

Non-racialism and the African National Congress: views from the branch

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South Africa's ruling party is well known as an organisation that supports the ideal of non-racialism. However, the extent to which the African National Congress (ANC) has defined and instrumentalised the concept of non-racialism is contested. This article looks at the history of non-racialism in the party and more recent interpretations by ANC leadership, before examining how non-racialism is understood, 19 years into democracy, by members of the party. Based on interviews with over 45 ANC branch members, the article describes how members, broadly speaking, have deep-seated concerns with non-racialism in the ANC and in society more generally. There is recognition from ANC branch members that race relations have significantly improved since the ANC moved into government; however, they feel not enough change has taken place and that racial tensions are impeding social cohesion and concomitant growth and progress in the country. There is division among members in regards to the efficacy and impact of the party's racially based policies such as affirmative action as well as the manner in which race potentially influences leadership opportunities within the party. Furthermore, the article shows that there is lack of definition and direction on the part of the ANC in regards to the instrumentalisation of non-racialism, and this deficiency has negative consequences for racial cohesion in the party. The article concludes by discussing how investigations into party branches through the lens of non-racialism, highlights more deep-seated concerns about local-level party democracy and a party fractured at the grassroots.

Keywords: non-racialism; African National Congress; branch members; race relations; democracy; social cohesion

The African National Congress (ANC) has for over five decades prided itself on being an organisation that supports the ideal of non-racialism. Certainly, its history is one of a struggle against racism. The extent to which the ANC has defined and instrumentalised the ideals of non-racialism is, however, contested. From early debates about who could constitute a member of the *African* National Congress as a liberation movement, to latter day concerns from branch members regarding the consequences of being *non-African*, non-racialism is a concept that has been problematically understood and applied throughout the party's history. This article will first look at the historical trajectory of non-racialism in the ANC as well as its more recent interpretations by ANC leadership. It will then present evidence from research with branch level members to understand how they interpret non-racialism, both looking out at ANC policy and looking in at perceived race politics within the party.

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Unpacking the ANC's non-racial history

For many anti-apartheid activists the concept of non-racialism undoubtedly sat at the heart of the ANC's anti-apartheid struggle (Interview with Ahmed Kathrada, Johannesburg, 7 July 2011). Although non-racialism became a central feature of the ANC (and Congress partners) after the adoption of the 1955 Freedom Charter it has a longer history in the anti-apartheid struggle, rooted in the relations between different Congresses. For example, the Natal Indian Congress, formed in 1894, the ANC, formed in 1912, the Communist Party, formed in 1921 and the Non-European United Front, formed in 1938, all worked together over decades to overcome apartheid and, in doing so, fostered non-racial relations (Anciano-White and Selemani 2012; Everatt 2009a). Following this the Freedom Charter decrees that 'South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white' (ANC, n.d.a). In 1961, then head of the ANC, Albert Luthuli (1961) supported this viewpoint stating that the vision of the ANC 'has always been that of a non-racial democratic South Africa which upholds the rights of all who live in our country to remain there as full citizens with equal rights and responsibilities with all others'.

In these formulations of non-racialism the concept is generally depicted by the ANC as part of a unifying and nation-building project. Early statements and speeches of Luthuli recurrently calling for a 'common society' support the idea that the ANC viewed non-racialism as central to a universalised, generic humanism (Suttner 2012). As the head of a national liberation movement the ANC was, according to Pallo Jordan (1997), an advocate of an inclusive South African nationhood, rooted in the 'universalistic, liberatory outlook of modernity' and the realities and imperatives of accommodation of all South African races, given they shared a common territory. In this line of thinking, it is argued that non-racialism was the 'unbreakable thread' between the ANC and other alliance members and that the demand for a non-racial South Africa was the common ground that united a wide range of forces for change (Frederikse 1990). Thus, Cachalia (2012, 59) further notes, anti-apartheid politics was characterised by a universalist orientation which focused on equal dignity for all individuals, regardless of real or imagined differences. This stance is reflected in the seminal 1994 elections, where the ANC's election slogan, 'a Better Life for All', signified the intention of the movement to work with, and for all who live in South Africa, regardless of race (Jordan 1997).

Together with non-racialism espousing unity, it was also seen by the ANC as symbolising an ethos of humanitarianism (Ansell cited in Lefko-Everett 2012, 130). The ANC's focus on defeating the systems of apartheid rather than a more extreme route of conquering the perpetrators indicated a 'significant commitment to a non-racial destiny' (Kathrada 2012, 2). The party reinforced this view in its submission to the *World Conference against Racism* explaining that the ANC did not surrender to the temptation of advocating black racial domination and instead believed that black domination would be as evil as white domination (ANC 2001).

Documents such as the Constitutional Principles for a Democratic South Africa (ANC 1991) reflect the values attributed to non-racialism of unity, humanism, humanitarianism and nation building:

A non-racial South Africa means a South Africa in which all the artificial barriers and assumptions which kept people apart and maintained domination, are removed. In its negative sense, non-racial means the elimination of all colour bars. In positive terms it means the affirmation of equal rights for all.

These values attributed to non-racialism indicate an aspiration by the ANC to transcend recognised and ascribed racial differences. However, in the decades following the promulgation of the Freedom Charter, the concept and execution of non-racialism was habitually, and often contentiously, debated within the party, both by members in exile and inside South Africa.

The contestation over the theory and instrumentalisation of non-racialism is exemplified by the fact that, for much of its history, the ANC was organised *in practice* along a more multiracial (separate but equal) than non-racial basis (see Everatt 2009a, 2009b; Suttner 2012; Ndebele 2002). For Suttner (2012, 25–26) those liberation organisations that declared themselves non-racial in the Congress alliance, including the ANC, have ‘tended to be organised on a multi-racial basis’; ‘As the ANC developed... there has been continual tension between its growing universal aspirations and its mode of organisation that remained racialised, right up until the late 1960s’. Kathrada (2012, 3) acknowledges that a ‘major criticism of our approach to building non-racialism was that we had established separate organisations for mass mobilisation based on racial lines’, although he deems this shortcoming justified in the socio-historical context. Furthermore, there were extensive debates in the party before it was agreed membership to the ANC could be open to all races. This took place 57 years after the movement was founded, in 1969. Perhaps, even more surprisingly given the Freedom Charter’s commitment to non-racialism, it was only in 1985 that ‘non-Africans’ were eligible to sit on the National Executive Committee (NEC).

