

Letters to the Editor

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Bare facts on Nkandla

DEAR EDITOR — The release of the results of the investigation by the task team set up to probe the alleged spending of public money on Nkandla, just hours before the Bafana Bafana match, was curiously timed. Nonetheless, it was in keeping with the government's promise that a swift investigation would be conducted and the result announced to the public.

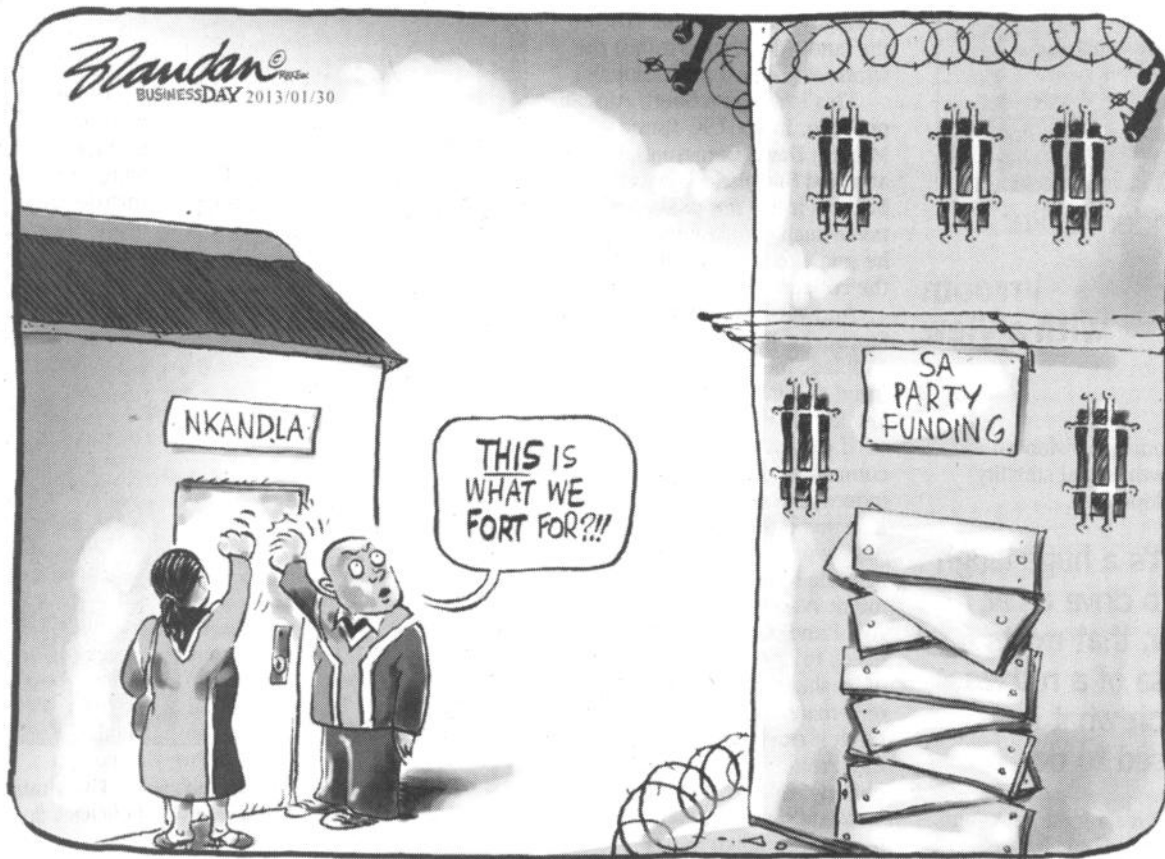
While in the mind of South Africans the result of the investigation is bound to compete for attention with the analysis of the match and the national team's advancement in the tournament, South Africans can at least put the issue behind them. They have been told that no public money was spent on the president's personal homestead. The country can now move on to celebrate Bafana Bafana's advancement in the tournament — if only it were that easy.

