? (*Applause*). I want to stop on that note, but first I want to say: it is time for us to cross the divides. We are wonderful, creative, brilliant people, loved by all, here and internationally. We just have to catch a wake-up call and get on with, and build on the strengths that we do have, with all of us in the Western Cape. Thank you.

Simon Grindrod

Thank you Madame Chair. You know, it's quite disappointing – Tasneem wrote her speech on the back of a cigarette packet, and it's better than mine that I stayed up all night to do! (*Laughter*). It's also quite awkward having my MD up here in the front row watching me (*Patricia De Lille attended the debate as an audience member*).

If we are serious about building a Mother City which is a mother to all her children, black, white and coloured, we must begin by celebrating the diversity that we have to the fullest. In other words, we must turn this into an enormous opportunity. It is my party's vision for Cape Town to use our social democratic principles to bridge the

divide between black, coloured and white, rich and poor, and to create a South African and African identity that makes us all feel like we belong.

We must breed and nurture in our people the undying certainty that they are all equal children of this Mother City. We must stamp out our confusion over identity, and instill a hope that is based on a common identity backed up with concrete plans. For this to happen, however, the divide between our political leaders and our people must be addressed. And since politicians are an indelible part of our city's future, the least we can expect of them is that they move beyond short term focus on fears, superiority and inferiority complexes, and that they embrace what we have in common, rather than the differences created by greed.

Moreover, Cape Town's advantaged need to find practical ways to assist with the process of upliftment, whilst our disadvantaged must be encouraged to share in the sense of responsibility for their future rather than concentrating on their sense of entitlement. I want to thank the convenors of tonight's debate – it has never been more relevant in a city like Cape Town, which, for far too long, has been torn apart and polarized along racial, ethnic and cultural lines.

And we must also, I think now, end the city-wide epidemic of denial, which has thus far allowed strategies and tactics of *swart gevaar* and white guilt to continue unabated. These strategies have no place in this country anymore. They are outdated and unacceptable, and only in Cape Town do they still get used and only in Cape Town do they still work. Now we must ask ourselves, what does that say about our city?

We as the ID believe that the time has now finally come to begin to effectively address these issues, including how they are exploited by political parties. The responsibility for leading this lies, first and foremost, with politicians, who must agree to ditch these regressive and immature tactics, and focus instead on encouraging debate around critical issues. In other words, if we are to break this mould, then politicians must lead it.

We are a social democratic party, and we believe that as a city we have a long way to go in addressing the legacy of apartheid, which is still alive and well and experienced daily by the majority of the poor in Cape Town. According to the State of Cape Town Report, published on the City's web page, we have approximately 1.2 million desperately poor people living below the breadline – these people are on our doorstep. The shocking reality of these statistics is borne out by the fact that 14.3% of households questioned in Cape Town responded that they went hungry often, whilst a further 39% of households went hungry sometimes.

The problems of the poor are the problems of the rich. Our failure to deal with poverty simply shortens the time we have to defuse the social time-bomb on which we all sit tonight. Despite the plethora of social problems, and despite the fact that this Mother City still treats the majority of her children as step-children and orphans, we as local politicians have to face the fact that trust and credibility amongst the electors for their elected is at an all-time low. So at a time when we are expected to show leadership and take the debate to a higher level, trust in us has never been lower.

The political culture of Cape Town has shown itself to be extremely immature. The fact that the battle for political control of our city and the province has always been so hotly contested should have produced a higher standard of quality of the political choices available to us. In fact, the exact opposite has happened, as parties scrape the bottom of the barrel, reverting to the tried and trusted race card at every

opportunity. And nobody is guiltless in this. Politicians have fuelled the fires of polarization for their own means, both in terms of political in-fighting in their own parties, and in terms of their inability to put the residents of Cape Town first.

Election campaigns and intra-party lobbying have been characterized by attempts to build a support-base around a racial agenda, when what is actually required is a frank debate around the competition for scarce resources. Traditionally political parties have capitalized on the despair of the poor and the fears of the rich, in their quest to maintain the divide that keeps many political parties in business. It is in their interests, often, to maintain those divides because if we did, one glorious day, wake up and find we were all unified, many parties would be out of business.

