



**THE  
PEOPLE'S  
DIALOGUE**

**Founder:** Herman Mashaba

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Full Speech by Herman Mashaba  
Founder of The People's Dialogue

## Our New Party Will Put People First

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*Note to editors: The following remarks were made by Herman Mashaba, Founder of The People's Dialogue, at the launch of the final Participation and Engagement Report. The launch video of the Report can be accessed here: <https://youtu.be/4Sbb9bQGLOE>*

Good Morning,  
Sanibonani,  
Dumelang,  
Molweni,  
Goeie Môre,  
Thobela,  
Abusheni,

I greet you all in the strange and difficult times, having never thought I would see the day when my government would decide what kind of clothes I can buy and wear.

On the 6th of December last year, I launched The People's Dialogue.

I did so, after resigning from the DA and realising what so many South Africans have come to realise for some time. Our political parties are holding us back as a people, they are the despair in our country, and are not the hope that we need.

The dialogue was to engage South Africans, of all genders, all shades, all incomes and all creeds, about the future of our country. What emerged took us by surprise, and exceeded any expectation we had when we created this platform.

Over the 3-month period from December last year to February this year, the dialogue reached an audience of 33 million on social media alone, generating over 2.4 million engagements from South Africans who were putting forward the solutions they believe are necessary to fix our country.

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**The People's Dialogue (NPC) | Company Registration Number: K2019599613**

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I am informed by professionals in the marketing world, that these achievements are unheard of for a new organisation.

We also engaged communities across Gauteng in face to face conversations, in their streets and homes, extending our reach to communities without access to social media.

What has been achieved is a socio-political experiment that has generated profound insights into what South Africans believe is necessary to fix their country and build a shared future for all our people.

I was deeply moved by the extent to which ordinary South Africans poured their hearts into the solutions they put forward. Over 125,000 substantive submissions were made through our platforms, translating into 3.5 million words of text, or 10,000 A4 pages.

Put differently, if these pages were laid end to end, they would continue for 3 kilometres.

In a small dialogue box on a website, entire turnaround strategies were written for Eskom and other state-owned entities.

Plans to overhaul our education system were designed and blueprints for creating jobs in our economy were put together.

What emerged from this is the understanding that South Africans love their country.

We hate our political establishment. But, we believe deeply in a better future, and we know what needs to be done to achieve it.

The dialogue began with a conversation about what South Africans love about their country, and why they believe it is worth saving.

This was a critical place to begin because, as a people, we have to be animated by a deep love of our country in order to engage ourselves in a campaign to fix it.

South Africans came forward and spoke passionately about their love of our people, our country's natural beauty, our ability to endure great hardships with humour and perseverance.

Our people spoke passionately of what I have come to call 'The Great Disappointment.'

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This is the deep-rooted frustration that South Africans of all backgrounds feel about how the opportunity to create a just and prosperous country in 1994 has been squandered.

Almost without exception, the people of South Africa feel that they have been failed.

Equally, without exception, South Africans believe this situation can be corrected. Hope is not lost.

It is not in our nature as a people to give up, and this is reflected in the feedback that The People's Dialogue received.

The dialogue turned to the question of what issues are most important issues facing South Africa today, with respondents allowed to choose more than one issue from a range of options.

Unsurprisingly, the most strongly felt issue, put forward by 90% of respondents, was corruption.

In responding to the call for solutions to address corruption in our country, South Africans put forward some truly excellent solutions.

South Africans want dedicated corruption courts that are specialised in their understanding of tender processes, supply chain policies and legislation governing public management of finances.

South Africans want high profile corruption cases to be prosecuted to demonstrate to the world, and the corrupt within South Africa, that we are serious about dealing with corruption.

South Africans want fundamental reform of tender processes. I can tell you from what I saw as the Mayor of Johannesburg that the corrupt have professionalised their ability to sidestep safeguards in our tender processes.

Our people believe that we need faster systems for service delivery, coupled with greater transparency and real measures to combat corruption in our tender processes.

Finally, South Africans want the re-establishment of the Scorpions in our country. We need a genuinely independent, prosecutorial-style investigative body that mercilessly hunts down the corrupt. When the Scorpions were shut down in 2009, they had a successful prosecution rate of over 90%. Today - we have endless commissions of enquiry. Words without actions.