Incidentally, all accounts of the news conference at which the result of the investigation was announced somehow remind me of an exchange long ago. The story dates back to 1949. Marilyn Monroe was alleged to have posed nude for a calendar — in those days, care was taken in the presentation of such photographs to leave the really interesting bit to one's imagination. A young and curious reporter who had seen and wondered about the photograph, to no end, approached Ms Monroe to ask her if indeed she did not have anything on when the photograph was taken. She retorted that she had "the radio on".

Public Works Minister Thulas Nxesi reported that only R206m was spent on security upgrades and operational requirements but no public money was spent on the upgrading of President Jacob Zuma's Nkandla residence. He also reported that there were supply chain irregularities in the procurement processes. This makes one wonder that if irregularities can creep into such an ostensibly high-security prestige project — what happens at the level of projects that are not so classified?

People have not stopped wondering about the truth in the Marilyn Monroe story. We sure have not heard the last of this prestige project.

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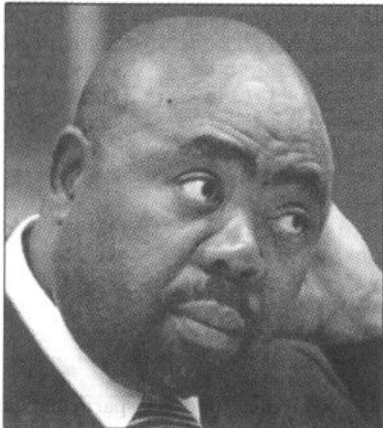
I won't help shine president's shoes

DEAR EDITOR — Donald Trump accused the sitting president of the US, Barack Obama, of lying. President Obama used reason, intellect and political maturity to silence him.

In Africa, Mr Trump would be dead or his business shut down. Keith Khoza, Jackson Mthembu and Gwede Mantashe would be fuming and calling his actions "treason". If Mr Trump was FirstRand CE Sizwe Nxasana, he would be sending a sheepish message to apologise for being rude.

So much for participatory democracy. We live in an Orwellian world as Big Brother intimidates to close down space for dialogue. He crushes dissenting voices. The road ahead to a proverbial African century is uncertain. Goodbye to Nkrumah's dream. On May 24 1963, in his "Africa unite" speech, then Ghana president Kwame Nkrumah laid down a blueprint for a prosperous and united Africa.

A new breed of leaders is making their mark. Gambia's Fatou Bensouda in the International Criminal Court, Sudanese Mo Ibrahim and Tanzania's Dr Frannie Leautier — they are flying Africa's flag high on the international stage. Malawi's first female president, Joyce Hilda Banda, is paving a new path. Unfortunately, she is still an exception and not the norm in African leadership.



Leaders such as Confederation of African Football president Issa Hayatou represent the past. He was in power when Nelson Mandela was in prison. Mr Mandela has long retired but Mr Hayatou is still here. A new Africa cannot grow from fossil ideas.

The Nkandlagate saga symbolises an old Africa that refuses to die.

Public Works Minister Thulas Nxesi spoils my Sunday. It is fine if party apparatchiks choose to shine the president's shoes. But don't ask the electorate to help you. Many have dubbed his Sunday press conference, explaining the public spending on President Jacob Zuma's private

Nkandla residence, a "whitewash". To me it is intsomi (a folk story). As the Australians did to Lance Armstrong's life story, I will also classify Mr Nxesi's findings as fictional. The truth is somewhere out there. Africa cannot succeed with such leaders at the helm.

I pity Mr Nxasana. How can you apologise for loving and wanting the best for your country?

Peter Bruce got it wrong (Thick end of the wedge, January 28). It is not just the duty of the media and "tough" leaders to speak power to the truth. We — young and old, rural and urban, black and white — must speak up.

Start a dialogue. The alternative is bloodshed. The destructive pathway chosen by the Malian rebels, al-Shabaab in Somalia, and Boko Haram in Nigeria, leads to hatred and pain. In 2013, Africans cannot rely on bullets to solve their differences. Let us build and not further destroy Africa.

As the legendary Senegalese music star Youssou N'Dour said: "We are building a new Africa. We want a continent where power is returned to the people...."

No corruption. No Big Man Syndrome. No wars. No lies. No poverty.

Africa can lead. Africa can prosper. Africa must unite.

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