

Gauteng Provincial Congress: We can be proud of the movement we are building together by Mmusi Maimane

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VIVA GAUTENG, viva!

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Fellow Democrats,

It is good to be home! Promise of hope and the province of change.

The spirit of the South African youth is strong in Gauteng. This province really fills me with hope like no other.

The streets are bustling with people from all walks of life. I feel their energy, and their desire to make South Africa a better place.

We have a good story to tell in the Western Cape, and I am proud of the work we are doing in Parliament, but my heart is truly in Gauteng! Khumbul'ekhaya!

Today we come together to build a stronger DA for a better Gauteng.

Twenty years of liberation movements should be succeeded by change. It is this that we must celebrate, the work that the DA is doing and will continue to do.

Just over a year ago I stood in Walter Sisulu Square, together with 8000 fellow South Africans, and thousands more watching at home, and called on the people of this great province to take our destiny into our hands.

I am happy that so much has changed since then. I am really humbled by the change we brought to this province together, and I am grateful that I can share the celebration of this change with you today.

Five years ago the ANC won 64% of the vote for the Gauteng ballot. Today, thanks to our hard work, that number now stands at 53%. They say they have won convincingly but it was a penalty shootout and they know it.

But while the ANC is losing ground, the DA has grown from strength to strength. From 21% in 2009 to 30% in 2014, it is clear that we are making great progress.

I must therefore thank the hardworking DA members of this province who stood up, who got to work, and who said "yes, we believe in change"!

It is through your help that we have gotten the DA so far. Together we have shown the ANC in Gauteng that we are not going to accept their corruption and poor service delivery.

We are not happy with the state of our Province. Bagaetsho, we say when we are unhappy we vote differently. They say they won't forgive us when we do, but we must remind them that the very essence of democracy is that if you dislike the government then you vote that government out.

We are not happy with the state of our schools and hospitals.

We are not happy with the state of our roads, or with the E-tolls proudly delivered to us by the ANC.

But despite our great success in the election earlier this year, the fight has really only just begun.

Over the past two weeks, as we have seen chaos in Parliament, it has become clear to me that the ANC government does not have the interests of the people of South Africa at heart. They have given up on our democracy.

The ANC majority in Parliament allowed President Zuma to get away with the theft of our money at Nkandla, and build himself a palace. This was money that was meant to go to building houses, providing services and creating jobs.

But the President decided that his needs were more important than those of the people he was elected to serve. These are people from Protea South, where money meant to solve the dolomite problem was used at Nkandla.

The ANC has failed the people of South Africa. The party of liberation is now a party which has left the people behind.

The ANC has become the party of patronage and corruption, with members of Parliament being dictated to by the masters of Luthuli House.

The only mandate that is now prevalent is the mandate of Luthuli House, the mandate to protect President Zuma at all costs. The people are left behind.

There is no separation between an ANC-led government and the ANC party, with the interests of the party being placed above the interests of the people it is meant to serve.

It is for this reason that after 20 years of democracy, we still face the legacy of Apartheid in our land. There is still a great divide between the rich and the poor.

Our fight is for freedom people can use.

In Gauteng – a province rich in natural resources – we see those in Alexandra living in the shadow of the riches of Sandton.

So many South Africans are attracted to the wealth of Gauteng, and the opportunities it holds. Johannesburg is overflowing with people who flock to the city in search of a better life. They long to get a good job, to own a house, to have a family and be able to provide for them. They long to be happy.

But jobs are scarce and competition is strong. Many of these people, who simply want to get ahead, are forced to live in poverty unable to provide for themselves and their families.

I am filled with frustration when I see how our government has become an obstacle to hard working South Africans in their quest for freedom they can use.

Yet Democrats, this does not have to be the case. It is time for the electorate to awaken to the fact that the burden of accountability rests on their shoulders.

It is time that we replace the ANC government that only serves the needs of the few, with a DA government that will serve the needs of the people.

In the Western Cape the DA has shown what a government free from corruption can offer. We have shown the people of the Western Cape that the DA is a party of principles that works tirelessly in service of those who voted us into government.

But the success story of the Western Cape does not have to be unique to that province. We can roll out accountable government across this vast land, even if we have to do so one municipality at a time.

The people of Gauteng – and of South Africa in general – have the power of change in their hands. And by power I don't mean load shedding.

The beauty of democracy is the ability to reject a government that does not deliver and replace it with one that will. In 2016 the people of Gauteng can vote for accountability, service delivery and equal opportunity for all.

