

# REPRODUCING TOXIC ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

## *Negative Campaigning and Race-Based Politics in the Western Cape*

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### ABSTRACT

*The 2014 election in the Western Cape was once again a high-stakes, fiercely-contested affair. Political parties saw the Western Cape as an 'open race' and the province became the centre of vigorous campaign efforts in the lead-up to the election. The African National Congress (ANC), which had lost control of the province because its vote share dropped from 45% in 2004 to 32% in 2009, hoped to unseat the Democratic Alliance (DA), which had won in 2009 by a very narrow margin (51%). The ANC felt that it had done enough to regain control of the province, especially in light of deep-seated disillusionment in many communities and the violent protests that took place prior to the election. While the ANC maintained its support base, winning votes from 33% of the provincial electorate, the type of identity-based campaign it pursued combined with other factors to work to the DA's advantage. Despite the fact that the DA also engaged in race-based campaigning it won 59% of the provincial vote. This was obtained at the expense of small parties, who received negligible support in the 2014 election. Only the Economic Freedom Fighters and the African Christian Democratic Party won enough votes to obtain a seat each in the provincial legislature. This article examines electoral dynamics in the Western Cape, which saw the consolidation of DA support in the province. It focuses on the 2014 election campaign and the extent to which the negative campaign cycle evident in previous elections continued during the 2014 election campaign.*

### INTRODUCTION

Election outcomes in the Western Cape have been examined through analyses of the 'coloured vote'. Breytenbach (1999, p 117), for example, argued that the

coloured vote was of special significance 'because the outcome of the Western Cape hinged very much on this factor', while a decade later Butler (2009, p 81) noted that in the run-up to the 2009 election the African National Congress (ANC) leadership became alarmed about 'the major realignment of Coloured voters in the province'. Coloured voters do form the majority of the provincial population in the Western Cape – in the 2011 census 49% of the people of the province described themselves as 'coloured'. The Western Cape is also the only province where three different political parties (namely the New National Party – NNP, the ANC and the Democratic Alliance – DA) have held power. The reason for the alternation of power is said to lie with the coloured majority in the province (Africa 2010, p 1).

These analyses provide a good starting point for understanding election outcomes in the province. As elsewhere in the country, race and other forms of identity remain important. South Africa remains a highly racialised society. Not only do historically defined 'race' groups in the Western Cape continue to be confronted with very different forms of persuasion and different information networks, they also have vastly different life experiences. In the democratic dispensation significant efforts have been made to uplift the lives of people impoverished by apartheid. However, life opportunities are still, to a large extent, racially structured. The province, therefore, provides a potent environment for race-based mobilisation and campaign efforts.

Unfortunately these explanations also do not take us very far. Indeed Hoeane (2004) has provided a comprehensive critique of explanations premised on the racially-based motivations of coloured voters in the Western Cape. Hoeane (2004, p 148) asserts that

the historical reality that the coloured people in the province are not wedded to one political party indicates that to ascribe emotive and racialised explanations to the behaviour of 'coloured voters' in the Western Cape is to limit analysis.

Not only, as Hoeane indicates, is this a very limited analysis, it is also a problematic one because it opens up the space for political parties to behave as they see fit in their attempts to attract voters. When the demographic characteristics of the electorate are regarded as the primary determinant of electoral strategy, political parties resort to attack politics and appeals to prejudice and stereotypes. This racially-based explanation of election outcomes has fed into the choices, rhetoric and behaviour of political parties (Africa 2010, p 2).

Rather, the character of campaigns can best be understood through an examination of the interaction between the key electoral role players. According to Buchanan (2001, p 365), three sets of actors are critical to election campaigns – candidates, the media and voters. Buchanan argues that candidate incentives

(of electoral victory) combine with media incentives (the need for peer respect, novelty, immediacy and the pressure of sustaining or increasing readership figures) and with certain traits of the electorate (such as alienation and indifference) to invite and offer rationalisations for the use of manipulation and deception. According to Buchanan (2001, pp 366-370) the difficulties of motivating an often indifferent and inattentive public invite candidates to appeal to narrow self-interest and to emotions like fear, prejudice and anger as well as 'emotional appeals that covertly trigger racial resentment'. Media incentives evoke campaign coverage practices (such as a focus on the most dramatic and conflictual features of the campaign) and discourage extensive or detailed substantive coverage of policies.

The mutually-reinforcing, symbiotic relationship between journalists and candidates drives journalists to produce 'spectacle' news: a genre requiring dramatic or entertaining stories with a focus on evaluating personalities rather than policy-making abilities. Buchanan (2001, p 368) further indicates that 'aggressive campaign rhetoric, even when it conveys factual information potentially useful to voters, reinforces the well-documented public distaste for candidates, politics, parties and government'. Buchanan thus provides a useful model for understanding the campaign environment. Destructive patterns of engagement also manifest in a particular way between incumbent parties and opposition parties. Typically, incumbents defend their record, while the opposition challenges or attacks the record of the incumbent. This is a necessarily conflictual mode of engagement.

To what extent has this destructive pattern of engagement been evident in election campaigning in the Western Cape? This article examines the 2014 election campaign in the province and the extent to which the negative campaign cycle evident in previous elections continued in 2014. It will show that this has been the dominant mode of engagement and that it is exacerbated by attempts to capture the coloured vote. Since 1994 political parties have used race-based campaign strategies with varying degrees of success. Initially, the National Party (NP) achieved success by using racially inflammatory rhetoric to tap into the fears of voters in the Western Cape. This success was short lived because the events which unfolded after that victory contradicted the key message delivered by the NP because campaign messages on their own are not sufficient to persuade voters, they also interact with political developments which occur at both the provincial and national level.