What is required is unity of purpose. Unity that comes from educating our respective support bases about the unavoidable interdependence we share – that the misfortune of some areas of this city directly impact upon others. We must help our respective voters understand that what happens in Bishop Lavis and other poorer areas fundamentally affects those who live in Bishops Court. Only when each racial and cultural grouping in our city has been guided to a strong feeling of self worth will they be able to join the Capetonian vision.

It was to help end the destructive atmosphere of paralysis, fear and mistrust that the ID stepped in to stabilize the government of Cape Town. People should understand it was not to get closer to the DA or further away from the ANC – it was done simply because it was the right thing to do. The ID's decision was not taken lightly, and certainly our support came quite cheaply, as we've all accepted, but it was, finally, one step along the way, one political party deciding to put the people of Cape Town before positions.

We would not allow another change of government in a city that has a history of changing not only politicians, but more importantly I think, losing institutional knowledge and critical skills each time a new party takes over. In the city of Cape Town we have lost, and are now dealing with the legacy of having lost, many senior managers during the staff restructuring process of the previous administration. Now we find that many of our most expert staff, as a result of realignments within the current administration, are sitting in what is called a displaced pool of employees, and their crucial knowledge basis is underutilized and unavailable to us.

Principally, what I must try to do as, incidentally, the member for economic development, social development and tourism, is to try to persuade the rest of the country and the continent, and indeed many overseas role players that we are no longer 'Slaapstad' in terms of economic investment and job creation. We have lost billions in economic investment simply because we have not returned their calls. And so to professionalise, and to bring to the monster that is government the idea that we should react to investor queries, is an urgent priority. What the private sector can bring to this city has not yet been fully explored. The secrets to much of what we want to do lie in the private sector, because we have political divides, but we also have economic divides. The two are undoubtedly intertwined, and the one needs to be addressed as urgently as the other.

In terms of our approach to government, which we feel is different, we as social democrats believe in constructive engagement. We do not oppose for opposition's sake; we will give credit where it is due, and we will certainly share our ideas with other parties if we think we have something to offer. We could not get very far down the line if we had opposition just for the sake of it. We have to accept that parties that we might not like have some very bright, committed people and some very good

ideas. We need to engage those parties and find the good stuff there, that's for the benefit of everyone.

In doing that, what we're saying is that the beauty of social democracy is that it pulls people together, and it can pull people together in this city, because it stands for sacrifice and compromise. In our city this is what we desperately need: we need the one group to compromise, and the one group to sacrifice, more than they have been doing. And that's the bottom line.

Twenty minutes away from some of our most exclusive suburbs, there is poverty that many Capetonians have never seen, don't wish to see or do not care for. What I am saying is that, in order to protect our long term future, the one group must be prepared to sacrifice more. The taxpayer, however, must be shown value, and must be shown, especially in this city, that their contribution is paying dividends in services and upliftment, and not in corruption. So, in conclusion, we are saying that we *are* divided; that there is a denialism in this city about that; that we have pockets of citizens who do not wish to know what's going on in their own city. The secrets for the vision that we have for our city lie in sacrifice and compromise. Thank you.

Judith February

Thank you Simon. Again, we see themes of social and economic exclusion and how we can bring about constructive debate in our province. Time for questions from the floor... Except I see Helen wants to have a last word!

Helen Zille

Some important themes were raised, and I want to address one raised by Tasneem: is Cape Town a remnant of the past, or is it helping South Africa consolidate its democratic future? Tasneem has said that Cape Town is characterized by social disintegration and division, and has a big divide between the rich and poor. That is true. The fact is, this is not unique to Cape Town. That doesn't make it right – we all have to work against that – but all those factors are everywhere in every other city in South Africa. The fact that the ANC wins because it has a demographic majority in those cities does not make those cities any less divided than Cape Town.

