

Spot the Difference, 3rd Election in-lay Interview with the RP

Interview questionnaire with the Republican Party of Namibia

If you were to predict the elections outcome, which will likely be true?

1. Your party wins majority seats in the National Assembly
2. Your presidential candidate wins the majority vote
3. 60% of Namibian youth will cast their vote



All indications are that less than 60% of Namibia's youth will cast their vote in the 2019 parliamentary and presidential elections. The youth feels disaffected by politics mainly because the governing party has made it difficult for the youth to identify with the state which is reserved for those who make claim that they liberated the country and everyone else has to justify their relevance in the exercise of democracy in the country.

An example was this year when the youth in Ondangwa produced a candidate to stand as a councilor, but the ruling party ridiculed her to the extent that the Vice-President of the country frightened the youth by telling them that they should not vote for candidates whose grandparents they did not know. Hence the youth stayed away.

The youth is directionless and is denied the freedom to choose their preferred candidates because the ruling party, which considers itself the government, has injected fear in the hearts of people that the only vote that is safe is for the ruling party.

It is unfortunately a fact that the Opposition has been marginalized and turned into the new bogeyman. Because of the small economy of Namibia, it is a reality that fear is likely to translate into apathy and the youth will vote with their feet and decline to endorse the status quo.

How will you go about achieving the above prediction?

It is obvious that a large number of the electorate, especially the youth, are extremely unhappy with the way in which Swapo is ruling the country, but it is unfortunately a fact opposition parties have failed to offer an alternative for the disgruntled ruling party members.

The reason being that opposition parties are not willing to work together in order to form a strong opposition that could hold the ruling party accountable for consequences of their exercise of governmental power as well as for the manner in which Swapo exercises its power.

The RP therefore has accepted the obligation to mobilize the youth in the party to take their sacred right to vote seriously. We have great sympathy with the hopelessness within the youth and will do our utmost to educate and encourage the youth to vote.

We are more than aware that inasmuch as there is apathy, the ruling party will use the resources to cajole its Youth League to manipulate and intimidate young people to vote for Swapo. The ruling party has resources to orchestrate vote through its state connected financial companies and the Chinese government to sponsor captive votes.

Therefore the RP will do its utmost to impress on the voters, old and young, to vote according to their conscience and we trust that those who are unhappy with Swapo will choose the Republican Party as an alternative.

Why is it important for young people to vote?

It is important for every Namibian citizen to exercise their constitutional right to vote in elections; because that is the only way one can voice his/her opinion and vote for what they believe in. This is even more important why those who are not satisfied with the status quo to vote rather than to stay away. Especially young people should realize that the future of the country lays their hands.

Democracy is about making the country to be better than the one we came upon and it is about a better tomorrow. No one can mortgage the future better than those who stand to lose it the most. The current political elite is stealing the future from the youth and the youth must reclaim that future through legal and constitutional means, namely elections.

This is important for the RP because the founders of the party were concerned about the future Namibia and set out, at the greatest of risks, to chart the new way of creating a Namibia for all. The youth has a role to be part of the new architecture of a new nation.

The ballot box is the first appointment that all citizens have with their future. Staying away will only give room for the loyalists in the ruling party to get into power at the expense of the nation and the fundamental ideals on which the RP was founded, chief amongst the right of all Namibians, regardless of race, tribe, language and culture, to participate and have an equal say in the governance of the affairs of the nation.

It is important for the youth to build their own narrative as agents and agencies of change. This will enable them to say one day that they build a Namibia they and their offspring will be proud of. The youth's participation at the ballot box is their commitment to the legacy they want to leave behind. The right to vote also enforces for the youth to internalize that democracy is about individuals working together to build a better tomorrow by sending the right people to the House of lawmaking.

Why should the youth vote for your party?

The Republican Party of Namibia (RP) is one of the very few political parties whose political support is not ethnic based. The RP has since its formation in 1977 strived to reconcile the peoples of Namibia and made no secret of its mission to have the quality of life of especially the grass-roots level improved to what is can be.

There is no other party that has the history, the narrative and the values like the RP. Born out of the struggle to defend the right of the people of Namibia in their rich cultural, linguistic and historical diversity, voting for the RP is a vote for Namibia as a Republic, which means that we are where we are not because we fought against anyone, but that we all belong here as equals under the Constitution and the laws not of one tribe or political party but the laws that represent the best of all of us.

What motivated the formation of your political party?

In 1977 Dirk Mudge broke away from the white minority ruling National Party of South West Africa because of its Apartheid policy. He then formed the Republican Party of Namibia with the view to firstly demolish Apartheid, to reconcile the peoples of Namibia and to pave the way for Namibia to become a Republic, proof of which was that the party was named the Republican Party of Namibia.

Our founding fathers and mothers agreed on a fundamental set of non-negotiable rules by which we should all live and be protected by. To live in a Republic means we no longer live as tribesmen or clans or members of one party but as equal citizens of one country under one flag, under God and governed by the same laws and rules. The RP is to all intents and purposes and in comparison with other parties the nexus of citizenship, it is the crucial intersection between the past and the future. The RP is across race and ethnicity. The RP does not point fingers at others but point its finger to the future, a better future for all Namibians.