And as I have said before, once the people lend us their votes; if we do not deliver, they can take their votes back.

But the truth is that the DA will deliver. The DA is the Party of delivery. The DA is the Party of the future of South Africa.

Democrats, we can be proud of the movement we are building together.

It is easy to criticise the ANC and say that the DA will do better, but I would not say so if I did not believe it to be true.

Our party is succeeding not because the ANC is failing so dismally. The DA is succeeding because of the dedication of its members to building a better South Africa.

From our unflinching leaders who face-off daily with Luthuli House, down to the activists who work tirelessly for accountability and service delivery on the ground; the DA is fighting to ensure the survival of the democratic dream in our land.

Building a strong party that regardless of the outcome of today's congress, unity must prevail, patronage must be rooted out, and that the DA is always bigger than any individual.

The DA is the future of a democratic South Africa!

AMANDLA!

I have a dream for Gauteng and for this nation.

I dream about a province where those without jobs are not left to fend for themselves.

I dream about a province where the water is always running, the lights are always on, and where children can play in safety and without fear.

I dream about a province that epitomises the non-racial, open opportunity society for which the DA strives. This is a society where the colour of your skin does not determine your fate in life.

That is the dream for my own two small children and the dream for your children and your grandchildren.

But this does not have to be a dream. I said it a year ago, and I will say it again: our destiny is in our hands.

Together we can rewrite the story of Gauteng based on the DA's vision for an open opportunity society.

In our story, people from diverse backgrounds will have the same chances of success.

Children will get a good education regardless of whether they go to school in Houghton or Alexandra. They will go on to university, graduate with a degree and live prosperous lives. They must know that as we marched in Eldorado Park against drugs, we will ensure that their children don't face the assault of drugs.

Their parents will have jobs, and although they may not be rich, they will be able to put food on the table and a roof over their heads. They will not worry about the safety of their sons and daughters, and they will live in peace and security.

Their grandparents will be taken care of and receive proper health care regardless of which hospital they go to. They will grow old in dignity, content with the knowledge that their grandchildren face a brighter future than they ever did.

In our story small businesses will flourish and investor confidence will rise. This will create real jobs and truly grow our economy. Unemployment will decrease and quality of life will rise.

We must fill potholes, keep the lights on, have houses that last.

The people of this province who suffered immensely after apartheid know that things aren't easy but they don't want the same for their children.

They want the use of the IT growth in this province to bring out small businesses that will increase jobs. They may be on social grants but they don't want to stay there forever. What they need is less dependency on the state.

This story will be written by the Democratic Alliance but it will be written together with the people of Gauteng.

Twenty years ago, Gauteng was home to the birth of the new South Africa when Nelson Mandela was inaugurated as the first democratically elected President of the Republic.

That day saw the culmination of a struggle for freedom that so many of you here were a part of.

We owe it to ourselves not let the hope and pride we felt on that day fade away.

The province that gave birth to our democracy must now see that it is upheld.

The beauty of it all, will be the day that the Nelson Mandela Amphitheater at the Union Buildings will be in a DA run municipality.

Too many made the ultimate sacrifice to get South Africa to where it is today for us to let that dream slip away.

We must not let the ANC lead this country down a path of destruction. We need to go to every corner of this province and spread the story of the DA, for the DA has a good story to tell.

Unlike the ANC, the DA is not a party that buys loyalty from its members through cadre deployment. We do not reward those who toe the party line with promotions, and punish those who question it.

Unlike the masters of Luthuli House, the DA leadership believes in the strength of a democratic organization where differences of opinion are treated with respect.

The DA does not seek to govern in pursuit of self-enrichment and personal benefit. We reject corruption and cronyism. We do not merely seek the perks of office like President Zuma and his Cabinet.

The DA seeks to govern this great land in order to serve its people and see it reach its true potential. That is the true spirit of our democracy.

We must follow the example set by President Mandela and work to bridge the divides of the past.

It is for this reason that the DA will continue to fight for accountability, constitutional government and the rights and freedoms enshrined in the supreme law of this land.

This fight will only be won when the people of this land reject the ANC in favour of a DA government that can turn this province and this country around.

The DA is ready to govern. We have shown it in the Western Cape, and we have shown it in Midvaal. Our structures are strong and our members are unwavering in their commitment to serve the people of this land.

I call on you to rise up, to take a stand, and take our destiny into your hands.

Together we can fight for change, and the fulfilment of the democratic dream.

Together we can turn this province blue, one municipality at a time.

I thank you.