There are numerous reasons for why the ANC experienced contestation over the concept and practice of non-racialism. First, the ANC’s concept of non-racialism did not evolve in isolation; it developed in tandem with policies dealing with the national question¹ and strategies such as the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) and a growing class analysis of apartheid. Jordan (1997) explains that the ANC has always maintained that democracy, national liberation and non-racialism are inseparable; however, if democracy is to advance national liberation it necessitates the empowerment of the most historically oppressed, being Africans, Coloureds and Indians. This empowerment is the primary aim of the ANC, as espoused in strategies such as the NDR and in discussion documents on the national question. In essence the NDR entails the ‘liberation of Africans in particular and black people in general from political and economic bondage’ (ANC n.d.b). Alongside political change it was recognised that economic equality that must be addressed in order to facilitate social transformation.

In this context transcending racial difference became associated with overcoming the class basis of racial oppression. There was a perceived need to go beyond legal equality to give non-racialism *real* meaning and an understanding that achieving racial equality (in the path to non-racialism) required fundamental structural social change (Cachalia 2012, 60). For some ANC thinkers such as Jordan (1997) there was recognition that both attitudinal and institutional racism are functions of the development of South African capitalism in a colonial setting, which then found resonance within society at large. An institutionalised racial hierarchy was a consequence of productive relations structured and determined by ‘colonialism of a special type’. To overcome this institutional racism empowerment of blacks in general and Africans in particular required the ‘radical restructuring of key aspects of the economy so as to destroy the material basis of the White racist power structure’. Cachalia (2012, 58) alludes to this thinking during the liberation struggle as ‘anti-racist racism’ – as a path that can lead to the elimination of

racial difference. Thus a more complex reading of understandings of non-racialism, in the context of broader ANC strategies during the struggle highlights challenges the party faced in applying and practicing an anti-essentialist form of non-racialism.

The contested views of African nationalism in the party further contributed to an imprecise interpretation of the concept of non-racialism. The exclusive African nationalism of many prominent ANC Youth League (ANCYL) members of the 1940s to some extent challenged the universalist notion of non-racialism. The ANCYL argued that ‘the national liberation of Africans will be achieved by Africans themselves’ (Everatt 2012, 15). Indeed, Everatt argues that the fact that non-racialism survived the ‘internal ructions of nationalist politics’ is ‘near miraculous’. Others (Jordan 1997), however, explain that African nationalism in South Africa eschewed racism in favour of a non-racial national agenda. Ultimately the party was able to reach some measure of accommodation of both ideals of African nationalism and non-racialism, although Everatt (2012, 16) maintains that non-racialism was left as a passive assertion that stood in moral opposition to racism, while African nationalism became the engine that drove the liberation struggle. For Cachalia (2012, 60) liberation movements may have aspired to transcend ascribed racial difference but in reality the imperatives of political mobilisation often required the naming of ‘friends’ and ‘enemies’ in terms that were evocative of experienced racial difference. This resulted in an essentialised view of race re-entering the theory and practice of the liberation movement.

Thus, both ideological and practical factors informed and compounded the theory and practice of non-racialism and explain to some degree the challenges, and at times seeming contradictions, in instrumentalising a vision of non-racialism. Ndebele (2002, 144) rightly points out that ‘the construction of non-racial politics within the ANC was a political process that unfolded in difficult environments externally and internally. Its development was a combination of factors that were often conflictual and divergent’. This argument poses an important question: what does the ANC actually mean when it uses the term non-racialism? The next section will attempt to answer this in post-apartheid South Africa.

Non-racialism and the ANC: post-apartheid

How has the ANC interpreted that non-racialism now is a party in power rather than a liberation movement? The first point to make is that there is no distinct reference point detailing the party’s post-apartheid approach to non-racialism; to understand current views on non-racialism information must be extrapolated more broadly from ANC economic, political and social policies as well as from direct comments on non-racialism made in a range of sources including NEC documents, ANC discussion documents, policy documents, speeches and interviews. One fairly comprehensive viewpoint dealing with the ANC’s post-apartheid approach to non-racialism is found in its submission to the *World Conference against Racism* Non-Governmental Organisation Forum, however, this was written over a decade ago in 2001. It must be noted that ANC documents and pronouncements dealing with non-racialism other than those discussed in this article may well exist, however, there is a seeming absence of a widely disseminated, clear, detailed policy on the instrumentalisation of non-racialism in post-apartheid South Africa, by the ANC. As political analyst Mangu (2003, 116) notes, the politics of reconciliation and the inclusion and accommodation of peoples of all races is ‘deeply lodged within the

dominant motif of the ANC's politics' but the ANC has 'never articulated the detailed terms of political inclusiveness'.

Where non-racialism is referred to in ANC documents it is often projected in the manner it was under the leadership of Luthuli; as a universalist, humanist and humanitarian concept, there to counter racism and foster nation building. Certainly, the ANC Constitution (2007) decrees that 'The ANC shall, in its composition and functioning, be democratic, non-racial and non-sexist and against any form of racial, tribalistic or ethnic exclusivism or chauvinism'. Other documents refer to building 'non-racial' societies, 'reaching out' and 'engaging with minority communities' (ANC 2010a, 5), using non-racialism to foster nation building (Zuma 2012, 3), using education, sport, cultural activities and local government to create a unity and foster non-racialism (Mantashe 2010, 1; ANC 2012) and that ANC leaders should reflect the principles of 'a non-racial and non-sexist national movement' (ANC 2010b, 9).

In this vein the concept of non-racialism plays an important symbolic function. However, many of the ANC pronouncements on non-racialism provide little substantive guidance for ANC members on how to instrumentalise a vision of non-racialism. The documents referred to earlier lack specificity of action on how to do the required 'building'; nor do they provide guidance for what 'reaching out' would look like in practice. Where the discussion documents do talk about using different social sectors to instrumentalise non-racialism, details of how to use the sector to build non-racialism are not provided. A further example is the discussion document prepared for the 2012 ANC policy conference – it makes only a few references to non-racialism primarily in order to point out that it is a core value or a 'unique feature' of the ANC; there are few additional details or discussion of the principle (ANC 2012, 22, 31). The National Planning Commission does discuss non-racialism, but only by page 420 of its *Vision for 2030* document. Significantly it asks for sustained campaigns to focus on changing attitudes and behaviour, and that race issues are not maligned. Its main recommendation is that people 'for whom a Bantu language is not a mother tongue' learn one, however, as Everatt (2012, 6) argues, this advice is 'scarcely sufficient to deal with the complexities of building non-racialism in South Africa'. This concern is echoed by Taylor's (2012, 42) argument that what remains of the project of non-racialism is, at the elite level 'largely a politics of non-performative incantation; where to simply express commitment to non-racialism has become ritualistic, but has no deep effect on the incontrovertible truth that South Africa remains a highly racialised society'.