The RP was born out of the sober realization that only when we acknowledge one another as equal citizens and stand ready to work together not against the past but for the future. The RP was born out of the conviction that the people of Namibia had the right to govern themselves and that inhabitants needed to participate in the naming and description of the future they wanted. The RP therefore derives its confidence and strength in the acceptance that we can all make a contribution if given the opportunity and space.

What philosophies/principles are at the core of your party's identity?

Republican Party of Namibia acknowledges God, the Trinity, as the Sovereign Creator of the universe, who has entrusted to humanity the right and responsibility to rule over the affairs of the world.

The RP is powered by the conviction that Namibia has the potential to become not only the envy of other parties that are based on ethnicity, but can become the microcosm for other political organizations in Africa to emulate.

The RP is at the cutting edge of what it means to be citizens in a Republic where everyone is expected to bring their share to the common good, which offers then equal protection in return. The RP is beckoning all Namibians to embrace the reality that the world owes us nothing--we owe everything to ourselves.

This is embedded in the onerous right, privilege and responsibility to vote rationally and according to our own conviction. The RP believes in majority rule as a democratic principle. At the same time the RP believes that even though the majority determines the winner in an election, the rights of minorities are protected at all times. The doctrine of the winner takes all is antithetical to the values of the RP.

This is born out of the party's experiences with the struggle for freedom which brought untold suffering not only to black people or only those who were outside but many white people who were inside fighting for independence. The RP believes in negotiations as the most sacred instrument solving national problems and challenges.

The Republican Party has therefore adopted a Program of Principles which amongst others states the following:

- To uphold the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia
- To guard against any derogation or suspension of the fundamental rights and freedoms as provided for in chapter 3 of the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia namely:
 - The right to life
 - Personal liberty
 - Respect for human dignity
 - Equal rights for men and women
 - Children's rights
 - Freedom of speech, thought, conscience, association
 - Freedom of the media
 - The right to culture, language, tradition or religion and education
 - Property rights
 - Equality before the law.
 - A fair trial
 - Protection against arbitrary arrest & detention
- To fight tirelessly against corruption, suppression, unfair preference and nepotism.
- To promote improvement of human relations and national reconciliation

- To promote peace, security and stability by means of social, economic and human development.
- To raise a new generation of God-fearing leaders of integrity, dedicated to serve the nation.

How do you think history will remember your party?

We want to believe that the Republican Party of Namibia will always be remembered as the one who broke away from the apartheid National Party and who started the process of negotiations and deliberations amongst all the peoples of Namibia, which eventually lead to the independence of the Republic of Namibia. We also trust that the Republican Party will also be remembered for the crucial role it played during the period 1977 until Independence, in reconciling the peoples of Namibia.

History will not only remember the path of the RP but will vindicate the choices the founders of the party made to accept that all Namibians were equal and that in spite of the differences that came with our histories, and the different methodologies that were chosen to prosecute the struggle for freedom and national independence, we were United in our goal to become free and govern ourselves.

The founding leadership of the RP was less interested in positions after the resolution was crafted that Namibia was free and sovereign and a unitary state under one democratic constitution with entrenched clauses and clear separation of powers of the organs of the state, namely the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary with free media and free business enterprise culture to buttress it.

We trust that the RP will be remembered to have fought harder for the importance of institutions as opposed to the power of individuals. We want to believe that in more ways than one, the RP will be remembered to have set the stage for all groups in Namibia to sit around the table inside Namibia to deliberate on the future of the country.

In what ways do you think your party has changed since its formation?

The members and supporters of the Republican Party of Namibia were initially predominantly white Namibians, because we broke away from an all white National Party in 1977. We are however proud of the fact that this has changed completely to the stage where today, the Republican Party of Namibia may well be one of a few political parties whose support is not ethnic based. Our members and supporters are from all the different ethnic groups in Namibia.

Like any situation in life the RP changed with time and realities on the ground, but its principles remain the same. Significantly the party had to learn to do more with less. The party also learned that politics is the art if the possible. In the process it lost a good number of members who had to choose to survive better. We understand this too well.

With dwindling resources at the party's disposal, we had to adapt and be realistic by accepting that we find ourselves in an African setting where it is not necessarily the message that counts.

We remain, however, convinced that the time will come when the RP's message will be heard and understood unhindered. When that time comes the RP will be known for its prophetic vision of One Namibia for all based on the commitment that the future must be better than the past and that in a Republic, welfare bound and ruled by the law as citizens.

What is your party's stance on the following issues?

Unemployment amongst the youth

Unemployment in general in Namibia has reached a level that is totally unacceptable. The main reason [for the unemployment] being the Government's failure to implement programs and policies that would have resulted in the creation of more employment opportunities. Apart from this and what is even more worrisome, is what can only be described as deliberate and blatant negligence by the Government in allowing the seemingly uncontrolled influx of uneducated and unskilled Chinese nationals who have infiltrated the labor market and who have taken over even the most basic unskilled positions from local Namibians.