In fact, Cape Town has many non-racial suburbs, which have been non-racial forever, right through the Group Areas Act. But that's actually irrelevant. It does not imply, it does not follow that Cape Town is more divided simply because the ANC lost here, or that other cities are less divided because the ANC won. It does not follow logically, and it's actually an irrelevant debate. The relevant debate is this: what are we going to do to address these crises which exist across South Africa in all cities, and are the remnants of our past?

Another assumption that is made is that the ANC's policies are better for addressing this legacy. That's an assumption that we fundamentally have to challenge, and we also, now, have the first opportunity to test that assumption. Whose policies are more empowering? Whose policies are better able to deal with the legacy of the past? I move from the point of departure that no political party has all the answers, no party has the monopoly on solutions. But it is wrong to make the assumption that the ANC is better able to deal with the past than anyone else.

Let me give you one example from Cape Town's experience in the past year. The ANC had a quota that no-one could even tender for a contract unless they were 30% BEE. The first thing we did as a multi-party coalition when we came to Cape Town, was scrap that quota. And everyone said "Oh yes, you see, you don't want black

economic empowerment!". And our answer was: we absolutely do want black economic empowerment. But our policy will accelerate it, not undermine it.

We do not believe in quotas; we do not believe in manipulated outcomes, we believe in opening up opportunities and showing that that is better for empowerment, and better for results. And within a year, the BEE component of tenders awarded was 10% higher than the ANC had managed to achieve at its best. So don't assume that one party has the monopoly on solutions to division and empowerment. We need to look at alternatives and we need to give them a chance.

Questions from the floor:

1. **Speaker:** I'm going to be frank. My overriding impression of your contributions tonight has been that they are merely cheap politicking; there is a sense that you are competing in terms of who looks best as a party, rather than addressing issues at hand. I can hear sincerity and real attempts to address issues, but there is always a cheap shot here and there, and then some reaction of person to whom the shot is addressed.

This reflects the bigger issue, which is actually a question of character: individual and national character. We're all humans and we all have strengths and weaknesses, but my impression of the national character right now is of arrogance, self-absorption, greed, and looking out for oneself. We're not really addressing this question. A deal made in 1994 to maintain the economic status quo, with a semblance of handing over power to others. We haven't come very far in 10 years - should we not be looking at character to ascertain why this is?

2. **Speaker:** Simon referred to diversity being a tremendous opportunity and Tasneem pointed out that intergovernmental legislation requires that government institutions at all levels govern on behalf of all. Helen Zille has expanded on the importance of coalitions. I don't agree with her purpose of a coalition, and I want to suggest that had the DA sought to enter into a coalition that included the ANC, rather than excluding it, we would not have the governmental problems we have today. My question to each of the panelists is: would you consider, even now, including the ANC in a coalition, because that is only basis that can be used before the next local election to deal with Cape Town's problems?
3. I am **Sabelo Mali, principal** of a high school in Khayelitsha. In the presence of the ID leader, I must confess that when an ID and DA coalition developed, I felt, as an African, that I should pack up and go. People always say that Cape Town is one of the most beautiful towns in the world, but how do they define beauty? The reason I ask this is because, living in Khayelitsha, I see elderly people relieving themselves in the bushes, and other signs of poverty, on a daily basis. My question to the panel is: in your minds, do you serve your constituencies at the expense of others? And in terms of governance, is the failure to serve the people a problem of incapacity within government, or is it caused by something else?
4. **Hector Williams, from Mitchells Plain:** during the election and by-election in Tafelsig, we saw the lowest of the low in terms of election campaigning by the DA, for argument's sake, and by the ID. But, after all that fighting and campaigning, one thing they keep forgetting is that majority of the people out there are politically ignorant.

How are we going to get the other 40% of people wanting to go to polls, wanting to vote for a person, not because they'll get a food hamper, but because they believe in the policies of what that party can offer. What are these three parties going to do in reconciling and setting an example to the ordinary people out there as to how white, coloured and African can live side by side and move forward together?

Tasneem Essop

I think that the critical question, and I'm not sure whether this is just related to character, but also a debate that our president has tried to encourage in the country, and that is values. It's an area that must be explored and debated, I would welcome that. I don't think a specific approach to the debate; it's not a matter of focusing on character rather than something else, I think all of these issues should be open for discussion and debate, whether defined as character or the values that we are promoting in society.