To fully understand the ANC's current approach to non-racialism it is necessary to look beyond uncomplicated references to the term non-racialism and examine ANC policies more generally. On closer investigation of a range of ANC documents (such as the ANC Strategy and Tactics document(s); the submission to the *World Conference against Racism*, ANC 2001; ANC Policy Conference discussion documents 2012; a discussion paper on the National Question by Pallo Jordan 1997; and an article by cabinet minister Jeremy Cronin 2011) one is able to discern a more complex and nuanced view of the way in which the party would like to build non-racialism in a post-apartheid setting (although not necessarily a clearer view of what it would look like in practice.)

As discussed in the previous section, a primary aim of the ANC was, as a liberation movement, and is, as a party in power, to work towards the NDR. For the ANC, a non-racial future can only occur as an 'act of black self-emancipation, with the African people taking the lead in their own liberation' (ANC 2001). Thus building non-racialism

acknowledges the history and nature of a society where black people in general and Africans in particular are, and have been, victims of apartheid's structural and social conditionalities. To counter the consequences of apartheid, structural transformation of society is required, with the ANC directing the state and giving leadership 'to the motive forces in all spheres of influence and pillars of our transformation project' (ANC 2012, 12), where motive forces generally refer to 'drivers of change' including 'black workers and black communities' (Cachalia 2012, 62). Cronin (2011) argues that 'You can't build a sustainable non-racial society in which unemployment, inequality and poverty are still profoundly skewed by a racialised past. You can't hope for enduring non-racialism when material realities...continue to reproduce the same racialised advantages and disadvantages'. For Cronin (2011), if the system caused the crime, then building a non-racial South Africa requires a 'transformation of the material conditions themselves'. In practice this means it is necessary to recognise, accept and act on racial difference in the present, as a means to achieve a non-racial future, reflecting Cachalia's references to 'anti-racist racism' (2012). As Jordan (1997) explains:

The movement adopted as policy the conscious and deliberate re-racialisation of South Africa by undertaking a host of measures, among which are affirmative action, to ensure that the results of decades of systematic discrimination and denial of job opportunities are reversed. In other words, the purpose of affirmative action is to create circumstances in which affirmative action will no longer be necessary.

Echoing contestations over the instrumentalisation of non-racialism during the liberation struggle, the current stance described earlier may not always sit comfortably with the more universalist, humanist visions of non-racialism espoused in other ANC writings. There are certainly valid reasons for why the ANC focuses on systemic change, the question that more essentialised approach to non-racialism raises, however, is whether embracing and supporting different policies based on race in the present will, and can, lead to non-racialism in the future. As a post-apartheid discussion of the national question explains, 'racial classification cannot be avoided if we are to ensure representivity in the state and in society generally. But we must acknowledge that this creates the risk of freezing racial and cultural categories rather than allowing for organic development' (ANC 2005). As Cachalia (2012, 59) asks, 'is a stable, essentialised subject with a fixed identity still required for a non-racial project?' He questions, in other words, whether it is necessary to accept a fixed sense of racial identity in the short term to achieve non-racialism in the long term. It is also important to ask how the ANC will know when the system has been sufficiently transformed to no longer warrant race-based policies. How will the ANC know when the non-racial future is here?

Unpacking the ANC's current stance on non-racialism leaves us with a key question: what does the party really mean when it talks of building a non-racial society? Notwithstanding ideological differences, it can be argued that *in theory* the party broadly supports non-racialism as an ideal norm in society. A close reading of ANC policy demonstrates that transforming society (through focusing on race) to overcome the distorted economic and social legacies of apartheid is a *means* to achieving a form of non-racialism. But, party leadership has provided insubstantial guidance on what *in practice* a non-racial society will look like. Lack of substantive guidance on instrumentalising non-racialism may be a consequence of the fact that the ANC has a strong and well-known legacy of promoting non-racialism, and is indeed now a non-racial party, thus

incidental pronouncements are seen as sufficient in the light of this legacy. Conceivably, however, lack of substantive guidance points to a reality in which the concept of non-racialism in the ANC is still contested and ultimately unresolved. For Suttner (2012, 28) it is a paradox that throughout ANC history the movement had tendencies towards the essentialisation of race alongside relatively universalist aspirations. This paradox continues.

Non-racialism and the ANC: branch level findings

How do branch level members of the ANC understand and experience the ideal of non-racialism? What do they think ANC leadership means when it asks them to build a non-racial South Africa? This section of the paper will first discuss branch level understandings of the concept of non-racialism. It will then 'look in' at racial dynamics within the party before 'looking out' to how members perceive ANC policies that are racially based.

Methodologically, branch members were selected from four ANC branches in the City of Johannesburg. In each site four in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with a mix of Branch Executive members and rank-and-file members. A focus group was then held with between six and eight members in each branch. A pilot study was initially held in Lenasia to test the research questions and methodology, after which questions were slightly altered. Three criteria were used to choose branches which would allow for as representative a study as possible: socio-economic status of the area where the branch is located; racial mix of the branch location and predominant housing type in the branch location. The Gauteng City-Region Observatory geographic information system (GIS) map (2012) provided data on these criteria.

The four sites chosen were: Protea South in Soweto (predominately African population group, low socio-economic status, high population density and extensive informal housing); Eldorado Park (predominantly Coloured population, mid to low socio-economic status, fairly high population density, informal housing); Lenasia (predominantly Indian population, with an increasing racial mix, medium socio-economic levels, medium urban density, mixed housing) and Sandton (large white population, with a growing racial mix, high socio-economic status, low population density, formal housing). Respondents from the first three sites chosen were all members of a single ANC branch in their ward. In Sandton respondents came from several different wards within one zone in Sandton. All respondents participated anonymously.

Meanings of non-racialism

In light of the argument that the ANC as a party has not definitively resolved its understanding of non-racialism, the specificities of the idea of non-racialism are left to members to interpret; how indeed have they done so? Certainly, there is no common, single understanding of non-racialism emanating from branch level members. However, two clear strands of thought emerge on the issue: for some non-racialism is not seeing colour at all: 'according to me the concept of race should not even exist, we should talk about being human' (Lenasia focus group, Lenasia, 4 July 2012). In this view, 'we are all born of one country, we are all the same in the image of God' (Respondent L, ANC branch member, Eldorado Park, 18 July 2012); we 'should try not to see colour'

(Respondent G, ANC branch member, Soweto, 31 August, 2012). Race should not be acknowledged as a defining or even distinctive feature of any individual. This perspective follows Maré's (2003) argument that within the strict meaning of non-racialism, there are no such things as biologically or genetically determined, and objectively verifiable, socially meaningful categories called races. In this view races are products of social construction and as such one should rise above them in order to achieve non-racialism.