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The next issue South Africans put forward in greatest numbers was that of jobs and the economy. I would venture that this issue has gained greater prominence in the last week as we have learnt of the certain loss of between 3 and 7 million jobs in South Africa in the coming months.

On the subject of jobs and the economy, South Africans want their government to put an end to the employment of illegal immigrants. They want a coherent national economic policy to replace the confusing mess put forward by our government. They want real support for small businesses, an aggressive cutting of red-tape compliance, because small business is vastly under-contributing in terms of their potential to create jobs and drive economic growth.

Of great importance, South Africans want the education system and curriculum of our country to be overhauled. Despite a relatively high spend per pupil, we are rolling out one of the worst education systems in the world. This is believed to be at the root of many of our challenges. The demand is also for massive investment in vocational and artisanal schools.

The next most prominent issue was that of crime. South Africans were unanimous in their disapproval of their criminal justice system – most commonly described as dysfunctional.

Most of the solutions put forward to fix our criminal justice system, relate to the work of fixing the SAPS and the NPA and expanding the capacity of visible policing, specialised policing and our detective services.

Other ideas emerged in this process, which include increasing the number and capacity of our courts to speed up justice, forced labour for prisoners to improve the country they have harmed, and education for boy children on how to respect and protect women.

It is worth mentioning here that many South Africans stand strongly behind either the reintroduction of the death penalty or locking up rapists and murderers and throwing away the keys.

While it may not be possible in this forum to give expression to the many issues raised by South Africans, and the solutions they have put forward, it is worth mentioning that illegal immigration, education and inequality all feature as critical issues.

It is necessary to point out that underlying every issue put forward by South Africans, is the failure of our political system. South Africans feel marginalised by a political system that is failing them on every level.

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In every issue raised in this dialogue, South Africans recognise that politicians are failing to perform the will of the South African people. We vote for political parties, who choose their candidates for us, and when we are let down we have no person to hold accountable at the next election. This has to change.

In many cases, these issues overlap with issues of the economy, crime and corruption and gain greater prominence when understood this way.

We will be making the full Participation and Engagement Report available immediately to all South Africans, because the contents of this report belong to the millions of South Africans who contributed to it.

In January this year, after experiencing an enormous level of impatience by the people of this country, I made the commitment that I will be launching a new political party.

I made this commitment, because it became abundantly clear that South Africans want a political alternative that can unseat the ANC and bring change to our country.

I made this commitment because there is a common understanding of what needs to be done to fix our country.

Today I can announce that I will be launching a new political party in August this year.

It is obviously difficult to be more precise with a date or an event type, given the uncertainty that exists from the COVID-19 pandemic. None the less, I remain resolute.

While some of information and surprises relating to this party will have to wait until the launch, let me share with you what I can right now:

Despite this uncertainty which promises to remain a feature of the months to come, I can say without any doubt that we will launch this political party to contest the 2021 local government elections next year.

People often ask me, how is this new party going to be different from the parties that have come before us like AGANG?

On a light-hearted note I can emphatically say, that I won't be kissing Helen anytime soon.

On a serious note, I can share that we will not be contesting all municipalities in South Africa. This is the mistake that many new political parties make.

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They have contested all 278 municipalities, as new parties with only months to prepare for elections, with the unambitious outcome of gaining a Councillor here and there.

This is why they have failed.

Our political party will identify municipalities that are strategic in nature and where we will win. We will govern in these municipalities, and we will demonstrate value by improving the lives of the people who live there.

On the basis of our service delivery achievements in these municipalities, we will take this value proposition to all South Africans in 2024, when we contest for the 9 Provinces and for the Presidency of South Africa.

I can say with certainty that we will absolutely be contesting the 3 metros in Gauteng, where the ANC is already under 50% in Johannesburg, Tshwane and Ekurhuleni.

There are other municipalities that we are considering, and our structures on the ground are working with us to put in place the pre-requisites to contest – most important of which is credible, ethical and servant-style leadership.

Let me be clear, we have already started to grow the structures in every province of South Africa. We will not wait until after 2021 to do this, we have already begun.

We have spent hundreds of hours during this lockdown engaging volunteers in all of the provinces via online meeting platforms as the new 'Townhall Meetings of The Future.' These individuals are already organising into structures on the ground that are starting to talk to South Africans about the political future of our country.

It is clear that we will be receiving a lot of support from the many disillusioned supporters of current political parties, and we welcome them with open arms.