#### ELECTORAL TRENDS IN THE WESTERN CAPE SINCE 1994

Campaigning in the Western Cape has been characterised by aggressive appeals to race-based fears. In 1994 the ANC put a particularly aggressive spin on the nationally-run 'attack, contrast and endorsement' campaign, emphasising the

attack component of the campaign with a series of advertisements asserting that the National Party's economic policy was responsible for the unemployment that had 'struck at the heart of coloured, African and Indian communities in the Western Cape' (Eldridge & Seekings 1995, p 15). Attention was paid to the NP's past record of forced removals, corruption, involvement in 'third force' activities, covert operations it undertook, its backing from 'Witdoek' vigilante leaders and the fact that Hernus Kriel, the NP's candidate for premier of the province was responsible for the notorious Section 29 law, which related to detention conditions (Eldridge & Seekings 1995, pp 15-16).

The NP in its campaign also capitalised on the highly-racialised fears of voters in the province. The vast series of endorsement-type advertisements for the NP utilised images of terrorism, intimidation, burning of collaborators, boycotts and strike action, referring to 'the comrades' as being responsible for violence in the country. The negative depiction of the ANC as a violent and dangerous party that would plunge South Africa into a state of chaos was bolstered by events surrounding the squatter occupation of houses built for coloured people (Giliomee 1994, pp 66-67).

The NP's campaign messages about the ANC's involvement in boycotts, strikes, arson and other acts of violence fell on fertile ground and convinced voters in the Western Cape that the ANC would allow the country to descend into anarchy. This tactic resulted in the NP winning an outright majority of 53.3% of the provincial vote ahead of the ANC's 33%. In the 1994 election the Democratic Party (DP) hardly featured because the election had assumed the character of a presidential race between Nelson Mandela of the ANC and F W de Klerk of the NP (Welsh 1994, p 107). The DP only won 6.6% of the provincial vote.

The 1999 election saw a realignment of politics in the province. The NNP lost its majority status, receiving only 38.4% of provincial votes despite having adopted a new name and a multiracial focus. The NNP manifesto for 1999 professed that the party was the most multiracial party in South Africa, representing 'a broad and inclusive South African patriotism that transcends race, language and religion' (New National Party 1999, p 213). The new focus also sat uncomfortably with the NNP's emphasis on protecting minority rights and its decision to change its name signalled an admission that it had erred and needed to improve.

The ANC in the province also took a softer approach, with appeals for voters simply to give it a chance. As Lodge (1999, p 66) indicates, particular emphasis was placed on 'listening'. Party leaders concentrated on meetings with select groups of community and religious leaders, while branch members focused on household visits. The ANC's campaign efforts might have helped it somewhat, however, the shift in power was largely due to the fact that voters in the Western Cape watched as ANC incumbents at national level led South Africa into a new

era under the leadership of international icon Nelson Mandela. The NNP, on the other hand, lost F W de Klerk as leader and was shamed by the flood of appalling revelations to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Breytenbach 1999, p 119).

While both the NNP and the ANC softened their campaign approach in the 1999 election the DP decided on a more aggressive strategy. Under the leadership of Tony Leon it built this strategy around 'robust opposition', with a focus on government failings, incompetence, corruption and a lack of urgency (Schrire 2001, p 142). According to Welsh (1999, p 91) the DP, in 1996, began to fashion a new approach to election campaigns, which involved the presentation of two clearly competing visions: the ANC's collectivism and the DP's democratic liberalism. This formed the basis of its 'fight back' campaign in the 1999 election.

The DP doubled its share of the vote in the Western Cape to 12% and, in the end, a NNP/DP alliance kept the ANC out of power despite the fact that the ANC had won 42.1% cent of the vote. F W de Klerk's successor, Marthinus van Schalkwyk, became the new premier of the Western Cape. The Democratic Party and New National Party announced in June 2000 that they would join up as the Democratic Alliance, with the aim of building a political movement that would effectively challenge the ANC for political power (Lodge 2002, p 157). The merger was short lived, with the NNP extricating itself from the new political formation in November 2001.

In 2004 the inconsistencies in NNP rhetoric finalised the demise of the party. Its support base was decimated by its incongruent and internally inconsistent campaign messages as well as by organisational difficulties. By 2004 the NNP, in coalition with its former arch-enemy the ANC, preached a campaign message that completely contradicted its messages of 1994 and 1999. On the other hand, the ANC ran a largely positive campaign, celebrating ten years of democracy. It emphasised its achievements, acknowledged its shortcomings and drew attention to its strength, experience and commitment.

The main thrust of the ANC's 2004 campaign was that it was the only legitimate party able to improve the lives of ordinary South Africans. A key message related to its partnership with 'the people' in pursuing this goal. The theme of 'a better life for all' and the presentation of the role of the ANC in ending apartheid as well as the importance of contracts and partnerships with various social actors was consistent with previous campaigns. As Lodge (2005, p 117) indicates, the language used also revived the 'people-centred' rhetoric of the Reconstruction and Development Programme. In 2004 the ANC focused on presenting itself as competent in its role as the government of the day. The message that 'the tide has turned' became institutionalised, indicating to voters that the ANC-led government had been successful in ushering in change in South Africa (Booyesen 2005, p 131).

