

Women's Rhetoric

Argumentative Strategies of Women in Public Life
Sweden & South Africa

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The documentary

Introducing the documentary

South African history is filled with a range of illustrious, skilled, versatile, courageous and eloquent women public speakers. These range from the feisty Winnie Nomzamo Madikizela-Mandela, to the stylish and educated Ruth First, to women such as Lilian Ngoyi, who spearheaded the 1956 Women's March on the Union Building in Pretoria with Helen Joseph and had a natural ability to inspire audiences. Women have been honored for their bravery in the struggle, but their speeches and deliberations are hard to trace. There are for example no speeches by women leaders on the ANC website, where seminal speeches by stalwart male members can be found.

There is still a lot of work to be done to render tribute to these women of the struggle and those who have raised their voices in the public domain. Hence the significance of this work, which in many ways was a pioneering effort.

From the time I was given the brief for the documentary, I searched the newspapers and kept my "ears to the streets" for events that could be of interest for this project. I also used some of my contacts at parliament to find occasions to film women speakers in public. When I called up Dene Smuts, MP for the Democratic Alliance (DA), whom I had interviewed on previous occasions, she invited me to film her year-end constituency meeting. The event, which was scheduled for early December 2005, effectively became the first of the eight events we filmed.

Given the time constraints facing us – I worked with Monique Bermeister and Catherine Morris, who did camera work, editing, and co-production – we decided to broaden the scope. Our decision was also influenced by an ambition to reflect the diversity of the type of events and

topics open to women speakers. Hence we filmed events around the 16 Days Against Violence Against Women and Children.

I heard of the ANC Women's League organizing a meeting in a hall in Nyanga, one of Cape Town's Townships, which turned out to be poorly attended but nevertheless provided some invaluable footage and insights into women public speakers. I suspect a lot of the speakers who addressed the loyal crowd, switched into English instead of exclusively speaking Xhosa due to the presence of a camera.

Another event linked to the 16 days of activism was held at the District 6 Café, which is at the fringe of the inner city. It was organized by an array of artists, actors, performers and activists and saw about 15 people, mainly young women, take to the stage on a very windy Cape night.

Introducing the women in the documentary

Patricia De Lille - Independent Democrats

Patricia de Lille has been involved in politics for the last quarter of a century and is the party leader of the Independent Democrats (ID) in Cape Town, South Africa. She is a member of both the Global Organization of Parliamentarians against Corruption and the African Parliamentarians Network against Corruption. De Lille was the first politician to expose corruption in the controversial arms deal in South Africa which led to the investigation of government officials.

De Lille's election as National Vice-President of The National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU) in 1988 earned her the highest position for a woman in the trade-union movement. She was elected onto the National Executive of the Pan African Congress (PAC) in 1990 and led its delegation in the constitutional negotiations that preceded South Africa's first democratic election in 1994. She was appointed Chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee on Transport from 1994 – 1999. De Lille also served on various portfolio Committees including Health, Mineral and Energies, Trade and Industry, Communications, the rules committee and the code of ethics.¹ She is the first woman to establish and run a party in South Africa and is loved and feared for her sharp and humorous tongue.

Helen Zille – Democratic Alliance

Helen Zille became executive mayor of Cape Town in 2006 and was elected national Leader of the Democratic Alliance (DA), the official opposition, in 2007. She began her career as a political journalist for the *Rand Daily Mail* after obtaining a Bachelor of Arts Degree from the University

1 www.answers.com/topic/patricia-de-lille

of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. Prior to that she was involved in the Black Sash² movement, the End Conscription Campaign,³ the South Africa Beyond Apartheid Project and the Cape Town Peace Committee. As head of the governing body of Grove Primary School in 1997, Zille led a successful challenge against government policy limiting governing bodies' powers to appoint staff.

Zille was the Provincial Minister (MEC) for the Western Cape and subsequently became a Member of Parliament for the DA. Within the DA she rose to the level of deputy federal chairperson, and was the national party spokesperson and spokesperson for education. She was also a finalist in the South African Woman of the Year Award in 2003. Zille reflects the multilingualism of the country speaking English, Afrikaans, Xhosa and German.⁴

Mudene Smuts - Democratic Alliance

Mudene (Dene) Smuts is a Democratic Alliance MP and the Regional Representative of the Western Cape Province. She also functions as the Spokesperson on Communications and Human Rights in Cape Town, South Africa.⁵ She is a founding member of the National Coalition of Women as well as of the Western Cape Women's Alliance.