The vast majority of branch members interviewed, however, implicitly see race as a fixed and important part of South African society. In this view non-racialism is not about transcending race but rather about accepting diversity and supporting the equality of different races: 'non-racialism talks to embracing your culture, your diversity' (Sandton focus group, Johannesburg, 10 September 2012). The terms 'free from discrimination'; 'equality'; 'rainbow nation' and 'respect' featured strongly in discussions on the meaning of non-racialism: 'Non-racialism is where you are not discriminated against based on the colour of your skin' (Respondent N, ANC branch member, Sandton, 31 July 2012) and we are 'united in our diversity' (Respondent M, ANC branch member, Sandton, 31 July 2012). Indeed, in this view you 'can only really understand non-racialism if you understand racism in South Africa. Racism stopped people from connecting and we need to change the way people perceive each other' (Lenasia focus group). For some members Mandela's approach to nation building – being forgiving and welcoming to all – is an example of what non-racialism should mean (Sandton focus group, Johannesburg, 10 September 2012).

Taken beyond a passive view, respondents also felt that non-racialism is about active engagement between different races. Members from different areas expressed a desire for people from different race groups to come to their area to 'share perspectives and listen to each other and learn' (Lenasia focus group). For many branch members non-racialism is about different races living in shared spaces, sharing everyday experiences and learning to accept and understand each other's cultures; 'it would be great to see mixed race couples' (Respondent G, ANC branch member, Soweto, 31 August, 2012). Non-racialism also involves 'equal opportunities' for each race group, particularly in the workplace and in education (Respondent E, ANC branch member, Soweto, 31 August, 2012). This gives us some insight into what ANC members feel non-racialism looks like in practice and perhaps provides some flesh to the bones of ANC documents that talk about 'building' non-racialism or 'engaging' communities.

How does this understanding of non-racialism correlate with the ANC's pronouncements on non-racialism? As discussed in the previous section, in many ways the party's historical instrumentalisation of non-racialism tacitly supported the idea of multi-racialism, and its contemporary approach could be said to take a multiracial stance where it recognises an intermediate need for race essentialism as demonstrated through race-based policies such as affirmative action and Black Economic Empowerment (BEE). On this reading of the ANC's approach to non-racialism, there is a strong correlation between many branch members' views and historical and current leadership views. It is important to note that this correlation has limitations. The majority of branch members did not articulate a clear understanding of using race-based policies to undermine inequitable race-based power relations. Comments such as 'it would be great to see mixed race couples' demonstrate a desire to see materialised a humanistic version of non-racialism; however, few respondents addressed the need for race

essentialism to achieve this goal through altering power relations based on race, which is indeed a key aim of the ANC's, as espoused in strategies such as the NDR. These views demonstrate that branch members do identify with a universalist, humanistic view of non-racialism that is indeed often espoused in ANC writings, if not always given substantive content.

Looking in: the ANC and non-racialism in practice

How does non-racialism play out in practice within the ANC, specifically at the branch level? Do members feel the party is broadly non-racial in its approach and practice to party matters or are there concerns? Although respondents took care to note that the ANC, as a party, theoretically supports the ideal of non-racialism it was clear, almost across the board that members feel there are significant problems with race relations within the ANC, at all levels. The strongest concerns about race relations in the party came from Eldorado Park, followed by Sandton, Lenasia and to a much lesser extent Soweto. This may be expected as the first three areas are what the ANC calls 'minority areas'. Minority areas are those that have a high predominance of non-black-African residents.² It can also refer to areas where the ANC is a minority party, but has come to be associated with race categories rather than voting patterns.

The reasons cited for concern were fairly wide ranging, but focused on a general unease that the party disproportionately supports and promotes Africans. Many members from Coloured (in particular), Indian and white communities feel that there is no space for them in the ANC and that their views and skills are not valued in the party. People expressed sentiments such as the fact that you are seen as 'the best cadre if you are from Soweto or Alexandra' (Sandton focus group, Johannesburg, 10 September 2012) referring to members from predominantly African areas. Beyond this, some members believe that there is active racist behaviour against the so-called minority groups. Several quotes highlight these views:

- In the ANC as an organisation, there is definitely racism taking place there, definitely. (Eldorado Park focus group, Eldorado Park, 11 September 2012)
- Not to be rude, but Indians and Coloureds, before we were not white enough now we are not black enough. Honestly we cannot fit in; we have to fight to fit in. (Sandton focus group, Johannesburg, 10 September 2012)
- I had never really experienced racialism [*sic*] until I came to the ANC. (Sandton focus group, Johannesburg, 10 September 2012)
- They [ANC leadership] don't regard Coloured people as important. (Eldorado Park focus group, Eldorado Park, 11 September 2012)
- We are cannon fodder for getting votes from minority groups. (Eldorado Park focus group, Eldorado Park, 11 September 2012)
- Comrades were saying, from the Coloured and some from the white community: 'It feels like we are sitting in a PAC meeting'. (Lenasia focus group)
- In the ANC racism is still very strong and it can be proven any day anywhere. (Eldorado Park focus group, Eldorado Park, 11 September 2012)
- The ANC is more racist than any other political party in South Africa at the moment. (Eldorado Park focus group, Eldorado Park, 11 September 2012)
- The ANC is perpetuating what the National Party was doing, playing racial groups against one another. (Eldorado Park focus group, Eldorado Park, 11 September 2012)

Leadership positions

One of the key concerns raised by many of the branch members interviewed was the perception that it is difficult to get a leadership position in the ANC if you are not an African. For some members 'there is a glass ceiling' (Sandton focus group, Johannesburg, 10 September 2012) to leadership positions above (and even at) branch level if you are not African. 'Without a [name] like Vusi or Khumalo you can forget about getting posts' (Eldorado Park focus group, Eldorado Park, 11 September 2012). 'Let's just call a spade a spade, if you are Coloured, if you are Indian and if you are white you actually don't stand a chance' (Sandton focus group, Johannesburg, 10 September 2012). Respondents discussed the perception that 'within structures of the ANC, from the zone, region, province to national, the Secretary and Chairperson must be an African' (Lenasia focus group). In the Sandton and Eldorado Park focus groups in particular there was a strong sense that leadership positions are deliberately held back from minority races. One white respondent in Sandton spoke of how they were asked to stand as a councillor and then told to step down at the last minute because they were not black. Respondents in Sandton also spoke of having to find and groom African members to stand as branch Chairpersons as it was not seen as appropriate to have a white Chairperson. A member from Protea South argued that the 'most vulnerable people in the ANC are not the blacks, they are the whites' (Respondent H, ANC branch member, Soweto, 31 August, 2012). From interviews and focus groups it is clear that the perception that there are no leadership roles for non-Africans leads to frustration and alienation on the part of other race groups.