The ANC won 45.3% of the vote in 2004 and took control of the provincial government in the Western Cape under the premiership of Ebrahim Rasool. Meanwhile, the DA's support base in the Western Cape climbed to 27.1%. The DA contended that a vote for the NNP in 2004 was as good as a vote for the ANC. It contrasted itself with the ANC and with other opposition parties, communicating the message to voters that other parties lacked sound policies, competence and integrity or that they simply served to fracture the opposition.

The primary theme of the DA's 2004 campaign was 'South Africa deserves better'. The party's campaign style was marginally softer than it had been during the 1999 'Fight Back' campaign. However, the ambiguous subtext of slogans such as 'Vote DA for real change' raised questions about whether the change from apartheid to democracy was artificial. As Booyesen (2005) argues, the slogans were interpreted 'as being polarizing'. Edigheji (2004) went as far as saying that the DA had predicated its election campaign on 'fear-mongering' and 'alarmism'.

In 2009, with the NNP absorbed into the ANC, the contest in the Western Cape was between the DA and the ANC. The DA's campaign, consistent with its previous hard-hitting messages, took place in a completely different political context. National events between 2004 and 2009 had created a situation in which the party's messages were much more salient to voters in the Western Cape. These events included the protracted and well-publicised corruption trial of Schabir Shaik, a close associate of then Deputy President Jacob Zuma. Shaik was found guilty and the basis of the conviction hinged on payments he had made to Zuma. Following this conviction then president Thabo Mbeki relieved Zuma of his role as deputy president, installing Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka as the new deputy president of South Africa.

Mbeki decided to stand for a third term as president of the ANC although he could not be president of South Africa since there is a two-term presidential limit. Jacob Zuma, no longer deputy president of South Africa, stood for election as ANC president. The decision about who would lead the ANC would be made at the party's 52nd national conference. The ANC 'entered a spiral of contestation between Jacob Zuma and Thabo Mbeki centring on issues of succession and incumbency' (Booyesen 2009, p 90). Zuma achieved victory at the national conference in Polokwane, obtaining the vote of 60% of the delegates (Southall 2009, p 4). This resulted in a situation where Mbeki was president of South Africa while Zuma was president of the ANC.

In September 2008, a little more than six months before the 2009 general elections, Judge Chris Nicholson delivered a high court judgement which inferred that Mbeki and senior members of his Cabinet had interfered with the work of the National Prosecuting Authority with regard to a decision to prosecute Zuma (Jolobe 2009, p 139) on multiple counts of fraud. The judgement provided the basis

for a vote of no confidence in Mbeki. Following Mbeki's televised resignation as the president of South Africa, ANC deputy president Kgalema Motlanthe became South Africa's acting president. As Butler (2009, p 69) points out, the unprecedented defeat of an incumbent ANC president was followed by a wave of instability, during which officeholders were 'recalled' and perceived Mbeki loyalists purged.

These national political developments had a very damaging effect on perceptions of President Zuma and the ANC among voters in the Western Cape. An Afrobarometer survey conducted in late 2008 revealed that only 13% of respondents in the province said they trusted Zuma 'always' or 'most of the time' (Africa 2010, p 19).

The events also led to the resignation of several ANC members and the formation of the Congress of the People (Cope) under the leadership of Mosiuoa Lekota and Mbhazima Shilowa. In addition, ANC structures in the Western Cape were beset with their own problems. Even before the formation of Cope in 2008 there were reports of internal battles between factions aligned to former premier Ebrahim Rasool and then provincial secretary Mcebisi Skwatsha (News24, 2005). Months after Mbeki was recalled as president of the country Rasool was told to resign as premier and was replaced by then Finance Member of the Executive Council (MEC) Lynne Brown (Makinana & Williams 2008).

In 2009 the Western Cape ANC campaign mirrored the party's national campaign, which focused on putting Jacob Zuma into power as South Africa's president. The theme was 'Working together, we can do more'. However, these efforts were completely overshadowed by the national events outlined above. Meanwhile, the DA ran its 'One Nation One Future' campaign under the new leadership of Helen Zille, former mayor of the City of Cape Town. Its message could be summarised by the slogans of two campaign posters: 'Vote to win' and 'Stop Zuma' (Daniel & Southall 2009, p 237). Messages about the challenges to democracy posed by a Zuma-led government and ANC dominance now resonated with voters in the Western Cape and the DA received an outright majority, securing 51.4% of the provincial vote. The ANC's portion of the vote declined to 32%.

#### DEVELOPMENTS SINCE 2009

After the DA seized control from the ANC in the 2009 elections governance in the province became highly conflictual and relations between the DA and the ANC in the Western Cape reached new levels of dysfunctional competitiveness. Besides policy differences and the usual vigour with which incumbent and opposition parties engage each other, a toxic level of acrimony and hostility has permeated exchanges between the two parties.

The fact that the ANC's provincial power was usurped by the DA in 2009, combined with racially structured inequality in the Western Cape, has provided a fertile ground for mobilisation and protest action. While thriving in many respects, the Western Cape has many inter-related complex developmental challenges. Many areas are regarded as major international tourist attractions, Cape Town won the 2014 World Design Capital title and the City of Cape Town has been rolling out its MyCiti bus service, with many new routes and bus services introduced into the city and surrounding areas.

Yet inequality is a major problem in the province. Irrespective of claims and counter-claims about which city in South Africa is the most unequal, the fact is that people living in township areas of the Western Cape face many socioeconomic challenges, including a shortage of adequate housing and backlogs in the provision of basic services. Apartheid-era spatial planning fuels many of these problems (Wainwright 2014).

