

Julius Malema

Julius Malema has a huge following among the youth and is President of ANCYL, which appears to have kingmaker status. Jacob Zuma once acclaimed Malema as a future leader and put him in the running for President of South Africa at some later date. But there is now ambivalence about Malema; his power in the ANC is both a welcome and an intimidating influence. Those who opportunistically believed that the ANCYL would passively step into line have discovered that Malema understands his power and will assert it. He freely expresses his views on Mugabe and Zimbabwe, on redistribution of land, on nationalisation of mining, etc. He is not restricted by protocols that are adopted to present a liberal face to the world. He is an embarrassment to the ANC. Disciplinary hearings and demonstrations outside Luthuli House indicate a lack of trust in the relationship between the elders and the youth. Declarations of loyalty to an abstract ANC do not hide the struggle for power that is going on.

In its quest for a less dogmatic and more liberal facade, the ANC leadership seems to want to curb Malema's outspokenness but is nervous about taking action against the ANCYL president. After the dethroning of Thabo Mbeki in 2007, Malema and the ANCYL are now reinstating the image of Thabo Mbeki as a worthy president and criticising Zuma; they seem to have the power to make or break leaders. And the ANC's ability to 'discipline' the ANCYL is compromised. But is it simply a matter of intimidation or is the hesitation based on what the facade hides? What is the truth? Is Malema the real face of the ANC and is the ANC's ambivalence an attempt to hide an actual consensus?

Judge Colin Lamont, who has declared Malema guilty of hate speech, has provided a means for the ANC to deflect its attack from Malema to the judge. The judgement that finds '*Shoot the Boer*'

to be hate speech ignored the ANC's veneration of the song as part of its proud tradition and legacy. And it seems that the constitution allows for hate speech on these grounds. So the judgement will be challenged. And the focus will shift to the defence of the song and Malema will be vindicated because the song will be vindicated. And his power will be reaffirmed as will the ANC's inability to curb it. Catch 22?

A question to ask : Was Julius Malema (1981) born at the wrong time?

He came into the world when the revolutionary struggle was coming to an end and bringing to an end the making of heroes through resistance to apartheid. Peter Mokaba was probably the

last person whose heroism evolved out of resistance and was shaped by oppression. Julius Malema, like so many young people, did not have that opportunity to prove himself in the fight against racism. He grew up in the period of transition when racism could no longer survive as state policy. It was a time when ways and means had to be found to reform the racist structures that still hold the society together. The enemy was no longer clearly definable and reformists do not readily become heroes.

In 1994, all of us came out of racism cold turkey and, having been addicted to it before that, we are constantly in need of a fix. Racism is what defined us. Attempts to create new definitions based on democracy have not yet been realised; we are hampered by our conditioning under apartheid and by present-day corruption. Conditions of superiority and inferiority still prevail; only those blacks who have gained material advantages escape the condescending gaze, a gaze that they too have adopted; the rest remain disempowered. Racism, therefore, still underpins our discourse and our interactions even when translated into cultural traditions because these traditions preserve perceptions of otherness.

We still define ourselves in terms of racism and for those who missed out on the actual struggle, who were deprived of the opportunity to become struggle heroes, racism cannot die. It has to be kept alive because it is necessary to the creation of heroes. The armed struggle against oppression has become a romantic struggle against racism in order to continue to give rise to heroes. The real struggle of today, a much more complex struggle, i.e. the creation of an equitable society with an administration system that is just, fair and efficient, does not have the same Rambo appeal. So we go on singing "Shoot the Boer" and "Bring me my machine gun."

Some people revere Nelson Mandela only as the freedom fighter. Yes, he is a hero of the struggle, but he became much more than that when he showed us that true heroism comes with the ability to embrace the enemy. He became a Mahatma.