I can't comment on opinion about cheap politicking, I really hope it wasn't. I did not realize this was a party-political platform... But be that as it may.

I think maybe the mayor can answer the question on coalitions...I'll leave that interesting question to you, Helen.

I want to agree completely on how do we define the city as beautiful – you make an excellent point. I know the mayor says you will find the problems exist in all cities. Two points: we live in Cape Town and we must take responsibility for the problems here. Of course, the remnants of past will not disappear overnight or even in 30 years, and we have to take responsibility for fixing that.

But I want to go further than that, and say: this has got nothing to do with who's in power. I do not want anyone to think that I've come up and made these points here, believing that the ANC has all the solutions to them. I have tried to present to all of us tonight as citizens of Cape Town, that this is fundamentally a joint responsibility. It's not a government responsibility - these are fault-lines in our society that we all have to deal with, as citizens, and we need to be committed to doing this. While we have absolute beauty in the city, both Simon and I have pointed out absolute areas of utter ugliness. Our president in the State of Nation Address said 'we must rid our society of all that is ugly and repulsive,' and it is incumbent on all of us to do that. We do have the ugly and repulsive right here on our doorstep, as Simon has indicated. That is our challenge in Cape Town.

How do we deal with issues of fair and equitable access to services and opportunities? Government has to deal with that, at all levels. If there are incapacities, government must deal with that as well. Often it is simply a matter of political will.

Should we reconcile as political parties? Sometimes it's quite fun to fight with each other... but non-destructively. Ethnic and racial mobilization should not happen. Any political party guilty of that should really deal with that internally. That kind of behaviour doesn't help anybody, in the city or in the country. If that's what happened in Tafelsig it is unacceptable, no matter who did it. As I said in the input I made, those remnants of election fire and brimstone continue after the campaigners have gone, leaving a fractured community behind. Will we reconcile as political parties? I think it's healthy for us to have our differences, but I feel the way in which we conduct

ourselves politically can be more sensitive to the challenges in we face in the Western Cape.

Simon Grindrod

The gentleman at the back spoke of the national character; in terms of this evening's topic, our focus is on the Cape Town character. We have a paradox here: we have the warmest and most giving and caring people in the city in their respective communities, but we need to get them doing this with one another. There is nothing wrong with Cape Town character; in fact we stand a better chance, I think, of solving our problems than many other cities.

Would the ID be open to go into a coalition with the ANC? Yes, we would – we believe that in a city with no clear winner, the only way to gain unity and stability is to have the top three parties governing together. We do not have a pathological hatred of the ANC. I truly believe that with last election results being so close, we could have had a 4-4-2 in an exco system, and you wouldn't have had the problem we're having now.

On the comment about the ID and the DA going into an 'alliance' - we are not in an alliance but a coalition in terms of stabilizing the city. The gentleman made the comment that he felt like leaving town when that happened. But how many people left town when the ANC went into alliance with NNP? That to me was a more unholy alliance than any we've seen in this city.

On capacity and the ability to deliver: in line with our approach of rejecting the head-in-the sand mentality, we must accept we have a skills crisis in this city, which is seriously impacting on our ability to deliver. It has resulted in us having spent only 18% of our capital budget, eight months into the financial year. Our city has never been more cash rich, but we cannot spend this money because we don't have the people and the managers we need to do it. The mayor knows it – we all recognize it. It's going to be a major obstacle.

Then we had the gentleman who quite rightly drew attention to the bloodbath that was the Tafelsig by-election. It was a textbook study in the most appalling campaigning that I'd seen. It appealed to the lowest common denominator and the basest instinct of human nature, and the responsibility for lifting that tone of debate can only rest with politicians, because people follow us.