The province has been plagued by service-delivery protests. In 2012 farm workers embarked on protest action for higher wages and improved working conditions. The violence that erupted in many farming towns resulted in the loss of lives (Underhill 2013). Following the farm worker protests, dissatisfaction in the townships of Gugulethu, Khayelitsha and Nyanga gave rise to what was termed the 'poo protests', in which protestors threw faeces on the stairs of the provincial legislature of the Western Cape and later at Cape Town international airport (Davis 2012).

Thousands of people took to the streets marching through the Cape Town city centre, damaging many businesses. Leaders of the landless people's movement argued that protests seem to be the only way to get the leadership of the province to pay attention, because 'once in power they turn against the voters'.

Smook 2009

The 'poo protestors' held several protests during which national roads had to be closed (Williams 2014).

The ANC in the province has accused the DA of being uncaring, inaccessible and unresponsive to the poor, highlighting, in particular, the disparity between rich and poor (Fransman 2014). The DA, in turn, accused the ANC of trying to destabilise the province and sabotage its governance efforts. The DA was convinced during the farmworkers' protest that the ANC was deliberately stimulating anger in order to push its political agenda (Davis 2012). It also blamed the ANC for fuelling protest action, while the ANC blamed the DA for not dealing adequately with the socioeconomic issues faced by township residents.

Given the scale of violence in the province, a number of religious groups and civil society organisations in the Western Cape released a declaration on 26 November 2013 signed by well-known religious leaders such as Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu and the current Archbishop of Cape Town, Thabo Makgoba, as well as by many religious academics. The declaration called for the faith community to take the lead in restoring the democratic values being denied 'by political leaders who are trying to make the Western Cape ungovernable' (Independent Online 2013a). The political environment in the province became toxic between 2009 and 2014 and the Western Cape has been marked by extraordinary levels of distrust and political tension. This volatile situation led the Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC)'s Western Cape provincial electoral officer, Courtney Sampson, to say that 'the climate of desperation in some areas could be a threat to election proceedings' (Geach 2014a).

The ANC faced continued challenges in the run-up to the 2011 local government elections. ANC offices in Cape Town were stormed by protestors angry about the list process (Independent Online 2013b) and former ANC Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe admitted that internal upheavals had caused the party to lose 40 wards in the Western Cape (Mtyala 2011). The fallout from the 2011 elections continued well after they were concluded. An internal ANC task team investigating allegations of irregularities in the list process looked at 10 wards in Cape Town and three in the Overberg and found that the processes leading to the nominations of Mzwakhe Nqavashe from Ward 40 and Coetzee Ntotoviyane from Ward 42, both in Gugulethu, had been flawed and recommended that the party begin the processes afresh (Coetzee 2013). In another incident, Western Cape ANC provincial chairperson Marius Fransman had to be rescued by his bodyguards after being attacked in Oudtshoorn following a meeting to replace the town's mayor, Gordon April (Barnes 2013).

The 2014 list process also presented significant challenges. The final list included Mbulelo Ncedana and Moegamat Majiet, both of whom had left the ANC to join Cope when it was formed (Hartley 2014).

While many voters in the Western Cape might not have been aware of the trials facing the ANC in the province, they would most likely have followed national events, which also created a challenging environment for the country's ruling party. Most notably, there has been sustained controversy and a significant public uproar about the Public Protector's findings regarding the inappropriate use of funds to upgrade President Jacob Zuma's private residence in Nkandla in KwaZulu-Natal.

Events such as the televised death of community activist Andries Tatane in 2011 at the hands of police in the Free State and the lethal use of force in August 2012 that resulted in the deaths of 34 Lonmin mineworkers, shot and killed by

police officers in what has become known as the 'Marikana Massacre' highlighted issues of community frustration and police brutality. In addition, civil society organisation Right2Know led a highly visible campaign against the Protection of State Information Bill (popularly known as the 'secrecy bill'), while rights organisation Section 27 highlighted inefficiencies in the public school system, particularly the non-delivery of textbooks in Limpopo (Africa 2014b).

The ANC also came in for increased criticism from its own supporters and, indeed, from former party leaders. The dissatisfaction was so pronounced that former Intelligence Minister, Ronnie Kasrils, among others, embarked on the 'Sidikiwe, Vukane, We are fed up' campaign, urging voters either to spoil their votes or to vote for one of the smaller parties.

The party also faced criticism from the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) over the rollout of highway tolling fees in Gauteng and over sections of the National Development Plan. The National Union of Metalworkers of SA (Numsa) strongly criticised the ANC and President Zuma and decided not to endorse the ruling party in the 2014 election (Africa 2014b).

The DA, on the other hand, consolidated its Western Cape support base in the 2011 local government elections. The party received a boost when the Independent Democrats (ID), formed by Patricia de Lille, originally of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), was absorbed by the DA prior to the 2011 elections. The ID had managed to win three seats in the 2004 and 2009 Western Cape provincial elections. In 2010 the party signed an agreement that would see it merge with the DA (Jolobe 2014, p 137). Patricia de Lille was invited into the Western Cape DA provincial cabinet and was later elected DA mayor of the City of Cape Town (Jolobe 2014, p 138).

While DA parliamentary leader Lindiwe Mazibuko and the party's Gauteng premier candidate, Mmusi Maimane, managed to achieve national profiles that enhanced the party's credibility, the DA's main challenge has been to shed its image as a party concerned only with 'elite interests' and to adopt a coherent position on its stance on affirmative action. Party leader and Western Cape Premier Helen Zille was forced to apologise for confusion about the party's position on employment equity (Williams 2014). While the ill-fated deal struck with Agang SA, in which Agang leader Mamphela Ramphele agreed to become the DA's 'presidential candidate', earned Helen Zille some harsh criticism, the party's leaders managed the fallout by presenting a united front at a press conference held to explain the failed merger.