Also to blame is sub-standard education the youth is subjected to as well as the lack of vocational schools and colleges throughout Namibia.

The Swapo government has not done enough to train and retrain our people to become more productive citizens. To focus on the youth can be problematic without tackling the whole gamut of labor relations and the work ethic.

Secondly young people do not stay young forever. For the RP it is how to transform the economy into a functional economy that is capable of responding to the short term, medium term and long-term developments requirements of the nation in all the 14 regions.

Access to resources for young entrepreneurs

Access to resources for young entrepreneurs is often misunderstood and over-politicized in Namibia. It would appear that here we allow a small segment of politically connected young people to get huge tenders and get super rich overnight, yet there is nothing to show for their entrepreneurship. They are mere so-called business men and women who add very little if anything to the development of our country. We would put more emphasis on skills development of young people to learn to solve problems in their communities and in the nation. At the moment it is a matter of making a few rich and those who may well be conduits of corrupt political masters.

Gender equality and Women empowerment

The challenge of gender equality and women empowerment is real. We are all products of our cultures, customs, traditions and habits and the sum total of these are that we are all, both men and women, ill-prepared to know what to do and when. The creation of a Ministry for Gender Equality is a waste of resources.

The entry point should be in schools, to prepare the girl and the boy child that in today's world they will be judged not by what they wear but what they bring to the table to improve the conditions of life for all.

The Land Question in Namibia

The Swapo government's policy on land-reform has failed dismally mainly due to the fact that the Land Question has been politicized which resulted in a blurred vision on how to work with available land to bring about national development on this country.

It is no secret that those who benefitted from the distribution of land in Namibia were mainly from politically connected cadres of the one ethnic group who never lost land during the colonial whilst ignoring the plight of those who did lose their land.

Most unfortunately the discourse about land, acquired a racial character that cannot help make capable Namibians who can till the land and have the right passion for working with the land to first of all provide food security.

Land is a scarce, valuable and non-renewable natural resource and asset. Land should not, in the first place be seen as wealth in itself but rather as an instrument for wealth creation. National resources with special reference to minerals, fishing resources and agricultural land, must be utilized productively, wisely and responsibly. Once the resource is destroyed either through allocating concessions on obvious grounds and/or the lack of management and proper control, it will result in reduced production, job losses and economic decline, leaving all Namibians disadvantaged.

Nation-building amidst gender-based violence, ethnic heterogeneity

We have not in 29 years tackled what old nation builders used to call The National Reconciliation Question. That would have helped us come to terms with who we are and how to work together towards national cohesion. In the absence of that clear inspiring template of what and who we want to become, we turn into each other. And the ruling party fuels the division more than it inspires cohesion and peaceful coexistence.

Government procurement processes of goods and services

Our procurement processes are infested with corrupt agendas and deep incompetence. When you appoint people you know cannot do the job, you breed corruption and misalignment. The rest is history.

Corruption and Accountability

The subjects of corruption and accountability need no discussion. The saying that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely has never been more evident than what is currently the situation in Namibia. Blaming the global economic situation for the problems we experience in Namibia is not true.

We find ourselves in this precarious situation because the Swapo government and its allies (Chinese) have looted this country to the point where we are basically bankrupt, because of pure greed and it is evident that there is no accountability from those appointed not on merit or competency but loyalty to the party or an individual. It is a result of not understanding the basics of an economy.

The overall perception is that the Anti Corruption Commission is totally incompetent and needs to be replaced with individuals who will act without fear or favor.

Decentralization: Devolution to Regional and Local councils

We pay lip service to these concepts that leaders pick up at a conference overseas or foreign consultants. The government has been centralizing left, right and centre while telling donors that we are decentralizing. No economy can grow by over-centralizing unless you have the iron fist management style of current China. But China works through highly skilled few individuals who know and understand their system and the long plans of the Chinese Communist Party.

What is your party's short and long-term vision for Namibia?

The RP's vision for Namibia is to make Namibians believe in ourselves first as the only ones who can develop this country. Investors can however assist us to move forward, but if we only rely on investors, they could easily turn us into a schizophrenic nation that does not know whether it is coming or going.

To put it simple, we are only 2 million people; we can reach each and every Namibian in five years with a single most powerful and unifying language that we are one nation, not different communities fighting along party flags and symbols.

Short term: Embrace same symbols for the nation, medium term overhaul the education system and place it in informed hands so that our children get the proper preparation with education and training that will make them sought after when they enter the labor market, ready to work and to solve problems.

Long term: Do not destroy the strong to make the weak strong. Develop Namibia into a distinct economic development hub that would stimulate growth and development in every region, so that people do not have to leave their traditional homes and families in the false hope that the capital will offer them better life.

Let better life happen where they are and where they call home. This means we need a different strategy, one that will unite all Namibians irrespective of political party affiliation, a strategy that will ensure that we are looking after one another, a strategy that will ensure that all Namibians will share in all the natural resources of the country and a strategy that will build our pride as a nation that will cease to be corrupt and greedy.

The future is at stake and it is more important than the bellies of the political elite and their friends and families. It all begins with a game plan which Namibia unfortunately does not have!