Helen Zille

I get to have the last word! On the need to develop character, and to focus on individual development rather than politics, I don't think it's an either/or question - it's both. Politics appears everywhere because it's about power. In every organization and institution in the country, there's a question about who's in control, who's in charge, and how accountable are those in charge. Politics is about getting power, keeping power, losing power, and holding power to account. It's a very necessary part of democracy and politics is a tough place. You can't take things personally and get hurt, you must rise above it. If you think we have tough debates, try reading the debates with Winston Churchill, or debates from other democracies. It's a tough place in which shots are sometimes expensive and sometimes cheap.

In response to the question about whether the DA would enter a coalition with the ANC: we did not do it then and we would not do it now. The reason is that we were able to put together a coalition that had more than 50%, and thus we were able to govern. Now we have a coalition that represents 62% of the voters in Cape Town. The ANC has more than two thirds of the national government, controls nine out of

nine provinces, and five out of six major cities. There is no reason why it also has to control six out of six major cities, every major centre in South Africa. In fact it's good for democracy that the ANC gets to be the opposition in one city. It's a very important advance for democracy.

We are about forming an alternative to the ANC, which South Africa desperately needs, which democracy desperately needs. We are prepared to put our policies to the test. We can't solve all problems, and we certainly can't solve them overnight, we won't even solve them in one or two terms, but we will make progress.

I come to the principal from Khayelitsha. He said he nearly left town on the assumption that the DA and the ID don't care about black people. That is a fundamentally mistaken assumption. If you were a principal when I was MEC for Education, you will know that I spent 80% of my budget on disadvantaged schools, to improve their circumstances. It is a fundamental mistake to assume that if you're one colour in South Africa, you cannot care for people of other colours. Unless we get beyond that mistake, we can never build democracy in this country.

Questions from the Floor:

1. **Anthony Silberberg:** I would like to compliment Helen Zille on the great job she's done in bringing stability to the Western Cape. My question is: to me there's confusion in the ANC on difference between majority rule and basic democracy. The ANC always seem to believe in democracy as long as they have an overall majority. It's important for the development of democracy to get people to understand the difference. How do we do this?
2. **Lorna Levy:** the point I want to make is: we've all come as interested concerned Cape Town citizens, with different ideas. We'd like to go away knowing how we can be active participants, active citizens: what is the way we can go? At the moment, it seems like the only activity we have is to go and vote every few years. But something interesting was set up when the sub-council structure came into being - there were going to be ward committees in different sub-councils giving people the opportunity in their constituencies to come together across different areas. This would make people much closer in their areas. I'd like the mayor to answer as to what actually has happened to the ward committees?
3. **Professor of Political Science at the University of Stellenbosch:** it was mentioned that legitimacy at local level is very low, lower even than at national level, and my question is related to that. Are there other channels for participation? In other countries they hold direct referendums, direct election of the mayor etc. Can we use ideas like that to increase legitimacy of local councilors?
4. **TJ Thabela:** for me as an ordinary resident, the instability of Cape Town politics comes across in what I experience in my neighbourhood; the kind of lack of transformation I feel in the suburbs. I want to know from the panelists, what their view is as to what needs to be happening to transform those elements we all aspire to: daily life, suburban life.

Helen Zille

In many ways majority rule is part of democracy, but it is critical that majorities are able to change. If they become entrenched according to race groups, they can't change. So we need to have shifting majorities because people are deciding on the

basis of programmes, policies, outcomes and all of those crucial things. Changing majorities are crucial to a democracy and we're not at that point yet – we need to get there.

On the topic of citizens' participation and ward committees, we do not believe that it is for the state to regulate civil society. We believe in public participation, but we don't agree that the state should set up a formula for how the public must participate, as in ward committees. We have supported ward participation mechanisms that are flexible in terms of how they are utilised from ward to ward. Thus, if you have a ward with a number of schools and a university falling within it, you should not be limited to only one education representative on that ward council, as the formula currently states. We have formulated a much more flexible model of participation and the only reason why it is being held up is that the ANC wants to consult further on it.

Are there any other channels for participation? I don't think we can generalize about levels of local participation and legitimacy of local councilors. We have some excellent local councilors, and participation varies from ward to ward, depending on the activity of the local councilor.