## THE 2014 ELECTION CAMPAIGN

A total of 26 provinces contested at provincial level in the 2014 elections in the Western Cape, making it the most competitive province. As outlined above, the

2014 campaign took place in the context of deep-seated disillusionment in many communities. Furthermore, the fact that the DA had won the 2009 election by a very narrow margin made the contest particularly fierce. Political parties saw the Western Cape as an 'open race' and the province became the centre of vigorous campaign efforts in the lead-up to the election.

Most political parties supplemented their national campaign plans with strategies specifically aimed at reaching voters in the province. Parties targeted particular groups such as farming and fishing communities as well as areas affected by gang violence. Posters belonging to the DA, ANC, EFF, Agang SA, Cope, the Patriotic Alliance (PA), the National Freedom Party (NFP) the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), the United Democratic Movement (UDM) and the Freedom Front Plus (FF+) lined the streets in the suburbs of the Cape Metro and other towns in the province. Door-to-door campaigning and large public gatherings featured prominently.

The African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) held its official campaign launch at the beginning of March (Norton 2014) and hosted various meetings across the Western Cape. The party's president, Kenneth Meshoe, went on a five-day walkabout in the province, meeting with churches, communities and businesses. The ACDP also deployed members of Parliament Cheryllen Dudley and Steve Swart, as well as a member of the provincial legislature, Grant Haskin and councillors Ferlon Christians, Demi Dudley and Gerald Siljeur in the province to meet with communities, walk the streets and address churches (ACDP 2014).

The EFF engaged in some novel forms of campaigning, among them hosting a 'Western Cape Social Revolution Party' at a Long Street, Cape Town, club (EFF 2014). In January the party's leader, Julius Malema, gave an address at Khayelitsha's Mew Way hall (Damba 2014) and the party's official campaign launch was held in Delft on 15 March. Malema also visited the West Coast, the Overberg and Mitchells Plain (Coetzee 2014).

The ANC invested a significant amount of time and energy on its campaign efforts in the Western Cape. As early as October 2013 it sent two of its senior members to strengthen its volunteer campaign, with Public Enterprises Minister Malusi Gigaba and Home Affairs Minister Naledi Pandor going to Khayelitsha to engage with ANC door-to-door election campaign volunteers (Kobokana 2013). The ANC's Western Cape manifesto launch was held on 18 January at Delft stadium, with deputy secretary general Jessie Duarte as the main speaker (ANC 2014). One newspaper article noted that the ANC was 'pulling out all the stops to win back the Western Cape'. In fact, President Zuma spent his 72<sup>nd</sup> birthday in a Cape Flats community, holding a rally at Vygieskraal Stadium, Athlone, as part of his birthday celebrations (Phakathi 2014a).

Members of the ANC's Women's League and of the provincial executive committee engaged 'with South Africans across the Western Cape as part of their

non-stop election campaign', embarking on door-to-door activities and listening to the concerns of community members (ANC 2014).

In addition, former Western Cape premier and current South African ambassador to the US, Ebrahim Rasool, went on a 'whistle stop' tour of Cape Town in a bid to convince the middle-class electorate, especially Muslims, to vote for the ANC (Kemp 2014). Provincial ANC leader Marius Fransman was also particularly active in his campaign efforts. During his campaign tour of the Cape farmlands and the West Coast, he addressed farmworkers at a rally near De Doorns on 22 April, lashing out at the DA and accusing it of siding with farm owners instead of workers (Geach 2014b).

The ANC's campaign centred on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of democracy in South Africa. The party's theme for 2014 was that it had 'a good story to tell', a message that was introduced in President Zuma's pre-election State of the Nation address and was the golden thread woven through all the party's election campaign messages. A key theme emerging from the ANC's campaign in the Western Cape was that the people of the province needed to be rescued from the DA's racist governance. Gigaba criticised the DA's policies on land, saying the party 'wanted land to remain in the hands of a white minority' (Etheridge 2014) and Fransman told farmworkers at a rally near De Doorns that 'apartheid still reigned in the Cape farmlands' (Geach 2014b).

On 19 March Gigaba is reported to have told Cape Town residents at a packed meeting in the O R Tambo Hall in Khayelitsha that the DA 'are not the devil's brothers. They are not the devil's relatives. They are the devils themselves. And so our modern-day devils, two-legged as they are, are liars and cannot face the truth' (Etheridge 2014). Meanwhile, Sports Minister Fikile Mbalula compared the DA's governance in the Western Cape to witchcraft and urged residents to summon the help of tokoloshes. Speaking in Nyanga on the occasion of the 35th anniversary of the death of Solomon Mahlangu, an ANC operative who had been sentenced to death for murder during the apartheid era, he said:

this thing of witchcraft is when a witch does nothing for the people but they still get re-elected. This is what we find ourselves in here in the Western Cape. We are being governed by witches ... these witches are oppressing us, they are trampling on us. Where are the tokoloshes and the [sangomas] so that we can chase these witches away?

Koyana 2014

Linked to the theme of saving the Western Cape from racist governance were campaign appeals designed to attract the coloured vote. President Zuma told supporters at his birthday celebrations that

the Western Cape needs a government that will treat the people of the Western Cape equally. Enough is enough with the neglect of predominantly African and Coloured areas in this province ... There's nothing to fear. The ANC is your family.