But, our focus will be on the almost 19 million South Africans of voting-age who did not vote in 2019, outnumbering those who did vote.

These South Africans are not apathetic. They live in the same country as the rest of us that is in deep need of change and they care about their country. They have just not been given a reason to vote, some for a very long time.

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In our online meetings with people across South Africa, it is already clear that many people joining us are confessing to be those who have given up on voting for the political parties in South Africa. Our new political party is going to offer these people a political home.

We are now beginning the work of taking the submissions received through The People's Dialogue, and engaging the brightest minds in our country as we develop the solutions blueprint for South Africa that we will launch with the new political party.

We are scheduled to sit down with former members of the police, from Generals to Officers who have patrolled our streets to gain their understanding of how we can fix the SAPS.

We will be sitting down with former members of the NPA and retired judges to see how we can fix our justice system.

We will be engaging captains of industry, business owners both big and small, economists and informal traders to craft our plan to grow the economy and create real jobs.

We will be sitting down with doctors, nurses, school teachers, school principals, academics, engineers and the men and women who patrol our borders.

Together we will forge a blueprint for South Africa like none other seen before.

We will not get lost in the high-brow political black holes of ideology and policy like many political parties; we are going to focus on presenting solutions to South Africa's problems.

By the time South Africans go to vote in 2021, they will know what we will do in government to address their greatest challenges.

Our blueprint will be based on the non-negotiable values that arose from the dialogue and the submissions of millions of South Africans:

Firstly, we will be a party that advances a free-market economy. We will not compromise on this, we will not water this down. We will be the political party for South Africans who aspire to make something of themselves and their family through hard work.

South Africans have made it clear that this is what they want, but they also want a just economy.

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Secondly, we will be a party of non-racialism. South Africans are tired of being divided by politicians for their own political gain. We are one country, one people, one past, with one future even if we look different from one another.

But for this to work, there must be social justice, because we can never be a non-racial country as long as our past continues to define our future. This leads me to our 3rd value.

Social Justice. We will stand for the building of a more just future for South Africa. Our inequality has to be addressed, and cannot continue for generations. We need to address the legacy of our past, but not through the 'window-dressing measures' employed by our government.

We need to move away from punitive measures of redressing our unjust past. We will be designing an incentivised approach to redress that harnesses the power of the private sector to do what government has so fundamentally failed to do over the past 26 years.

We need wholesale investment in the opportunities and education for those who have been left behind by 26 years of ANC government. Our goal must be the building of a strong middle class in South Africa, that forms the majority of the country.

Fourthly, we will be a party of the rule of law. We will achieve a criminal justice system that delivers, that is harsh to criminals who should live in fear, and compassionate to law-abiding people who should feel safe.

Part of our commitment to the rule of law is an uncompromising principle to manage our borders. We will be a party that advocates for the people of the world to come to South Africa, but to come here legally and obey our laws once here. I do not believe this is too much to ask.

We will change the political system. While we will advocate for changes to our electoral system, we will act to live our principles. Our party will have a candidate selection process run through community primaries. Aspirant candidates will be put forward by the party to you the people of this country.

Elections will be held, before the main elections, where you will tell us who your candidates should be. In 2021 you will choose our candidates for Councillors and Mayors, and in 2024 you will choose your candidates for Provincial Parliaments, the National Assembly, Premiers and Presidential candidates.

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We will honour those outcomes and those are the names you will see on the ballot paper in the elections. This same system will ensure that if those elected representatives let you down, they can be held to account and removed.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is probably as far as we should go while ensuring we still have some surprises in store for you when we launch in August.

What is left for me, is to pay homage to the South African people.

You have withstood terrible hardships and indignities, but you have done so proudly as a people.

You have engaged this platform and poured your heart and soul into the discussions around a better and brighter future for our country.

You are the foundation, the very bedrock, upon which this new political party will be built.

You have given the few rands and cents that you could spare to support these efforts.

I have been moved to the point of tears by the messages of pensioners who took 2 taxis to go to their bank and give us R20 that they really couldn't afford to give because they too believe that hope is not lost.

It is the people of this country that get me out of bed every day, and to whom I will dedicate every minute going forward to deliver you a better South Africa.

Together we will take our country back.

Together we will turn it around.

And together we will make it work.

I thank you.

Issued by:

Herman Mashaba  
Founder  
The People's Dialogue

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