On the lack of transformation, let me say that, although maybe not quickly enough, middle class suburbs are transforming. In my suburb there is now a white minority. The areas that are not transforming are areas like Khayelitsha and Gugulethu, they are still solidly one race only, if you take race as the criterion, which I am guessing you are. So the challenge is to uplift quality of life everywhere, and not only to see things in racial terms.

Simon Grindrod

On Mr Silberberg's point, how do we educate voters? The government must do this in terms of its IEC responsibilities. It is critical that before 2009, a lot of voter education takes place. We must move away from race-based voting to issue-based voting. That's the only way we can have a mature democracy.

On the topic of citizen participation, many citizens need to start simply by becoming more mentally active. There is so much happening that people don't even know about. Citizens have a responsibility to know what's going on in their name. So, they can begin by reading the newspapers, looking at what's going on in our sub-councils, and trying to keep informed. That is a first step toward active citizenship.

To the professor of political science who's looking for ways to get involved: you can find your ID membership form at the door on your way out! (*laughter*).

Tasneem Essop

Democracy is about majority. The mayor and Simon have their views on the fact that elections are largely race-based, and that is a legacy of past, but I do think that people are voting to a large extent based on policy and issues. I think we need to have faith that people are voting with thought, and we do need to respect the ability of people to think for themselves, and vote for the parties they believe in, and that take forward the issues that are important to them.

Helen: we're not talking about regulating participation, but about *facilitating* participation. Ward committees exist to facilitate participation. We can put whatever spin on this we like, but I think ward committees are important so that people such as Lorna Levi can participate. We should have those institutional forums in our communities to hold our councilors accountable.

Are our suburbs transforming? The mayor says that middle-class suburbs are transforming, so if you can afford to go and live in a nice middle-class suburb, that's great. The reality, however, is that we must also talk about those who have left those changing suburbs – have they actually gone to find themselves a gated community in the northern suburbs? I think that is happening. In my suburb Plumstead, people are actually moving out. This is the spatial fragmentation that Cape Town has to deal with. We are still perpetuating the old models of urban sprawl outside the city, which are neither healthy nor cost effective. We must deal with this.

Questions from the Floor:

1. **Speaker:** all three speakers spoke about narrowing the gap between rich and poor. But there's a third category that exists, which we shouldn't ignore – the category of the wealthy. The wealthy are the remnants of the white nationalist equity. It's historically based, but it's also very sustainable. To just speak of the rich and the poor is too narrow. Given the differences between the rich, the poor and the wealthy, how are we going to lift the poor when they're in a social catch-22 on all fronts: class, gender, race, education, infrastructure, and so on?
2. **Ms Whittaker:** my question relates to participative citizens: how will your political parties go about building trust and credibility for us to become the participatory citizens they are calling for?
3. **Norman Levy:** we had a very interesting lecture on democracy from mayor; but what happened to will of people of Cape Town when the ANC was excluded from a coalition formed of minority parties?
4. **Bongani Makewa:** my questions relate to the issue of wealth. I'd like to ask the mayor to bear in mind globalization and the way in which cash flows between the poor and the rich. We come from a background in which a minority was very rich. How are we going to deal in SA with the resistance of the wealthy when it comes to redistribution of wealth? Currently, the masses of the people who are voting are the ones who suffer the most. How do we deal with these things by means of coalition? Do we really need an alternative in South Africa yet? If we don't need an alternative in South Africa, MEC Essop, how are we going to deal with our internal party conflicts?

Tasneem Essop

I think the issues raised are critical. Talking of the gap between rich and poor – yes, it's a simplistic distinction, it *is* about the wealthy as well, and about the programmes we put in place to uplift the poor, and the bias against those programmes. Also, the economy itself: how do we make it mainstream? The people currently excluded from the mainstream economy - how do we bring them in? The question of shared growth is an important one, that's the fundamental shift. We've had growth, but how do we share that growth in the country?

I'm worried about the sense that many people are waiting for political parties to give them permission to become active citizens. We must facilitate it institutionally, yes, but to become active you don't need our permission. Go out and do things. Every single day there are issues facing this city. The spirit of volunteerism that we talk about – there are so many things that are needed. Don't abdicate your responsibilities as citizens. Don't reduce your participation to that vote. Don't abdicate your responsibilities as citizens.