Cronje & Van Schie 2014

Some leaders chastised voters in the province. After a two-day visit to the Cape Flats Gwede Mantashe said coloured people would remain a minority if they did not define themselves properly. He reportedly said:

You call yourself a minority. You are governed by a minority all the time. It's a mindset. We must liberate ourselves ... and appreciate you are part of a majority ... One thing we are not going to do is give coloureds presents. Coloured people must play their role and earn their responsibilities. They must earn it among all of us.

News24, 2014a

The ANC's call for the support of 'smaller political parties' to win back the DA-led province was shunned, with Cope leader Mosiuoa Lekota saying that his party had formed coalitions with the DA in the Western and Northern Cape because of the 'strong position taken by both parties to deal decisively with rampant corruption and maladministration' (Coetzee 2014).

The DA ran a highly visible national campaign complemented by strategies specifically aimed at reaching particular groups such as farming and fishing communities as well as areas affected by gang violence. Many of the ANC's problems (the Public Protector's report on Nkandla and the textbook crises in Limpopo in particular) provided the party with rallying points for its 'Western Cape Story' campaign, which was launched on 8 March at Blue Downs Stadium in Cape Town (DA 2014c) at a rally attended by about 4 000 people wearing blue T-shirts emblazoned with the DA logo (Geldenhuys 2014). According to the DA, the Western Cape story 'highlighted the great strides made in the province since 2009' (Democratic Alliance 2014b).

Much of the DA's strategy was focused on refuting the ANC's 'good story' message while simultaneously highlighting the party's achievements in the Western Cape. While delivering her State of the Province address, Helen Zille asserted that 'we have the best story to tell' (Makinana 2014). The party's campaign slogan was 'Together for change, Together for jobs' (Democratic Alliance 2014a).

On 26 March Zille launched the DA Braille Manifesto at the League of the Friends of the Blind in Grassypark, in an effort to attract support from voters with disabilities (Democratic Alliance 2014d). On 6 April she led a march in Mitchells

Plain against gang violence and drug abuse, to highlight efforts of the DA-led City of Cape Town municipality to combat these social ills (Sesant 2014). The march also served to launch billboard messages showing Mayor Patricia de Lille and other prominent Capetonians promoting the campaign to combat gang violence and drug abuse, as issues that continue to affect communities in the Cape Flats.

Two weeks later, on 19 April, Zille again addressed an anti-drugs and gangsterism march in Manenberg (News24, 2014b). DA Western Cape leader Ivan Meyer and party provincial deputy Theuns Botha hosted an election rally in Hartenbos, close to George, on 12 April to get the DA message across and to consolidate party support that had been tested in the area in recent by-elections (Phakathi 2014b). On 17 April Zille delivered a speech at a small harbours picket in Hout Bay, where she addressed fishing communities in an effort to allay fresh fears that proposed government policies on the allocation of fishing quotas would negatively affect the livelihoods of many in the fishing communities (Democratic Alliance 2014c).

The DA issued a pamphlet specifically aimed at coloured voters and quoting former ANC Director General of Labour, Jimmy Manyi, who, in 2010 had said that there was an over-supply and an over-concentration of coloured people in the Western Cape. The DA pamphlet, captioned 'The ANC wants to stop you from getting a job, or a promotion', indicated that the ANC had issued new employment regulations which would 'prevent thousands of Coloured people in the Western Cape from getting jobs' (DA 2014c).

Under the draft employment equity legislation companies with more than 150 employees would have to use the national economically active population demographics to determine the equity targets of their top and senior management as well as their professionally qualified staff. The DA argued that this would clash with provincial racial demographics and marginalise certain race groups from the workforce in the Western Cape (Watters 2014).

In reaction to this, lawyers for the ANC in the Western Cape sent a letter to Helen Zille demanding a retraction of the pamphlet, arguing that it constituted a violation of the Electoral Act and the Electoral Code of Conduct and that it was 'clearly geared to divide communities on racial lines, and cause serious discontent amongst voters and possible voters' (Mjongile 2014)

The ANC also strongly criticised the DA's 'Western Cape story', arguing that Zille had not kept her promises and had not delivered to poor communities. For example, ANC Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa accused her of neglecting delivery in the province, saying that 'wherever we go, they [people in the Western Cape] are crying tears because of poor service' (SAPA 2014). The ANC felt that it had done sufficient to regain control of the province, especially in the light of deep-seated disillusionment in many communities and the violent protests which had taken place prior to the elections.

The DA also ran an aggressive campaign against smaller parties, distributing pamphlets and running a series of radio advertisements pointing out that a vote for any opposition party other than the DA, was a 'wasted' vote. In one pamphlet the party used a graph to point out that it had won the Western Cape by a mere 1.5% of the vote and that a vote for a small party could result in an ANC-led coalition taking back the Western Cape. It further pointed out that abstaining could benefit the ANC.

### VOTER TURNOUT

Despite the perpetual mudslinging between parties there was an increase in voter turnout and the 2014 election in the Western Cape was more competitive than that in 2009. As seen in Table 1 a large proportion of eligible citizens in the province registered to vote. When the voters' roll was certified in March 2014 by the IEC 2.9-million of 3.8-million eligible voters had registered – a registration level of 78% (IEC 2014a). On election day 2.1-million people (73% of registered voters in the Western Cape) cast their ballot. While this represents a slight decline in turnout from the 75% in 2009, participation as a proportion of the eligible voting-age population increased slightly from 53% in 2009 to 57%. There was a negligible proportion of spoilt ballots (0.88%).