Several respondents, however, do not think there are problems with the racial composition of leadership (at all levels) in the ANC. As one respondent (N, ANC branch member, Sandton, 31 July 2012) from Sandton noted, 'The ANC leadership does understand non-racialism, you find that sometimes they just take random people to balance the demographics and promote non-racialism in the organisation'. The interviewee contended that the perception that Coloureds and Indians say they were not white enough and are now not black enough, is just that, 'a perception'. They continued, however, to state that 'this perception may be brought about by the fact that they don't receive any positions. In my view this is because they do not participate in the branches and we can only elect an active person' and that 'racial quotas are wrong'. Ironically several respondents from Sandton argued just the opposite; that no matter how hard they work they can never get positions because they are not African. Nonetheless, some respondents did voice positive sentiments about race relations in the ANC, arguing that the party is broadly racially representative and allows space for all population groups in leadership positions (Protea South focus group, Soweto, 31 August 2012; Lenasia focus group). The ANC is 'showing willing' and trying to mend racial division, ensuring 'there are still minorities who are given positions' (Respondent G, ANC branch member, Soweto, 31 August, 2012).

Language

Several members interviewed in minority branches felt strongly that language was used as a tool by some ANC members to alienate non-Africans and in so doing enhanced race essentialism and the value of Africans over other black races in the party. Respondents explained how 'vernacular languages' (African languages) are used in many ANC

meetings and those that do not speak the language are left feeling alienated. Members described situations where they asked the speakers to translate but their requests were ignored. This left them with a sense that their input is not wanted or valued and that they have no role to play. Not all agreed with this view however. Some noted that many meetings are held in English which is widely understood by all, and when necessary, comments are translated (Lenasia focus group; Sandton focus group, Johannesburg, 10 September 2012).

Contestations over the use of language in fostering perceived racism is significant in terms of building non-racialism, as language can be used to promote nation building and the national question. As discussed in the previous section, the National Planning Commission promotes the learning of an African language as a means of instrumentalising non-racialism. However, this support of African languages has the potential to be misconstrued as perpetuating an anti-African stance rather than fostering a humanist vision of non-racialism. This example is perhaps indicative of a need by the ANC to disseminate more clearly its vision of how to build non-racialism to its branch members.

Race relations at the branch level

To what extent is non-racialism practiced at the branch level? Are there tensions between race groups within branches? Branches researched with multiple race membership (Lenasia and Sandton) had experienced racial tensions while those with a strongly dominate single race group (Protea South and Eldorado Park) had not. Lenasia presents an interesting case study of racial strains, potentially overcome. Lenasia was historically a predominantly Indian branch, which over the past few years has attracted a large African membership with the move of Africans into parts of Lenasia. Respondents discussed how race played a role in voting during the executive branch elections, for the first time, in 2011. Some Indian members were concerned that 'the branch was going to be taken over by Africans' although this did not materialise. A handful of Africans were voted onto the executive 'in places that were previously occupied by Indian members' (Respondent B, ANC branch member, Lenasia, 4 July 2012). For some in the branch it 'was a big challenge that we were confronted with' and 'challenged some mind-sets' (Respondent A, ANC branch member, Lenasia, 4 July 2012). Although racial tension threatened to divide the branch, in practice it appears the branch is functioning well and members of both races work together.

In the case of Sandton, members interviewed came from different branches within the Sandton zone and so did not discuss one branch in detail but rather a pattern of racial tensions played out in branch and zonal settings. As discussed earlier, some non-African members felt unwanted or even mistreated by members of their branch because of their race. Tensions go both ways; a black-African member felt that 'white congress members do not want to come on board...they are just card carrying members nothing more' (Respondent N, ANC branch member, Sandton, 31 July 2012); they were frustrated at the lack of 'active participation' by white members. There is an implied view that some white members utilise the party for personal gain rather than build it as an organisation. On a more positive note, however, and indicating there is no clear pattern of behaviour in the Sandton zone, a respondent explained 'in our branch there is no racial tension' and reiterated the importance of equal representation for all race groups (Respondent O, ANC branch member, Sandton, 31 July 2012).

Protea South and Eldorado Park did not have explicit problems with race relations in their branches, primarily because their members are composed of a single race. Protea South noted that ‘most of our members in this branch are black...our ward covers Lenasia where there are Indians but they aren’t members’ (Soweto focus group, Soweto, 31 August 2012). This was seen by some as problematic:

We don’t really know what is happening with the Indians, there are Indians in our branch area but they don’t come to meetings, they move to the other [Lenasia] branch. Maybe some are working and can’t come during the day...this is a problem, the race issue does still take place. (Respondent G, ANC branch member, Soweto, 31 August, 2012)

A colleague agreed that ‘there are no Indian members on the Youth League structure here...I would like [us] to learn from each other’ (Respondent H, ANC branch member, Soweto, 31 August, 2012).

In Eldorado Park the branch is ‘a pure Coloured branch’ and so there are no clear racial tensions. However, this was not always the case. Before the Demarcation Board and the ANC realigned the branch boundaries, the branch covered part of Eldorado Park and a predominantly African informal settlement. There were tensions in the branch at this time as residents of the informal settlement felt the branch was too focused on the Coloured community and not on their needs. However, as respondents explained, it may have looked like a race issue on the surface, but actually it ‘had more to do with the economy and poverty’. There is a perception that the ANC separated the informal settlement from the Eldorado Park branch because they felt ‘they will be better off in another branch where majorities are black’. The current branch members are not happy with the changed demarcation because ‘it doesn’t go well with integration, it doesn’t go well with [the] social cohesion that we are trying to achieve...we could have been much stronger as a branch’ (Eldorado Park focus group, Eldorado Park, 11 September 2012). Protea South and Eldorado Park illustrate that even where there are no explicit racial tensions within the branch there are still implicit concerns in terms of building non-racialism, as different race groups are missing an opportunity to work together.

Looking out: ANC branch members and non-racialism in society

Race-based policies

The previous sections provide some insight into what ANC branch members feel about non-racialism within the party; however, it is also important to look at whether members identify with the ANC’s external policies that explicitly refer to racial categorisation. As the ANC has no detailed policy on how to implement non-racialism, this question translates into understanding what members’ feel about ANC (and in turn government) policies that are focused on social and economic transformation based on race, such as policies on the NDR, affirmative action and BEE.

