

HERMANUS UPRISING AND THE FORMATION OF THE LAND PARTY



A BRIEF HISTORY AND SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

According to Stats SA and the General Household Survey report (<http://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=7678>), The Overstrand municipality is the most racially segregated municipality in South Africa. Hermanus is widely known as a holiday playground for predominantly wealthy white people. The sprawling mansions and picturesque views in Hermanus are in stark contrast, however, to the overcrowded, cramped, neglected and under-serviced settlements of Zwelihle, Mount Pleasant and Hawston.

The Overstrand Municipality has failed dismally to plan for and provide adequate land and services to meet the growing population and needs of our poorer communities. There is no access to affordable housing for the middle class – the people who work to keep Hermanus ticking – and any land that was available for such housing has quickly been sold off by the municipality for the development of further luxury boutique hotels, conferencing centres, golf courses, gated estates, retirement villages etc. benefiting only the rich. These dodgy deals and the associated corruption in the municipality have been questioned and investigated for the last 20 years, sadly to no avail.

Enter Gcobani Ndzongana in 2006, a hugely respected Zwelihle community leader, social activist and hero to the poor and working class people of South Africa, regardless of race, religion, creed or culture. He became well known in Hermanus years ago through his involvement in social compacts as well as environmental activism against the nuclear plant proposed in Bantamsklip (<http://bantamsklip.org/home/our-team-2/>). Above all, Gcobani is a sincere and compassionate human with no interest in money or popularity. It was through his discipline, strength, wisdom, courage, humility and perseverance that he managed to do what nobody else could. He united and mobilised communities to stand up and demand that the municipality be held to account for their outrageous and blatant disregard for and neglect of the poorer communities in the Overstrand through their corruption and greed.

WHAT SPARKED THE 2018 RIOTS IN HERMANUS?

The story of how we got to this point reached a climax with the breaking down of a fence that the municipality put up to separate the white community of Sandbaai from the black community of Zwelihle. The white community was actually furious that it was a fence and not a wall, as they wanted to entirely block out the black community from their view. This fence was seen as a symbol of apartheid by many and served only to divide and segregate further. The homeless, starving and destitute black people watched this fence being erected while they wondered where their families would sleep that night. A group of 300 or so angry Zwelihle residents used their combined strength to knock that fence down. Gcobani Ndzongana was immediately arrested and incarcerated even though he did not actively participate in kicking down the fence. The Zwelihle community was furious and gathered to

march peacefully to the police station to hand themselves in as the actual perpetrators of the offense. They were met with rubber bullets and tear gas before they reached their destination.

A harrowing two-weeks followed. The only demand: free Gcobani Ndzongana. The protest, starting out peacefully, turned into a full-blown riot when a thinly staffed and stressed police force used unnecessary brute force and violence to try and stop the protesters from gaining access to the main road in Hermanus. The community of Zwelihle fought back and succeeded in getting South African Minister of Police, Bheki Cele to intervene and address parties on both sides of the proverbial fence. The riot came to a halt at last, but not without its casualties. A young baby died from tear gas inhalation, a pregnant woman lost her unborn baby due to tear gas inhalation, a young man went blind after being shot in the eye by a rubber bullet, a police man was brutally axed in the head, municipal buildings were torched and destroyed, Hermanus business suffered.

THE RACISTS' REVENGE

Thanks to the biased and racially prejudiced "reporting" from a local tourist information Facebook page called *Mywhalecoast - Kleinmond Hermanus Stanford Gansbaai*, the Zwelihle community were portrayed as barbarians, terrorists and thugs. Politicians adopted this narrative too. The racially motivated and overtly racist hate speech emanating from the white community in response was shocking and abhorrent. While the racial tension was escalating, Gcobani Ndzongana was released on bail and some of the charges against him were dropped. A victory for his supporters and an outrage for the predominantly racist white community.

Throughout all of these happenings in Hermanus, a group of white right wing business owners formed a forum to share their fear and hate-fuelled "intelligence" about Gcobani Ndzongana and others. The "voice" of this forum was a self-confessed white supremacist and new world order and white genocide conspiracy theorist. He went on a relentless WhatsApp voice note rampage spreading false rumours, suspicions and downright lies that sent many Hermanus residents into a frenzied panic, and further fuelled their fear of and hate for the black community of Zwelihle and the white people standing with them.

Private security companies were popping up overnight, patrolling the white suburbs and removing any black and brown people they found walking in the streets of these neighbourhoods.

AN UNEXPECTED TWIST

In the midst of brewing hatred, fear and division, some surprising friendships were blossoming in the background. A civil rights organisation called Overstrand Unite, started gaining traction and worked hard to facilitate relationships and understanding between people of all race groups, cultures, communities and political affiliations in the Overstrand to break down the racial divide and to hold the municipality to account for their alleged

corruption, racism and greed. As a multiracial, multicultural front, Overstrand Unite, with Gcobani Ndzongana, compiled a list of 22 demands that they handed over at a historic meeting with the municipality on the 5th of November 2018. The meeting was chaired by HRC Commissioner, Chris Nissen, who stated that this was the beginning of a process to resolve the problem once and for all and not a negotiation. The Overstrand Municipality responded 2 days later with an officious letter with legalise responses and no regard for the people suffering because of their transgressions. Overstrand Unite then organised a peaceful protest outside the Overstrand Municipality offices in Hermanus on 5 December 2018. Thousands of black, brown and white people from all over the Overstrand joined together in solidarity in the pouring rain to demand that Helen Zille investigate corruption in the Overstrand Municipality, with particular regard to the Municipal Manager, Coenie Groenewald. It was a beautiful, peaceful, joyful and united day as people danced and sang waiting for Helen Zille's arrival.