**Table 1**  
**Voting Age Population, Registration and Turnout in the Western Cape**

	Eligible voters	Registered population	Percentage registered	Valid votes cast	Percentage turnout based on eligible population	Percentage turnout based on registered population
<b>1994</b>	2 405 919	NA	NA	2 137 742	88.85	NA
<b>1999</b>	2 317 171	1 864 019	80.44%	1 587 978	68.53	85.19
<b>2004</b>	3 024 207	2 220 283	73.41%	1 582 503	52.32	71.27
<b>2009</b>	3 746 547	2 634 439	70.31%	1 987 777	53.05	75.45
<b>2014</b>	3 771 271	2 941 333	77.99%	2 140 090	56.74	72.76

Sources: Africa 2014a; [www.electionupdate.org.za](http://www.electionupdate.org.za); IEC 2014

## RESULTS

The Democratic Alliance emerged from the elections significantly strengthened. The party increased its majority in the Western Cape, winning 59% of the vote in 2014 compared to 51% in 2009 (see table 2). The DA remained the ruling party in the provincial legislature, holding 26 of the 42 seats, up from their previous term when they had occupied 22 seats.

The ANC maintained its level of support in the Western Cape, with 33% of voters casting their ballot for the party compared to 32% in 2009. The ANC thus maintained the 14 seats it had won in 2009.

**Table 2**  
**Western Cape Provincial Results (1994-2014)**

Party	Total number of votes				
	1994	1999	2004	2009	2014
<b>DP/DA</b>	141 970 7%	189 183 12%	424 832 27%	1 012 568 51%	1 259 645 59%
<b>ANC</b>	705 576 33%	668 106 42%	709 052 45%	620 918 32%	697 664 33%
<b>EFF</b>	NA NA	NA NA	NA NA	NA NA	44 762 2%
<b>FF/FF+</b>	44 003 2%	6 394 0.40%	9 705 0.62%	8 384 0.43%	11 587 0.55%
<b>ACDP</b>	25 731 1%	44 323 3%	53 934 3%	28 995 2%	21 693 1%
<b>ID</b>	NA NA	NA NA	122 867 8%	92 116 5%	NA NA
<b>UDM</b>	NA NA	38 071 2%	27 489 1,75%	14 013 0.71%	10 199 0.48%
<b>COPE</b>	NA NA	NA NA	NA NA	152 356 8%	12 520 0.59%
<b>NP/NNP</b>	1 138 242 53%	609 612 38%	170 469 11%	NA NA	NA NA

Source: IEC 2014

This consolidation of DA support thus came primarily at the expense of smaller parties in the province. There was a sharp decline in support for Cope, which lost the three seats it had won in the Western Cape legislature in 2009. Its support

in the province declined from 8% in 2009 to 0.6% in 2014 following a damaging public battle for the leadership of the party. The ACDP's support base also dropped – from 2% in 2009 to 1% in 2014. This secured the party only one seat in the provincial legislature, down from the two seats it held after the 2009 election. The EFF managed to win only 2% of the vote in the province, securing one seat in the provincial legislature.

As seen in Table 3, other small parties in the Western Cape received negligible support in the 2014 election. Parties such as Agang SA and the Patriotic Alliance (PA) did not feature at all. Agang SA won 0.3% while the PA won 0.4%.

It would appear that the DA's campaign against smaller parties, evident since 2004, yielded results in 2014. The growth of the DA in the Western Cape must also be seen in the context of the NNP's demise and the growing set of challenges that has faced the ANC since 2007. The DA also ran a campaign as the provincial incumbent, with the message that it 'had the best story to tell'. This simultaneously highlighted its record of governance in the province and its criticism of the ANC nationally and in other provinces. In terms of the final election result, the DA was not punished at the polls for the use of race-based campaign rhetoric such as publishing the pamphlet criticising employment equity legislation and the comments made by Jimmy Manyi in 2010.

The ANC, however, seems to have paid a price for resorting to identity politics. Once it was ousted from power the party became far more confrontational in its approach. In stark contrast to its 1999 and 2004 campaigns, it chastised Western Cape voters and implored them to liberate the province from 'racist governance'. While this may have mobilised its core supporters, the strategy proved counterproductive in that it probably alienated middle-ground voters across the spectrum, working to the advantage of the DA.

Further research would be needed to assess whether the DA's strengthened position is primarily an anti-ANC/EFF vote or is the result of growing loyalty to the DA, positive perceptions of the party's performance or strategic voting based on the premise that it is better to vote for a party that does not face the same capacity constraints as other opposition parties. Some voters might have felt that they needed to counter the electoral dominance of the ANC or they may have been concerned about the extent of support for Julius Malema's newly-formed party, the EFF. Thus, the radical platform upon which the EFF contested might have galvanised DA supporters even though most of the DA's campaign efforts were directed against the ANC.

There does appear to be growing loyalty to the DA in the province. Data from an Afrobarometer survey conducted in 2011 shows an increase in party identification among voters in the Western Cape from 48% in 2008 to 61% in 2011. Of the 61% who indicated that they felt close to a political party 49% said they felt close to the ANC and 45% said they felt close to the DA (Afrobarometer 2014).

Given the DA's victory in the province, it would appear that a proportion of the electorate are voting for the party although they do not 'feel close' to it. Irrespective of whether the changes that have occurred were due to voters switching allegiance or to differential turnout, the outcome has been dramatic.