Regarding internal politics in the ANC: it's been in the papers a lot recently. Every political party has its internal politics and maybe we should be managing this less aggressively and more constructively, but we have our own party processes that we use to discipline party members and so on. There are forums in which all of these matters should be ironed out. Again, the ANC does not consist only of its elected leaders – all members must be active and let their voices be heard.

Simon Grindrod

The one thing we can do to bridge these kinds of divides between rich, poor and wealthy, is to carefully prioritise our social projects, and ensure that money is being spent in places where it is most needed. This links in to what I said earlier about compromise from one group and sacrifice from another.

On the issue of volunteers - the truth is we wouldn't know what to do with volunteers if they knocked on the door of civic centre. We have to think about this, because currently we wouldn't know how to handle a mass of volunteering citizens.

Trust and credibility issues: these, I and my party believe, would be solved if we returned to a constituency-based system: the list system is an unaccountable system.

In terms of redistribution of wealth: right now, the changes in rates and property values in the city is a form of redistribution of wealth. Those people whose property values have gone up 700% are having to pay a bit more in rates than those whose property went up by 300%. We must make up our minds as to whether we want this wealth distribution or not.

Helen Zille

No country across the world has found the answer to the question as to how the divide between the rich, the poor and the wealthy can be bridged. We did a major scenario exercise about 10 years ago in which we grappled with this question, and we decided that strong growth, powerful education of a high quality, and real opportunities would help us address this problem within 20 years. But we haven't had strong enough growth and we've had a decline in education. That has really slowed the process down.

On the question of building trust and credibility, I agree with Tasneem on this one. Citizens don't need government's permission to become involved and active citizens. There are a million things that can be done, without any assistance or permission from government at all.

On the question about excluding the ANC, and the DA putting the party before the people: in our understanding, which may be flawed, we are putting South Africa above everything else by saying that it's good for democracy that the ANC is not in power everywhere.

On point of being cash rich, which was a point Simon made: in Cape Town, we can't spend our budgets because we lack skills in critical places. We are trying to develop an organogram that works, with integration of the different municipalities. But first, we're going to have to spend more money on operational issues to hire the skills we need.

Questions from the Floor:

1. For the mayor: what is going on with the Greenpoint Stadium? One minute it's on, the next it's off.
2. **Rudi Oosterwyk:** Mayor, why are you so gung-ho about alternative government? Why at this early stage in our democracy should you not go for co-operative government?

And to the MEC: to what extent is the split within the ANC reflective of the split in the social milieu in the Western Cape?

Helen Zille

We have a hugely complex project at Greenpoint, far more complex than any other city has had to deal with. It involves major land re-zoning, and will cost a lot of money. We are getting through the statutory processes, although this has been difficult. We have brought the costs down by R1 billion, which was very hard to do, involving long negotiations, re-design, re-engineering and so on. We are still R180 million short. That may seem like small change in comparison to the billions, but it's also the cost of a new sewerage works, which we need desperately. We've reached the ceiling that the city can afford, which is R400 million, plus R100 million for contingencies.

We're also at the critical point of looking at a ceiling of 10% escalation in terms of our budget, and our advisors have told us it may be higher. Because the city has no control at all over factors that lead to escalation (they are macro-economic factors) I have asked the national government to guarantee any further escalation beyond 10%. Those are the circumstances we're under. I have to get clarity on these things, or risk a popular decision today that will lead to disaster later.

Why am I so excited about alternative government? Well, the juxtaposition of co-operative government and alternative government is misleading. The two are not opposites. We can provide voters with a choice and an alternative, but we can work very co-operatively together, as Tasneem and I do every day.

Tasneem Essop

On the split in the ANC - I think it's too strong to call it a split. There are differences, strongly voiced, but it's not a split and I honestly don't believe it's along racial lines. It's along opinion lines. Some of that has come out in public discourse, but it's certainly not a split.

Judith February

Thanks to all our panelists and our audience. We have looked at some real challenges here tonight, and had some excellent discussion.

END