

# Daily Dispatch

## Partying in face of death

**O**UR provincial bosses seem to have lost sight of the needs of the people. Communities cry out for better services, in some cases any services. They lack essential things like emergency medical care, clean water, sanitation, roads and proper structures for their schools.

Yet in their wisdom Bhishe bosses have decided to fork out over R26-million this coming financial year to celebrate national days, political figures and other events.

Ironically, the same day that the Dispatch reported on this decision we ran another story right alongside that one, revealing that Bhishe would have to act as “babysitter” for 13 “dysfunctional” municipalities in the 2015-16 financial year.

Professional teams will be sent to support these municipalities that are struggling to conduct day-to-day operations. Some of these are home to the poorest and neediest communities in the province. Their needs are the dire ones set out above.

It is against this backdrop that the decision to spend R26-million on “celebrations” is particularly difficult to understand.

And it becomes even more perplexing in the light of our front page story yesterday revealing the critical need for proper emergency medical services in the province.

A special hearing of the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) has been sitting in East London this week after an investigation by the Eastern Cape Health Crisis Action Coalition (ECHCAC) revealed that emergency medical services in the province are life-threateningly compromised.

Ambulance response times are poor, equipment at hospitals is in short supply, competent staff are lacking and ambulances struggle to travel on rural roads due to their bad state.

Heartbreaking stories emerged in which it was alleged that the government’s inability to deliver an elementary emergency medical service was causal in some patients dying.

Why are these matters not the most urgent priority – on which any available millions are spent? How can we afford, let alone think of, holding so-called “celebrations” when lives are being lost?

Delivering her policy speech recently, sport, recreation, arts and culture MEC Pemmy Majodina said the millions would be used for, among others, marking Freedom Month, African Month, Youth Day, the Ngquza Hill massacre, a former ANC secretary-general Reverend James Calata, Nelson Mandela, the Bhishe massacre and Dr Walter Benson Rubusane.

Of what use are these events to poverty-stricken communities?

Theirs are the fundamental needs that require attention – not events with the potential to translate into more money laundering or self-promotion exercises ahead of the local government elections next year.



# Transform beyond colour

**E**ARLIER this week, University of Cape Town associate Professor Xolela Mangu heralded on these pages, a protest at the university that included the soiling of Cecil John Rhodes’ statue, as genuinely transformative and marking race as a central issue. It had the potential to initiate new political and social transformation, he said (“Shattering myth that race doesn’t matter” DD, March 24).

I have a problem with the compression of whiteness into the figure of Rhodes and the assumption that the transformation issue at UCT is simply a racial one. Surely it is about the kind of universities we want rather than the colour of the leadership and academics?

The actions of the students at UCT legitimately highlight the problem of having a potent colonial symbol like Rhodes appearing prominently on the grounds of a South African university without qualification, justification and signage. Why is there nothing to indicate exactly how and why he is there, and what the university thinks of his presence, his history and legacy?

This was clearly a massive oversight on the part of UCT’s senior administration. It should have been dealt with long before vice chancellor Max Price took office, by his predecessors, Mampela Rampele and Ndebele Njabulo. The Rhodes statue issue has also ignited lively debate elsewhere about the colonial history and legacy of universities. In the Eastern Cape there is an animated debate again about the naming of Rhodes and Fort Hare universities, as well as in Zimbabwe over whether his remains should be removed from the Matopo’s.

At Fort Hare, the SRC has demanded that the university’s name be changed to Robert Sobukwe University, which the leadership at Fort Hare has so far rejected. At Rhodes, some students insist that the new vice chancellor, Dr Sizwe Mabizela, change the university’s name as a matter of urgency.

The reluctance of institutions to do this, especially universities with long and distinguished histories like Rhodes and

## LESLIE BANK

Fort Hare, is understandable given that they enjoy considerable international brand recognition. And in both cases these brands are associated with leadership and excellence in different fields.

Everyone knows that Nelson Mandela went to Fort Hare and that Rhodes has a record of academic excellence befitting of an association with the internationally renowned Rhodes scholarship. To drop these names would send both institutions a long way back in the queue of wannabe universities scrambling for global recognition and resources.

