

Response to "Missing in Action"

Dumisani Zulu, Office of the Gauteng Premier Nomvula Mokonyane

It is in the nature of politics that an opposition will always highlight what the opposition believes to be the flaws of the other. Most of the time this is done by underscoring the internal contradiction in the policy position espoused by the other party or the unsustainability of the project pursued.

It is only when the opposition have failed to find fundamental errors of judgement on the part of the other that the opposition will resort to gutter tactics to besmirch not the policy stance but also the name. In some contact sport this is referred to as the low blow (below-the-belt) and the perpetrator suffer the humiliation of losing points. In social and political arena, this tendency is not only an affront to its intended object but also to the discerning readers of such a respectable publication as the Mail & Guardian.

I found this disposition in an argument advanced by the writer in today's Mail & Guardian who seeks to attack the character of the Premier by using weak straws to prop up unfounded assertions against the Premier of Gauteng. The writer starts by taking us on a time-wasting detour riddled with potholes instead of a straight forward destination-bound route of factual narrative. For instance, he wants us to believe that the Premier holds a "notoriously earned tag" because of her action-oriented, hands-on leadership style. What's "notorious" about this trait or style? In the same line the writer trips and commit a cardinal sin in the art of sound argumentation by citing that the Premier espouses a "no nonsense management style" and "want to get things done" not in "her way" but in accordance with the prescript of the law and the mandate given to the government by the people of Gauteng and South Africa in general. Putting aside the unsound inferences and innuendos which have no substance, what a piece of glaring contradictions?

As if the writer is on an ego-gratification voyage, he subjects our senses to his tumultuous sea of emotions in a bid to show weakness on the part of the Premier. Ironically, he drowns in his own faulty claims and prejudice. This is shown in such value-laden phrases as "thuggish behaviour and ill-discipline" being a "known fact" without proffering empirical evidence to support his so called factual judgement.

What is disappointing with this writer is the fact that he wants to project himself as someone who is privy to the life and times of the Mokonyane family. He attempts to achieve this by stupidly bringing up the Premier's husband private life into the picture. It is a shame that when one has no sensible case to make one resorts to banal conjectures. Such is the mainstay of the piece I refer to.

In the last edition of this newspaper, the Premier, through the government communications head, made it clear that the law must take its course and she has never and will never interfere with it. However, the writer continues to allege that the Premier abuses her power to protect her own. Nowhere in his writing does he show proof of such wrong conduct on the part of the Premier.

On the issue of biking culture, yes, the Premier has expressed her views many times about the dangers of riding a bike under the influence or without proper training and licence. Out of her volition, after seeing young people perishing on bikes, he met with the biking community as well as the families of the deceased to express condolences and appeal to the bikers to exercise caution and respect the rules of the road when biking. She is the only Premier who has come out strongly condemning bad behaviour on public roads by few bikers. Is this not good enough? Does this not reflect the motherly side of the Premier? Unfortunately not all the good community work that the Premier does is meant to be a media funfair or public relations. There are numerous projects she is involved in such as the Food Bank which she established last year and co-opts aimed at poverty alleviation in our communities. Instead of expending good energy on matters such as this of Mokonyane's son, writers like this one, must go out contribute their valuable time and skill to such community initiatives so that Gauteng can be a better place for all.

In conclusion, as readers we must ask ourselves how such piece of writing add value to ourselves. How does it contribute to the body politics of the time? Please, may we have more credible stuff so that we can be equipped to play our role as the active citizenry.

<i> Part of the "Letter from a concerned resident" and the response from Zulu were both edited to omit unsubstantiated claims.</i>*