During the peaceful demonstration, however, a number of white bakkies and white right wing racists were following the group of protesters, hanging around the police photographing them and trying to intimidate them. One such right wing antagonist was none other than Willem Petzer, accompanied by Afriforum, hiding safely behind the gates of the municipality where only police and press were allowed. In one of Petzer's fake news videos about this peaceful protest, he mentions his contact in the Overstrand Municipality who has been feeding him information about the events in Hermanus and the people involved. It has since been revealed that the contingent of white right wingers present that day were there to start the civil war should any violence break out. Sadly, for them, it remained peaceful and Helen Zille signed the memorandum and vowed to investigate the corruption in the municipality and seek legal advice on removing Coenie Groenewald from council. A sweet victory for Overstrand Unite and all the participating protestors, but a thorn in the side of the right wingers seemingly so desperate for a race war.

THE WHITE RIGHT HATE INTENSIFIES

The more support and respect Gcobani Ndzongana garnered, particularly from white people in the Overstrand, the more vicious, hateful and fearful the right wing became. His alliance with Overstrand Unite and his efforts to stand united with white and brown people was too much for these racists to handle. The white women in particular are threatened, bullied and harassed online and in person every single day by these ignorant and nasty individuals. Waking up to death threats and having white bakkies follow them to their homes, receiving threatening phone calls and messages, their places of work being contacted, being called satanists, witches and demons, and their children being threatened have become the order of the day for these women. You might recognize the names of at least three of these women: Vanessa Swanepoel, Mandy Owens and Leandra Da Silva.

Vanessa Swanepoel has undoubtedly received the worst of it as these right wingers somehow believe that she is solely responsible for orchestrating the riots in Hermanus. Her face, home address, business address, phone number and full personal history have gone viral

internationally thanks to right wing leaders from NKP “Swaart Maandag” and ACDP WhatsApp groups, Willem Petzer and Hermanus locals also publicly naming and shaming her. These women are considered the most dangerous “volks veraaiers” and calls for their rape and murder are made by the right wing without even batting an eyelid.

THE LAND PARTY IS FORMED

Community leaders and members from Zwelihle and their supporters realised that they needed a political platform to fight the corruption and racism that has had such a devastating effect on their lives. The poor, the working class and the down-trodden felt that they had no political home with any of the existing parties and decided to form a political party and asked Gcobani Ndzongana to help them.

The Land Party was born through social activism and its mandate is to never stray from serving the people as social activists.

The Land Party constitution can be broken down into three basic tenets: Language, Character and Ideology.

LAND PARTY LANGUAGE

Our language is communicated through pure socialism that accommodates the poor, the rich, the working class and the most destitute and downtrodden. We believe strictly in people before profit.

Our guiding principle is humanistic love for the people of South Africa, particularly the poorest of the poor. We are led by the heart and we will always remain grounded with the people. We will continue to live with the people, walk with the people, talk with the people and continuously ask and understand what makes them happy and take dedicated action to fulfil that happiness. Money or greed will never be a driving force for Party members. We are prepared to sacrifice ourselves entirely, down to our last cent, to serve the people of South Africa. Through strict discipline, strong, accountable leaders and bravery, we seek to create a Socialist South Africa that empowers and educates all citizens of South Africa to become self-sustainable.

Our principle focus will be on the economy of South Africa as we seek to open up and reform government. Through socialist modernisation, strong and accessible investment opportunities, upholding and improving a free and open market economy seeing macroeconomic growth, growing South Africa’s gold reserves, a strong focus on modern agricultural practices and effective land redistribution, emphasis on science and technology, working cooperatively with businesses, prioritising local products as well as strong ties with political alliances across the world, we plan to build South Africa’s economy as one of the strongest in the world.

LAND PARTY CHARACTER

Our character is largely based on the communist values of SHARING. We will work tirelessly to promote and protect the people we serve and always uphold democratic centralism and the people's dictatorship.

We are not sexist, racist, homophobic or against any religion. We are anti-imperialism, we are anti-tribalism, and we are anti-nationalism. Our collective wisdom, heart and connection with the people will guide us consistently and constructively in carrying out action in the name of all the people of South Africa.

We are kind, courteous, loving and empathetic always. We will always be accessible to the people and remain grounded and ready at all times to act and serve. We believe that through UNITY, this country can succeed at anything. We will always be victorious and will never accept defeat.

LAND PARTY IDEOLOGY

Democratic centralism is at the heart of our Party. We understand that we are in South Africa, and therefore, our guiding ideologies are always influenced and transformed in the context of South Africa. Our constitution will never be rigid or static, but evolve with the times and the needs of the people.

We draw influence from Marxism/Leninism, Mao Zedong thought and Chief Leader Thought with South African characteristics. We have learnt from the failures of previous lines of thought, and we have renewed and modernised the lines of thought that will work to grow South Africa's economy and empower and uplift all the people of South Africa. We do not believe in rigid communism. Our guiding ideologies are adaptable with distinct South African identity and culture and focused always on liberating the people of South Africa.

We seek to advance the culture of socialism in South Africa through democratic centralism, South African patriotism and unity, upholding the rights of the people and educating them on their rights, and most importantly on love for all people.

The Land Party Ideology was formed by young, dynamic and pragmatic social activists representing all races and cultural backgrounds. Vast amounts of research and collective wisdom has been put into the constitution to introduce a new era for South African politics. South Africa has a fairly short, but very complicated history, revealing many failures on the part of political leaders seeking only to enrich themselves.

The Land Party is the vanguard of the people of South Africa and we are excited to present to the people a creative, youth-inspired and humanistic mash-up of ideologies as the best possible solution to the problems we face in South Africa. We are ready to sacrifice everything for the people and we are the only Party providing hope to the people through action, results and wholehearted love and empathy for the people that make South Africa so unique and special.