A possible loss in donor funding makes the decision a tough one, but probably one he will eventually have to make. The Rhodes-Mandela University might have been a good compromise strategy a decade ago, had it not been for the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. It would have signaled Oxford level ambition, while endorsing their slogan – where African leaders learn. But I think that moment has passed now.

Fort Hare is an interesting case. While the university carries the name of a colonial military colonel whose job it was to pacify the Xhosa people, Fort Hare as a brand means something very different. It is a global marker of blackness, of the agency of African people in their own liberation struggle and is synonymous with the rise of African nationalism in southern Africa.

In this case colonial symbolism or a name has been emptied of its original meaning. To change this university’s name would indeed lose some of the power of that special history.

The Rhodes legacy in South Africa is a complicated one and he cannot be easily erased from our landscape. He is still around everywhere in our society.

Rhodes was also not only a man with racist views – like virtually all white men of power in his generation – and a cham-

panion of racially based segregationist policies in South Africa, but he also represented colonial globalised capitalism. And the modern version of this – neoliberalism – is the official economic policy of the ANC government.

It is here that Rhodes’ whiteness blurs. Indeed, many of his ideas and inventions have been uncritically adopted by our post-apartheid government and are clearly reflected in ANC policy.

Rhodes’ legacy clearly goes much further than his whiteness. It is part and parcel of our national political and economic landscape.

In the Eastern Cape, he promoted land tenure reform to increase production from African farmers for colonial markets, which is not very different from the ANC emerging farmer programmes, which seek increased production for global markets.

The Communal Land Rights Act of 2004 was almost a carbon copy of Rhodes’ Glen Grey Act of 1885, which he pushed through the Cape parliament.

He was also the architect of mixed government in rural areas, where chiefs ruled together with elected officials. The ANC has adopted this approach since 1994 through the retention of tribal or traditional authorities combined with democratic local authorities.

Many disagree and demand full democracy in rural areas.

There is obviously a need for much more recognition in the debate about the continuities of his legacy and what people say about this across a number of spheres of the society and economy.

Isn’t it also true that many white and black students at UCT embrace the prestige attached to the Euro-centric Oxbridge style of higher education they receive there? It gives them status and recognition they would not receive graduating from historically black universities. Isn’t this why many students are at UCT in the first place? To gain access to the global reach of so-called “whiteness”.

Is this also not why Mangu himself works at UCT, rather than Fort Hare or Walter Sisulu University, which would be much closer to his beloved Steve Biko

Centre? And does rejecting Rhodes and his whiteness also mean rejecting the university with its current curriculum, intellectual content and organisational forms, not just the colour of its staff?

Should we drop the western ideas of academic excellence or the globally accepted standards to which this university aspires and replace them with a knowledge structure that reflects indigenous African culture and local knowledge?

Many at Fort Hare would say yes, but what do the UCT students say? What kind of education do they want and is it possible to remove whiteness from higher education altogether?

The students at UCT complain they can’t breathe because of the “suffocating whiteness” of the institution.

But is the answer to simply replace this with what might become “suffocating nationalism” retained in an island of disconnected elitism.

This has been the model for many post-colonial African institutions where more effort has been placed on de-racialising them than decolonising them.

Now, I do see why it might be necessary to remove Rhodes’ grave and remains from the Matopo Hills in Zimbabwe where his body was inserted among the graves of great chiefs in an African ancestral landscape. That seems rude and inappropriate.

But to deny him a spot in the grounds of UCT seems more like denial, or an attempt to erase history.

The fact is, he is part of this landscape and government policy whether one likes it or not.

There are undoubtedly urgent issues of transformation to be addressed at UCT and to the extent that soiling Rhodes’ statue brought these to the fore, I welcome this. I also acknowledge the power of Rhodes as a symbol of oppression. But let’s not pretend that genuine transformation at UCT is limited to changing the colour of the leadership or academic staff.

Leslie Bank is director and professor of the Fort Hare Institute of Social and Economic Research

## THE CHIEF

# Just a little logic needed

**W**E WERE backwards and forwards to and from our bank the other day, the beloved and I. We wouldn’t have been, had a phone query made in advance to pre-empt the need for more than one trip been answered properly. However, that’s such a high blood pressure-inducing tale, I won’t repeat it here lest the steam starts escaping from my ears again.

The visits highlighted for me one of the questions already on the “Why don’t they...?” list I like to keep.

