

## **Democracy Development Programme Political Forum**

**Tuesday, 20 May, 2008**

**Elangeni Hotel**

**Topic: The relationship between non-racialism, democracy and citizenship**

**Presenter: Professor Ivor Chipkin**

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### **Executive summary**

DDP hosted a follow-up debate on race. The discussion explored the dynamic relationship between non-racialism, democracy and citizenship. The forum was well attended by representatives of the academic fraternity, political organisations, grassroots organisations, local authorities, public institutions, etc.

Professor Chipkin's presentation explored the differing meanings of "blackness" with respect to two traditions of nationalist politics, namely, Non-racialism and African Nationalism. For him blackness has been the universal slogan of those who struggled for democratic values, irrespective of skin colour. The national question is not only about white racism. He argued that the non-racialist project was not only about racial redress, but also about helping whites to overcome their racism. It was about different races embracing each other as equals based on universal rights and values. However, chipkin argued that this thesis eventually failed and got substituted by African Nationalism.

According to Chipkin, African nationalism implies a measure of "authenticity", which recognises only those who show solidarity with thy black leaders as legitimate national subjects. Understandings of race have thus been reduced to a white / black dichotomy, letting broader factions of race off the hook. He contented that the Freedom Charter was not an African nationalist manifesto, and that the anti-apartheid struggle was waged primarily in the pursuit for democratic values.

Chipkin noted that the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) interlinks the race and class questions. Here racism is seen as functional to white capitalism. Consequently, the RDP was premised on a fundamental suspicion of white capitalism. However, he argued that whilst non-racialism asserts the challenges of poverty and inequality, deracialised capitalism reproduces black economic inequalities. Finally, it is also his contention that affirmative action benefits predominantly the class interests of urban-based social forces with strong links to the political elite.

The presentation stimulated lively debate amongst participants. Some of the dominant views advanced articulated a need to consider issues of gender as an essential aspect of broader debates about identity. Debates about the functionality of race and class should also take account of intra- racial class dynamics as its commonplace that blacks did not suffer equal levels of socio-economic misery under apartheid's strategy of separate development.

Meanwhile, debates about democracy should be alive to the fact that the anti-apartheid democratic movement was not an undifferentiated movement; it embodied differing conceptions of democracy. Hence, debates about race and democracy need to place a higher premium on questions about the specific form and conception of our democracy. In short, we need to investigate whose conception of democracy is dominant and what kind of democracy are we pursuing. Furthermore, much more discussion is needed on how to expand democracy beyond traditional meanings and to use it as an instrument to foster activism.

In sum, participants were unanimous on the need for a broader conception of race which transcends the black/white dichotomy. What is required is a holistic debate on identity that engages both its ethnic and civic features.

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There is a welcome  
conversation beginnir

**Abridged version of full presentation:**