**Table 3**  
**Western Cape Provincial Results**

<b>Party</b>	<b>Number of votes</b>	<b>% votes</b>
African Christian Democratic Party	21 696	1.02%
African Independent Congress	6 508	0.31%
African National Congress	697 664	32.89%
African National Party	1 249	0.06%
African People's Convention	1 291	0.06%
Agang South Africa	6 398	0.30%
Al Jama-Ah	13 182	0.62%
Azanian People's Organisation	844	0.04%
Congress Of The People	12 520	0.59%
Democratic Alliance	1 259 645	59.38%
Economic Freedom Fighters	44 762	2.11%
First Nation Liberation Alliance	635	0.03%
Independent Civic Organisation Of South Africa	11 949	0.56%
Indigenous Peoples Organisation	1 180	0.06%
Inkatha Freedom Party	1 078	0.05%
Kingdom Governance Movement	490	0.02%
National Freedom Party	763	0.04%
National Party South Africa	2 694	0.13%
Pan Africanist Congress Of Azania	3 591	0.17%
Patriotic Alliance	8 510	0.40%
Peoples Alliance	440	0.02%
Sibanye Civic Association	478	0.02%
South African Progressive Civic Organisation	642	0.03%
United Christian Democratic Party	1 158	0.05%
United Democratic Movement	10 199	0.48%
Vryheidsfront Plus	11 587	0.55%
<b>Total Valid Votes</b>	<b>2 121 153</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
<b>Spoilt Votes</b>		<b>18 937</b>
<b>Total Votes Cast</b>		<b>2 140 090</b>

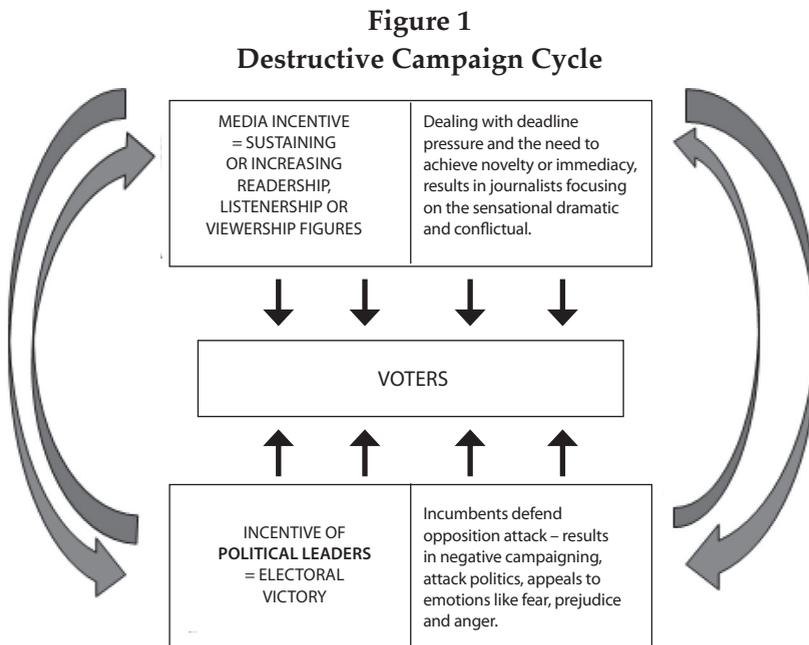
Source: Independent Electoral Commission.

CONCLUSION: REPRODUCING DESTRUCTIVE PATTERNS OF ENGAGEMENT IN THE WESTERN CAPE

The campaign in the Western Cape once again degenerated into a series of negative race-based appeals, with politicians and political parties discrediting one another. All the parties that contested the election in the Western Cape signed the 2014 electoral code of conduct indicating their agreement that ‘elections require an environment wherein there is free political activity, where all political parties are able to canvass support without fear or hindrance’ (IEC 2014c). However, as the election date draws closer parties find it hard to refrain from engaging in inflammatory campaign rhetoric (Africa 2014a). In 2014 parties accused each other of racial mobilisation and denied that they were practising it, even as they went ahead and engaged in inflammatory campaign rhetoric.

As indicated above these destructive campaign tactics are based on explanations which view voter choices as primarily determined by the characteristics of the voter. In addition to having a polarising effect, race-based strategies are quite simply ineffective if they do not resonate with public sentiment about provincial and national political developments. Yet the past five democratic elections in the province have reproduced a similar toxic campaign environment.

The work of Buchanan (see Figure 1) helps in unravelling the reasons why campaigning in the Western Cape assumes the same toxic patterns of engagement.



Source: Adapted from Buchanan 2001

Parties in the role of opposition typically resort to negative campaign appeals couched in racial terms. This is compounded by the way in which the media frames news stories about the 'coloured' vote as well as its preoccupation with conflict and hostility between parties and party leaders. While these conflicts may be newsworthy, in many instances such reporting contributes to negative campaign strategies used by parties in an attempt to secure media attention.

It is for this reason that Africa (2010, p 1) argues that it is not primarily the *nature* of the electorate but political developments (both national and provincial) as well as the behaviour and campaign efforts of political parties that provide a more plausible reason for the dramatic political changes in the Western Cape.

As Swanson & Mancini (1996, p 1) argue, politics is 'always persuasive, forcing us consciously or subconsciously to interpret, to evaluate and to act'. Such persuasion inherently involves agency on the part of the recipients, who must assimilate and consider the information being presented to them. This leads to the question of *what* voters are interpreting and evaluating. They are, of course, interpreting and evaluating the words *and actions* of political parties and leaders. Despite the obvious limitations of identity-based politics, as well as its damaging effects, it is hard to see how this narrative will change in future elections.

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