It’s this: Why don’t banks allow more than one person at a time to enter their premises through their heavy self-locking doors?

“Security,” you’ll probably answer. I would agree – except that as many people as can fit are allowed to pile into the self-locking door area on the way out!

I’d have thought banks should worry about criminals being able to make a quick getaway, rather than restricting how many people get in at a time, wouldn’t you?

Imagine if gang members had to each patiently wait their turn to get out! A huge deterrent, surely.

Also high on my “Why don’t they?” list are ladies loos – especially those in shopping malls! Are they all designed by men?

Why don’t they position ours before the gents’ toilets, and in sight of the entryway? Instead, they’re usually way past the male loos, down long and often lonely passages.

On my six-weekly-or-so visit to the largest mall in town, I’m compelled at least once when I’m there to spend an extra penny (euphemistically speaking).

It’s all the fault of the regular coffee stops needed to keep my spirit up for the miles of walking such a trip entails. A favourite pharmacy is the drawcard, and all would be well if I could just stock up on toiletries and leave, but with my favourite kitchen accessory shop there, too, not to mention a few fine shoe shops, etc, I simply can’t.

I was at the centre earlier this week and it was particularly deserted (sad to say).

When nature called, not only did I have to face a very long and lonely passage, but I also had to turn two corners once I’d passed the Gents! Nerve-racking. Admittedly, I’m wussier than most, but let’s face it, these days it’s dodgy for even the bravest female to venture into lonely places.

A newcomer on my list of “Why don’t they?” has nothing to do with security – just stupidity. Why don’t they toss out an apparent “rule” that says if a remote control accompanying, say, a new DVD player doesn’t work, it can’t be returned or replaced – even if the item it’s accompanying doesn’t work properly either?

We had to take back a faulty DVD player the other day. The large store from which we bought it was happy to send it away for repair. Unfortunately, they couldn’t do the same for the equally faulty remote control that came with it, said the salesman! The store’s efficient manager confirmed the silly regulation but agreed with me it was utterly ridiculous and refunded our money for the whole caboodle.

Luckily it meant there was no need for me to throw a hissy fit – a mostly effective tactic but one I’m reluctant to use unnecessarily (if only to spare the beloved’s blushes).

Today’s Chief is Stevie Godson. E-mail her at [stevieg@wordnerds.co.za](mailto:stevieg@wordnerds.co.za)

## FROM OUR FILES

**MARCH 27 1985:** The Rev Allan Hendrickse yesterday reaffirmed the Labour Party stood for it’s earlier call for the resignation of his cabinet colleague, the Minister of Law and Order, Mr Louis le Grange. The LP stand could spark the first major crisis for the multi-party government coalition under the new tri-cameral system.

**MARCH 27 1965:** A larger than life size bronze bust of General Louis Botha, SA’s first prime minister, was unearthed 6 000 miles away in a sculptor’s workshop in England by a Port Elizabeth antique dealer. The bust has already been purchased by the Umdani Park Trust for Botha House in Natal.

The dealer, Mr CS Love, said it was the find of a lifetime. He bought the bust and shipped it to Port Elizabeth to new owners Umdani Park Trust, who purchased it for the Botha home.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

# Forget Auckland slip – Proteas’ fire burns on for proud fans

**I**HAVE been a proud Proteas fan since I could pronounce the names of the players I saw on the television set at home. I have always been captured by their spirit and this week was no less so by any means.

No man in our team should feel as though the glory was not brought home because that glory has always been here. The Proteas are our glory and our pride.

To correct captain A B De Villiers’ view that they did not make a difference in the nation’s heart and hope – they did, and they always have. A Protea will always survive, remember. And the team has most certainly not been defeated in our hearts.

At the end of the game, I was on a roller coaster ride of emotions but the final stop was a decision to be proud. It may seem dark, but the sun will rise tomorrow and the Protea fire will be burning inside of us. It’s the love, hope, hard work, humility, dedication and more, that keeps this fire burning.

Thank you AB De Villiers for your incredible leadership and thank you Proteas for your amazing journey.