‘Blacks in general and Africans in particular’

Before turning to government policies respondents were first probed on their view of the phrase ‘Africans in particular and black people in general’ commonly cited in ANC

policy documents in reference to the NDR. The vast majority of respondents disliked this term: 'I hate that statement'. 'To me we are all Africans, this is where we were brought up, this is where we live, this is the only home we know. Let us treat all people equally' (Sandton focus group, Johannesburg, 10 September 2012). An executive branch member (Respondent G, ANC branch member, Soweto, 31 August, 2012) from Protea South explained that he did not agree with the statement as it 'creates division'. Similarly a respondent from Eldorado Park described how the statement made them feel alienated. They asked 'what do we understand by the phrase "Africans in particular"? All of a sudden we are no longer Africans, but we were born in Africa'. A colleague later noted that 'nobody else is more African than me, we are all African. We need to get rid of things in the ANC constitution where they talk about blacks in general and Africans in particular...these things kill us as an organisation'. There was a strong feeling in this branch that until the ANC 'excludes some of this terminology' it will be difficult to get rid of 'racial discrimination' (Eldorado Park focus group, Eldorado Park, 11 September 2012). Several respondents in Lenasia (from different races) agreed that the phrase 'showed no signs of a non-racial South Africa' (focus group, Lenasia, 4 July 2012). Several members of the Sandton branch (focus group, Johannesburg, 10 September 2012) argued that the statement was premised on the assumption that if you are white you are rich, which is not always the case. Rather than having policies that favoured different races, respondents argued that individuals would be better served by good education. It is instrumental to note that the NDR phrase is central to a strategy of transformation that is intended to eradicate precisely the type of racial division that is articulated in the statements above. An unintended consequence of this strategy is therefore to create a potentially racially divisive, alienating effect on some non-black-African members of the party.

Although the use of the NDR phrase was widely disliked, some respondents felt the sentiments behind the phrase are appropriate as Africans are economically disadvantaged and should receive preferential treatment. Indeed in Protea South an intense debate took place in the focus group (Soweto, 31 August 2012) about the economic legacies of apartheid and the ANC's current promotion of 'Africans in particular'. Some felt that black South Africans need to move beyond focusing on the role of apartheid in their lives and look forward to how, as individuals, they can create new opportunities. Others, however, supported the idea of promoting 'Africans in particular'; 'under apartheid it is blacks in particular who suffered...the black people are the majority but the economy is in the hands of the minority...that is where inequality is...so we have to rectify those things'. Black people don't have the same advantages as other groups and if 'you concentrate on the Coloureds and whites it is not going to be fair on blacks'.

The debates by branch members over the NDR concept of promoting blacks in general and Africans in particular, highlight several issues. First, many ANC members have not fully engaged with the thinking behind the strategy of the NDR. Relatively few respondents addressed the need to use racially based social and economic policies to foster long-term racial equality and thus the complexities inherent in this aspect of the ANC's approach to non-racialism were not discussed. Where discussions did take place there was still contestation over the usefulness and necessity of a racially based approach to fostering social and economic equality. The debate in Protea South indicated there is no comprehensive solidarity around economic transformation. The instinctive rejection of the NDR phrase by many branch members does indicate, however, a high level of support

for a universalist, humanist view of non-racialism, rather than one that focuses on differentiation of races.

Turning to the government policies of affirmative action and BEE (coupled together here as they were often discussed interchangeably by respondents) respondents followed similar views to that on the *rationale* for (although not the use of) the phrase 'blacks in general and Africans in particular'; some supported it, some did not, for broadly similar reasons to those discussed earlier. Interestingly respondent's support or dislike of the policies did not correlate to their race group.

A substantial number of respondents did agree with and understand the need for affirmative action and BEE. They were variously seen as a 'good strategy' which 'empowers people' (Respondent F, ANC branch member, Soweto, 31 August, 2012) and 'creates economic opportunities' (Respondent E, ANC branch member, Soweto, 31 August, 2012; Respondent M, ANC branch member, Sandton, 31 July 2012). Branch members felt that policies such as these appropriately address the legacies of apartheid (Respondent K, ANC branch member, Eldorado Park, 18 July 2012). Respondents argued that 'blacks haven't had their roots in the economy' and so still need assistance and protection (Respondent N, ANC branch member, Sandton, 31 July 2012). There was also acknowledgement by several non-African interviewees that minority races still hold top positions in the workplace and that minority races need to recognise this (Lenasia focus group). However, even respondents that supported these policies had some reservations, primarily because they felt they were poorly implemented and had not, in practice, benefited the majority of Africans (Protea South focus group, Soweto, 31 August 2012).

Although many branch members supported affirmative action and BEE, as many did not. There were various reasons for this. Some argued that in a democratic setting there is no need for policies that 'lift' Africans as 'we are free to move anywhere we want and apply for any job we want' (Lenasia focus group). Others argued that jobs and opportunities should be awarded on merit not race; 'Hunger is not race specific', and 'opportunities should be awarded based on qualifications not race' (Respondent O, ANC branch member, Sandton, 31 July 2012; Respondent E, ANC branch member, Soweto, 31 August, 2012). Others in Protea South (focus group, Soweto, 31 August 2012) were concerned that privileging blacks over others may be 'unfair' to those 'white people' who have 'worked hard for what they have'. Several respondents from Eldorado Park (focus group, Eldorado Park, 11 September 2012) argued that policies such as affirmative action and BEE had not benefited Coloureds at all: 'BEE is the worst enemy meant for the benefit of Africans only...affirmative action is another way of reversing apartheid'. Some felt the policies actually create division in the Coloured community and negative perceptions of the ANC, because 'Coloured people will not vote for the ANC because they don't have jobs and they blame this on affirmative action for having robbed them of opportunities' (Respondent L, ANC branch member, Eldorado Park, 18 July 2012). Interestingly only one respondent explicitly said they did not agree with affirmative action and BEE because they divided people according to race: 'unless we move on from viewing people based on their race we are going to be in trouble' (Respondent O, ANC branch member, Sandton, 31 July 2012). This finding highlights a concern that race identities may be embedded in the minds of South Africans to a point where it is not paramount in branch member's minds that they could be transcended.

Social cohesion

Beyond economic policies, it is useful to understand the extent to which ANC branch members feel non-racialism has been instrumentalised in society more broadly and whether the ANC is fostering non-racialism in society. One concept the ANC has recently embraced, which deals with the theme of non-racialism is that of building 'social cohesion' (Mthembu 2012). Social cohesion is understood by different actors in various ways, however, for the South African Presidency, it refers to 'the extent to which a society is coherent, united and functional, providing an environment within which its citizens can flourish'. Social Cohesion further refers to a set of social processes that help individuals feel they have a sense of belonging to the same community and that they are recognised as members of that community (The Presidency of South Africa, n.d.).

