

City Press online, 2 February 2020

Memories of February 2 1990

It has been 30 years since FW de Klerk announced the unbanning of the ANC, SACP, PAC and other political organisations of the liberation movement in South Africa. City Press spoke to seven prominent individuals about what that moment symbolised for them

It has been 30 years since then president FW de Klerk announced the unbanning of the African National Congress, South African Communist Party, Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and other political organisations of the liberation movement in South Africa.

His speech changed the course and politics of South Africa for ever. City Press spoke to seven prominent individuals, some of whom are still active in politics, about what that moment symbolised for them. Anti-apartheid activist and Speaker of the National Assembly Thandi Modise Thandi Modise It didn't amount to much for me emotionally, because it angered me. At the time I had just gotten out of prison. I had a wasted youth, in the sense that if I had been white I would have completed what I had wanted to study.

This announcement meant that we could express ourselves and it was an opportunity for us to get a chance to come home and see our families after a long time in prison. South Africa is a very young democracy and we are still busy flexing our democratic muscles. We are trying out different kinds of emphasis to reach out to our people. There will come a time where our politics will settle down. I think we are disagreeing a lot, but sometimes when we look at the manifestos, we realise that we are not far apart. ANC struggle stalwart Mavuso Msimang Mavuso Msimang

At the time I was in Ethiopia with the United Nations Children's Fund, for whom I was managing an emergency programme for Eritrea. We listened in, and everybody was glued to televisions and listening to the radio. I mean people jumped up with excitement. People were still excited even after the announcement – this helped them

gain more motivation. The feelings I had were of being overjoyed. After many decades of struggle, at long last, we see the struggle give birth to fruition. I pay tribute to FW de Klerk for having the common sense to realise that this country would not have an apartheid system by force. February the second made it possible for all of us to map out a possible future for South Africa. DA Federal Council chair Helen Zille Helen Zille I was walking to my son's pre-primary school for a parent-teacher meeting when the announcement was made. By the time I arrived, the news was spreading, and I noticed some parents gathered excitedly at the entrance to the classroom.

They told me the news. At first, I didn't believe it. But, as other parents arrived, they had heard the same version on their car radios. Eventually it sunk in and I knew the stalemate had been broken, and we could avoid a civil war. There had been a seismic shift in the political landscape, and we could now seriously get to work building the new South Africa. Anti-apartheid activist Frank Chikane Frank Chikane We were expecting the unbanning of political parties for a very long time, and people didn't believe that it would be happening any time soon. When it did happen, people were surprised and didn't know what to do with it, because nobody planned for it.

We focused more on the releasing of late president Nelson Mandela soon after the unbanning of the organisation. There was a lot of excitement. Anti-apartheid activist Sydney Mufamudi Sydney Mufamadi There are some of us who were in the internal leadership then and were privy to the fact that there were talks under way, and that one of the things we should anticipate was the unbanning, so we were not surprised. Democratisation is permanent work in progress. There was a period after 1994 when the trajectory was one of improvement over a sustained period of time. In 2009 we started to experience a decline, which is why today we see the Zondo commission trying to look at these problems characterised as state capture. It had a debilitating impact on the political and governance process in the country.

I think since December 2017, we have started to see an improvement when you look at the quality of governance. Good party leader and Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure Patricia de Lille Patricia de Lille When I heard the announcement on the second of February I was in Zimbabwe, organising a meeting with the internal and external PAC. When we heard this message, we came together with the external PAC

to discuss the next move after hearing this news. We questioned: "Why now?" Our analysis was that the decision was not entirely because they wanted to lift the ban, but because of international pressure. At the time, apartheid was considered a crime against humanity. It was just due to the international pressure. Former National Party and Cope MP Nic Koornhof I was one of the young members of Parliament on February 2, 1989 and I was sitting there, listening to this absolutely fantastic news. I became a member of Parliament in 1987 and I retired during the last elections, so I have seen everything in South Africa. I was there in '94 when Mandela was sworn in. If I can quote Koos Bekker, he said there was more wealth created in South Africa under an ANC government, in the last 25 years, than in the previous 300 years. That is true. Democracy has, however, brought a lot of other stuff. Security is a big problem because people do not feel safe. Queenin