I cannot wait to switch on my television set to watch my conquerors, my team, my Proteas play again. Proudly, and with hope. — Lindokuhle Qabisisa, via e-mail

The bias of Minister Mbaks (Fikile Mbalula) is so clear that he needs his associates to remind him he is black and that it’s now two decades since apartheid was lifted and Africans are free to voice their displeasure and pleasure.

Bafana Bafana lost games after which players like Lerato Chabangu were vocal about Mbalula’s name-calling of the team.

Yet Mbaks has never said a negative word about the Proteas or Springboks, though they lost too. Both have less than five blacks in the team. Bafana never had an issue with colour. Representation was on merit.

It is no good comforting AB and the “good boys” for doing nothing! Chokers again, Mr Minister – say it!

Let’s liberate our minds and base what we say on facts. — Vuyo, via e-mail

THE Proteas played like true warriors. They were beaten by a good team who up to now has not been beaten. New Zealand are really a team to beat, candidates for taking the champions crown this year — Yukile Maki, Mdantsane

## Touchy about tithing

THE book *Tithing is a Lie* by Phumzile Mfenyana (“Tithing is a Lie” book raises

hackles” DD, March 24) refers.

Mfenyana is correct and his book should free people from this abusive practice of church leaders demanding 10% from their flock. These leaders threaten people with curses for not tithing, quoting the prophet Malachi’s words directed to the nations of Israel.

Surely one does not need to be a scholar or even a theologian to read the Bible’s truths. If we study the scriptures, we may be shocked to find that Abraham never tithed on his personal property or livestock; Jacob demanded God bless him FIRST before he could tithe.

Only the Levites were authorised to collect tithes (there are no Levites today). Only farm produce, not money, was tithable.

There is not a single example of a Christian tithing in the New Testament. It seems tithing in the church first appears some years after the Bible was completed.

Jesus said: “freely you have received, freely give.” Jesus did not tithe. He paid taxes.

So, give freely to the needy, the orphans, the poor, the beggars at the robots. Let the pastors work for their keep.

Paul worked as a tentmaker and refused any financial support. — Pat Mbokodi, via e-mail

## De-prioritise partying

THE article “EC to spend millions on celebrations” (DD, March 25) refers. More than R26-million for a couple of parties and celebrations will be spent by party-lover MEC Pemmy Majodina. Not a care in the world that the province is falling apart, roads riddled with potholes, no water, no maintenance of vehicles, the list endless.

That money could really help to fix many problems in the Eastern Cape.

Stop this useless expenditure on fruitless “celebrations” as only a few will benefit once again.

R3.7-million awarded to celebrate the life and times of Nelson Mandela. Who is scoring this time?

This is while the article above this one in the Dispatch reads “13 municipalities in a mess.” How about that for priorities!

You’ve got to love this country! — Leon Strachan, Haven Hills

## A monument too far

RHODES University’s Richard Pithouse justifies the retention of colonial relics in his home town, Durban, while supporting their removal wherever else (“Rhodes – embrace

unexpected moment” DD, March 25). Queen Victoria’s statue in downtown Durban is fine, according to Pithouse, because its surroundings are a “world apart from any sense that the conception of the empire was organised around the cult of Victoria.”

Clearly homesick and displaced from his beloved Durban (famously described not so long ago as the “last outpost of the British Empire”), perhaps the juxtaposition between the township and urban conditions of Grahamstown is too stark for Pithouse.

The reason it is so obvious in Grahams-town is because, unlike in Durban and other places, the planned forced removal of township residents in the 1970s did not happen.

Grahamstonians, led by academics from the very university Pithouse is part of, successfully resisted the removals.

That is not to say conditions in Grahamstown’s township should be tolerated. Pithouse should rather question why they still exist, as I’m sure they also still do in Durban.

Like Durban’s downtown, UCT is not the same place it was when Rhodes’ statue was originally erected there. Likewise, Rhodes University and Grahamstown are transforming and the transformation is

ongoing. To suggest otherwise is plainly dishonest.

As for Pithouse’s objection to the textbook reference to John Stuart Mill’s 1829 essay “On Liberty” being used in university course material as “the starting point for discussions on freedom”, contentious material is often the stuff of academic debate.

Or does Pithouse suggest that the essay should be burned in the same way he supports the toppling of the UCT statue (but please don’t touch Durban’s Queen Victoria). — J C McConnachie, Grahamstown

## NOTE TO WRITERS

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