There is a general sense from respondents that South Africa is still racially intolerant and has not achieved acceptable levels of social cohesion. Most attribute this failure to the reality that different race groups, by-and-large, live spatially and socially segregated lives. Discussions across all focus groups talked about ideas of 'other', 'difference' and a lack of understanding and accepting people.

The level to which the ANC has successfully worked towards creating a socially cohesive, non-racial society was seen variously as high and low by different respondents. Some branch members felt that the ANC was doing a good job: 'the ANC is succeeding in promoting non-racialism because anyone can join the ANC; transformation is still taking place...despite apartheid scars the ANC made room for the DA and other political parties' (Respondent F, ANC branch member, Soweto, 31 August, 2012). The latter comment might miss the point of a democracy but does illustrate a sense that the ANC is not racially dogmatic and supports the idea of tolerant and diverse society. Others felt strongly that the ANC was not succeeding in building a non-racial society, rather it was 'saying one thing and doing another' and was 'not committed to really seeing the whole outcome' of a socially cohesive society (Respondent C, ANC branch member, Lenasia, 4 July 2012). There was concern from one respondent that as a liberation movement the ANC 'didn't do very well, we looked at liberating people from apartheid but we didn't look at the psychological and social scars...we didn't integrate, there is no real social cohesion and structural integration' (Eldorado Park focus group, Eldorado Park, 11 September 2012). On balance, however, there was a sense from branch members that the ANC may be trying to support a socially cohesive South Africa but it was 'not going all out', was 'not dealing with issues of race on the ground' (Respondent H, ANC branch member, Soweto, 31 August, 2012) and was generally not achieving enough in terms of building non-racialism.

Respondents agreed there is no facile solution for creating social cohesion and racial harmony, however, there is a strong sense that more needs to be done to build integrated communities that understand and respect racial diversity. Branch members are not advocating for a society where there is no racial difference, rather they want communities that integrate, share government services, social spaces and work environments, and ultimately respect and learn from one another.

Conclusion

What can we conclude about the state of non-racialism in the ANC in 2012? Do contestations over the ideal of non-racialism today reflect historical challenges? Generally

speaking branch members have deep-seated concerns with non-racialism in the ANC and in society more broadly. There is certainly recognition that race relations in society have significantly improved since the ANC moved into government, however, branch members feel not enough change has taken place and that racial tensions are impeding social cohesion and concomitant growth and progress in the country.

The vast majority of branch members interviewed place a high value on the ideal of non-racialism. This is significant because it demonstrates that there is hope for improved race relations; people's views on other races have not solidified. The importance of a 'cohesive' society is not underestimated by ANC branch members. When it comes to understandings of non-racialism (notwithstanding some divergence on the meaning) there is a clear underlying theme of respecting and learning from difference. Respondents implicitly see a non-racial society as one where people from different race groups are treated *equally* and individuals do not have to be defined by their race group. There is a strong appreciation that South Africa is composed of a diversity of cultures (encompassing religious, race, class and gender differences amongst others) and that to build a non-racial society does not mean overlooking (or attempting to overcome) this reality. Rather non-racialism is about sharing and embracing difference, with respect, as equals.

Do these views from branch members correlate with ANC policy and leadership views on non-racialism? Broadly speaking, yes. On the one hand many branch members share a humanistic and humanitarian view of non-racialism as espoused in several ANC documents that make reference to the concept. On the other hand, the idea of sharing and embracing difference correlates with an ANC stance on non-racialism that has at times implicitly supported the notion of difference. The ANC's protracted battle to accept members from non-African races as well as its support of racially based policies such as affirmative action demonstrate that, as a liberation movement as well as a political party, it has not yet tried to transcend racial differences, but rather accept and work with them to create a society based on political, social and economic equality.

That branch member's views broadly correlate with leadership views on non-racialism is in some ways a fortuitous coincidence. As discussed earlier, ANC leadership has not yet provided a clear and detailed vision of the meaning of non-racialism and how to instrumentalise it. Indeed one of the main areas of concern voiced by branch members was that of poor leadership from the current ANC incumbents. There were strong emotions on this issue from Eldorado Park: 'The fact is the ANC leadership does not understand non-racialism at all and when they try to address these issues they speak to the wrong people, not the ordinary citizens...who experience racism first hand' (Respondent I, ANC branch member, Eldorado Park, 18 July 2012).

Concerns about leadership were not only centred on non-racialism, but they were also limited to respondents from 'minority races'. Branch members from Protea South (focus group, Soweto, 31 August 2012) discussed (with almost all focus group members agreeing) how an overhaul of the majority of senior leadership of the party is needed: 'the leadership of the ANC is lacking, very lacking'. There is concern that leadership is not in touch with the needs and problems of younger generations and is too focused on the past, rather than seeking solutions for the future. Respondents from Sandton (focus group, Johannesburg, 10 September 2012) also argued that top level ANC leadership is too distanced from branches; 'they need to make themselves available to interact with residents of the branch'. There was discussion in all branch focus groups about members at times being frustrated with, and even embarrassed by, actions and pronouncements of

some ANC leaders. These views have direct implications for the organisational culture of the ANC and raise questions about why there are leaders of a party that many of the branch members interviewed do not claim to support. It also raises the question of whether research on non-racialism and the ANC in different regions (rural rather than urban, for example) of the country would result in different findings.

Although views on non-racialism may broadly correlate between branch members and leadership, there are various areas of divergence on racially based policies and pronouncements from different sectors of the party. Many respondents for example do not support the party's focus on economic policies that favour 'Africans in particular'. As discussed earlier this has had an alienating effect on non-Africans in the party. Indeed the perception (whether real or imagined) that the ANC is advancing only the interests of Africans has led to loss of electoral support in 'minority areas'. This has made the role of being an ANC branch member in these areas very challenging, and often thankless. Branch members from Eldorado Park in particular (and to some extent Sandton) are frustrated with the party and feel much anger about the way they are treated because (they deem) they are Coloured (or white or Indian in the case of Sandton and Lenasia). They express the view that leadership in the party do not fully appreciate their frustration and disappointment.