Smuts received a Bachelor of Arts with Honors from the University of Stellenbosch in English in 1971 and started her career as a reporter for *Die Burger* in 1972.

- 2 Black Sash is a non-violent white women's resistance organization founded in 1955. The Black Sash initially campaigned against the removal of colored mixed race voters from the voters' roll in the Cape Province by the National Party government. As the apartheid system began to reach into every aspect of South African life, Black Sash members demonstrated against the pass laws and the introduction of other apartheid legislation.
- 3 An anti-apartheid organization allied to the United Democratic Front (UDF) and comprised of conscientious objectors and their supporters in South Africa. It was formed in 1983 to oppose the conscription of all white South African men into military service in the South African Defense Force.
- 4 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helen_Zille
- 5 www.itweb.co.za/sections/telecoms/2007/0705231040.asp?S=Cellular&A=CEL&O=FPQQ

She was awarded for Enterprising Journalism in 1978 and 1981 by the Stellenbosch Farmer's Winery (SFW).⁶ Before venturing into politics full time, she was the editor of the women's magazine Fairlady. She was elected to parliament in late 1989.

Smuts subsequently participated in the Council for a Democratic South Africa's (CODESA) negotiations for a new South Africa as well as the constituent assembly and was a member of the draft team for the 1996 constitution. She is one of the longest serving MPs in parliament, and is regarded as one of the most skilled speakers.

Elizabeth Petersen - Director of St Anne's Homes Interfaith Prayer Service

Elizabeth Petersen is a social worker and the director of St. Anne's Homes which is a shelter for victims of domestic violence in Cape Town. The shelter also focuses energy on women who are infected with HIV / AIDS. St Anne's works to empower disadvantaged and distressed women and children to find relief, support and a chance to become independent, confident and self-sufficient. They are offered a range of services: individual and group counseling, alcohol rehabilitation, employment readiness, vocational training and after care.

Petersen has a bachelor's degree in social work from the University of the Western Cape, and is currently working toward her masters, studying religious and cultural beliefs and gender-based violence. Petersen is well respected on the social as well as political scene in Cape Town, and was selected to carry the Olympic torch when it passed through South Africa in June 2004.⁷

Maddie Mazaza is the Director of City Transport for the City of Cape Town.

In the documentary Mazaza is attending a public meeting at the community hall in Mowbray, a suburb in close proximity to the University of

6 www.whoswhosa.co.za/Pages/profilefull.aspx?IndID=3357

7 http://www.woodstock.org.za/about/profiledetail.asp?art_ID=24

Cape Town, to discuss the City's integrated public transport plan along the Klipfontein Corridor.⁸ She was meant to address concerned residents about these transport projects, but the meeting changed from being merely informative to slightly confrontational as it was attended by a huge group of taxi drivers who feared losing out on business because of the proposed corridor down Klipfontein Road. Mazaza, her colleague Donald Cupido and councilor Owen Kinahan, did not manage to make themselves heard nor allow the presentation and a Q&A session for the residents to go ahead. The meeting was a total disaster, and the taxi drivers blocked the Main Road outside. The police were called in to monitor the volatile situation, but luckily there were no incidents of violence.

Naima McLean - singer/songwriter

Appearing in the documentary at "Up the sound" at the District 6 Café in early December 2005, Naima Mclean is a student at the University of Cape Town, and performed as a singer/songwriter at the event linked to the annual "16 Days of Activism", organized by an array of young artists, actors, performers and activists.

Mrs. Mtwana - NGO official

Appearing in the documentary speaking at the ANC Women's League - meeting. Mrs. Mtwana is an NGO worker, and was invited to the event to speak on the subject of Violence against Women and Children which is the focus of the 16 Days of Activism. Mrs. Mtwana switched between English and Xhosa and used simple but evocative language to instruct her audience about women's rights and the physical and psychological effects of violence.

8 www.capetown.gov.za/clusters/viewarticle3.asp?conid=12295