In a similar vein many branch members are also disillusioned about the manner in which they feel members are awarded senior positions. Numerous members from 'minority' group races strongly believe that senior positions are only open to Africans, which hinders their role in the party. Many of these branch members implicitly see racial difference as a key reason for the way in which (they consider) they are poorly treated by Provincial and more senior level ANC leadership. In turn they believe this demonstrates that the ANC leadership does not take building non-racialism seriously. So long as branch members use their race as a key point of grievance it will be difficult for the party to foster non-racialism. It is not necessarily the case that race is the cause of difficulties in these branches. As Jordan (1997) explains a driving force behind 'ethnic consciousness' can be 'competition with fellow Blacks over scarce resources' and that 'racial and ethnic flashpoints' exist over what are seen as diminishing job opportunities. Drawing from Jordan one can argue that the viewpoint of many 'minority' race members may not change until there is a perception that there are 'sufficient resources for all the disadvantaged'. Notwithstanding the validity of this argument, so long as members believe their race is a hindrance in the ANC, non-racialism will be difficult to foster. This sense of grievance by some 'minority' members may be an unintended consequence of an ANC strategy to build non-racialism that requires an intermediate focus on race essentialism and the (historically necessary) promotion of one race, in particular, to achieve equality.

In their discussions of non-racialism, leadership and political dynamics within the ANC, many members described what they feel is a lack of democracy within the party. The ANC prides itself as a party which elects leaders based on the wishes of its provincial, and in turn local branch, structures (ANC 2007, see Butler 2005). In practice, however, branch members feel they have very little, if any, say in who ultimately attains leadership positions. For those from Protea South (focus group, Soweto, 31 August 2012) there is concern that people only got positions because of 'who you know' and that corruption was a significant factor in winning leadership positions; 'if you are not the friend of Zuma you will never get up there'. One focus group member (Sandton focus

group, Johannesburg, 10 September 2012) discussed how ‘in my branch I have a Minister...I have never seen that Minister...if his own branch doesn’t nominate him how does he actually [get power]?’ A member from Eldorado Park (focus group, Eldorado Park, 11 September 2012) gave an example of a person serving at the regional level who claims to come from a branch where ‘there is no structure’. Others stated that ‘they already know who they are going to put in there...we must go on with the procedure while they already know who is going to be in’. Several respondents felt that leadership positions in the ANC were not a reflection of ‘your capabilities’ (Eldorado Park focus group, Eldorado Park, 11 September 2012). The Sandton focus group (Johannesburg, 10 September 2012) also discussed how ‘brown envelopes’ (with money) were passed between members and party whips to facilitate gaining a leadership position. Respondents discussed the financial importance of senior branch positions; it is branch Chairs who control branch projects which can involve numerous opportunities for (corrupt) financial benefit.

Allied to leadership selection concerns is frustration that branch members have no input into policy decisions of the party. In theory the party values the views and work of branches, as evidenced by President Zuma’s (2010, 8) words: ‘We must make our branches work, we must make our people part of driving change as ANC branches’. Indeed, the ANC Constitution (2007, rule 3.2) explains that the ANC’s policies are ‘determined by the membership’ and that its leadership is ‘accountable to the membership’. However, numerous examples were discussed of where branch members had written reports or provided verbal feedback on pressing issues and had had little response, or had been told by regional or provincial members that their reports were not read. ‘You can write report upon report...we did an analysis...was it ever read...hell no...the PEC asks the same questions a year later...but did they ever read the report’ (Sandton focus group, Johannesburg, 10 September 2012). When asked whether branch members feel ‘more senior ANC structures listen to them’, members from Eldorado Park (focus group, Eldorado Park, 11 September 2012) answered:

definitely not, definitely not...we can complain...ask them to assist with the elections, to come address the plight of the people, nothing is happening, zilch...they don’t listen to us and I don’t know if it is only here in Eldorado Park but they don’t listen...they are not taking us seriously.³

Branch members were frustrated by this experience as they feel they know well what the challenges in their communities are, and so should have some voice (Sandton focus group, Johannesburg, 10 September 2012). ‘We are the people that know what is happening in the township...we work in these communities, we live here’ (Eldorado Park focus group, Eldorado Park, 11 September 2012). Respondents are concerned that ‘as much as the state has moved away from the people, the ANC and leadership have also moved away from the people’ (Sandton focus group, Johannesburg, 10 September 2012). The ANC’s relationship to non-racialism at the branch level thus sheds light on the role of branch members’ input (or not) into leadership and policy decisions and ultimately whether the ANC’s purported support of grassroots democracy is more theory than practice.

Turning back to non-racialism, notwithstanding concerns discussed earlier, branch members do recognise that the ANC has a longstanding commitment to ideals of

inclusion and equality of races. Respondents also recognise that any organisation will have strong and weak leaders (Eldorado Park focus group, Eldorado Park, 11 September 2012) and that ‘we are a new democracy’ and ‘change will take time...as time goes by it will get better’ (Protea South focus group, Soweto, 31 August 2012; Respondent G, ANC branch member, Soweto, 31 August, 2012). However, members feel more must be done to build a non-racial South Africa. Branch members had numerous ideas including the view that ‘The ANC must embark on a campaign to show it is a non-racial party that embraces all racial groups’ and that it must ‘try to deal with internalised oppression’ as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was not effective enough at doing this (Lenasia focus group). Thus a significant challenge to the party, as expressed by members, is that of providing leadership and a vision of a non-racial South Africa.

Added to concerns about building non-racialism is that of a party fractured at the grassroots. Through substantial engagements with over 45 branch members it is clear that the ANC is faced with deep frustration and discontent at the branch level. On a positive note, this frustration transcends race, being voiced by branch members from different areas, classes, genders and races. These findings from ANC branch members raise some important questions for the party: What is its detailed vision of a non-racial South Africa? What indicators will it use to know when it is on the road to achieving this vision and when there is no longer a need for race-based policies? As one branch executive member (Lenasia focus group) noted, the party needs to ask ‘Are we still a liberation movement or are we a political party?’. He argues that the strategy and tactics document and its focus on ‘Africans in particular’ is important but does not fully deal with the reality that the ANC is now ‘in parliament, in government and managing the country’. Finally, the findings from the research illustrate a pressing need to (re)engage with branch members in a meaningful and democratic manner, through listening to and acknowledging their views, if the party is to reach its goal of building a ‘united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society’.

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Notes

1. The idea of ‘the national question’ broadly refers to the right to and practice of self-determination in a context of historical oppression of one or a number of people/s by a dominant colonial power. See Jordan (1997).
2. For example see comments from Gwede Mantashe (Staff Reporter 2011).
3. Of interest is that several weeks after the report which this article is based on was circulated in the ANC NEC, President Zuma, on relatively short notice, undertook a high profile visit to Eldorado Park to talk to residents about high levels of drug abuse in the community.

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