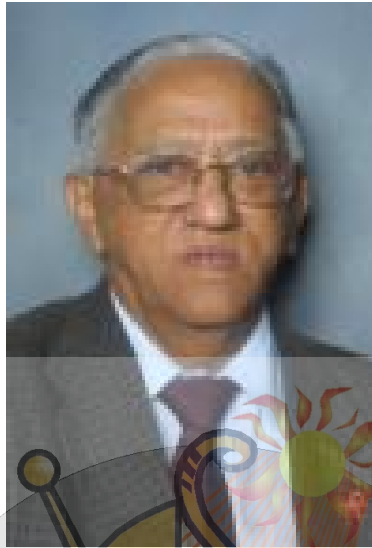


# RAM SALOJEE



BIOGRAPHY  
EDUCATION  
LENASIA RATEPAYERS ASSOCIATION  
PEOPLES CANDIDATES PARTY  
SPORT  
ISLAM  
INDIAN SOUTH AFRICANS  
YOUTH

Madam-Chair, it is indeed a pleasure for me to address this gathering of women who have tried to overcome the socio-political divide, created by the hot-spurs of historical myths, based on race, privilege, self-interests and dogma. I will try this afternoon, to explode and expose, a number of myths that create the ever frightening ghosts of conflagration and insoluble group polarisation, in a country with a treasure-house of human potential and material resources, which we all can share, exploit and distribute, to the mutual advantage of all our people. In effect, we possess the resilience and the capacity to serve as the mecca for the hopes and aspirations of the whole of the African continent. But, alas ' we are too tied to the outmoded and heretical prejudices, insulated in the bastille of power, which has made us the polecats of the world.

My presence here this afternoon, gives lie, to the oft repeated and legislatively directed definition, that all of those, who refuse to participate in Government created institutions, like the S.A.I.C. are radical agitators, bent upon sowing the seeds of violence, distrust and chaos. We love peace, progress and security as much as any sane and sober person. It is in pursuit of these goals, that we have opted to function outside the stifling walls and prejudice entrenching passages of the status quo. We love peace and liberty too much, and do not wish to be co-opted into the administrative bureaucracy of a system, which believe to be unjust, undemocratic and can but only lead to the type of concentration and polarisation, which we all oppose. Further, we contend that true dialogue, consensus and trust cannot flow from institutions and dispensations, in which the deprived and dispossessed sections of the majority can only bargain, talk and demand, within the constraints of imposed forums, rules and regulations. No true reforms, no just results and hopeful consensus can evolve from such one-sided agendas. Also, it is our firm conviction that for South Africa to prosper, in terms of human inter-action and leadership growth, ethnic restrictions, group confinement and race orientation denies the full potential of leadership qualities. The present content of Parliament (white), S.A.I.C., the defunct C.R.C., the Homeland Authorities and all other tiers of local and provincial Councils clearly show the lacklustre and often unimaginative representation. In this regard the Government has perpetrated the biggest fraud by its propagandist declaration of the oft repeated total strategy and total onslaught. The greatest danger this country faces is that resulting from the denial of basic rights, true self-determination and the sharing of meaningful power with all its citizens; and not the spooks of communism and other undefinable threats. Yes, the perils that emerge to threaten the status quo has evolved because, South Africa is the only land to my knowledge, that has so many laws entrenched and continually amended to control the lives, liberty, movement, existence, education, religion and dignity of those bereft of power and influence in the Government of the country. Even now as the drums of polarisation beat to inveigle the Indian and coloured into the periphery of the white laager, and so create a

vulnerable political, geographical and racial buffer, it is the Nationalist Party Congressess who will decide the fate of all of us. We have not been given the opportunity to debate and deliberate whether we accept a narrow Indian identity or that we aspire with the broad masses of all South Africans a non-racial identity. Another, fable that South Africa's problems is not one of majorities and minorities, but one purely based on a group of minorities, is designed to mislead. Already, with its policy of ethnic homelands for Africans; the dubious homogeneity of a white ethnic tribe and similar subordinate coloured and Indian tribes, the Nationalist Party has manufactured a white majority on the 87% of soil, over which it holds unfettered power. Thus, in reality it is a question of majorities and not one of minorities. In the wake of the revamped 1977 Constitutional Proposals, doing the rounds of the Nat. Party Congressess, we hear the absurd comparison between a strong Nat. Party elected President and the De Gaulle option. De Gaulle represented the French Nation, whilst here we will have a President tied to the taut strings of his party's beleid. Further, it is fiction to state that the need to move away from the Westminster System is based on considerations of democracy and power sharing. In effect it is to keep power in the hands of those who now monopolise power, that we now have the three-chamber parliament; closed standing committee debates and a powerful president and a loaded powerful president's council. In a Government between unequals there can be no basis of genuine consensus deliberations and ofcourse suggestions of democracy become traumatic. The retention of the Group Areas Act, the exclusion of Africans, the loaded vote, in favour of the wealthy at local level leaves little to the imagination. Even the division of issues into own and common; and the methodology used to define the gray areas, clearly display the intentions and directions of change. Not only will the heavy-hand of authority remain in white hands, but the coloured and Indian groups will have no leverage to bring about fundamental reforms in the dismantling of the Group Areas Act, the influx control acts, desegregation of facilities and residences within their areas; not to mention that the all important function of allocation of resources : funds, skills, opportunities, housing, land, education, etc will still be effectively in white hands. In truth the Indian and coloured institutions will act as targets for their peoples frustration; serve as conduit pipes for the implementation or retention of laws to which they have always resisted; thus lowering the burden on administrative bureaucracy, which white-manpower is unable to handle; ofcourse the coup de grace, would be that now the Indian and coloured communities will be commanded to swell the defence force and take up arms against the enemies of apartheid. In all sincerity I ask you here to-day: if you were in our places, with a conscience for justice and equity, having tasted the poisonous venom of discrimination and prejudice, would you accept the short-lived benefits of opportunism and hob-nobbing in the chambers of parliaments, separated by the divisive corridors of impotent and sham power. Have we a moral right to throw overboard our deeply held spiritual and religious convictions of justice and non-racialism and sever our moral bonds of equal citizenship from the en-

forcibly de-nationalised African millions of our common homeland? It is for these reasons that we are forced to oppose the new dress on an old body. For our simple belief in the basic ideals of humanity and justice we are labelled radicals and agitators.

This myth tragically is even promoted and given momentum by the so-called liberal English Press. In recent weeks there appears to be a well-orchestrated editorial moves to label us as radicals and to give a gloss of respectability and credibility to those representatives who were elected in the now farcical SAIC elections, with percentages as low as 2%. These disowned representatives of the statistically defined Indian Group; as unrepresentative as they come are fondly promoted by the freedom-loving and objective <sup>news</sup> gathering media, as moderate leaders. Just as there are people in powers of influence <sup>who</sup> have termed the Indian group as irrelevant in the political equation and that we should not mind being used as political football. A sincere political assessment of our political past and our determination to make our contribution, in genuine changes towards a non-racially just and equitable society, <sup>undoubtedly</sup> will show, that the stereotype South African Indian is a figment of prejudiced minds. As far as the English Press is concerned, it appears to have decided that Indian opinion must be galvanised in favour of Botha's reform. Contrary to its stated principles, that the press merely reflects the trends in the society and that it will publish items of newsworthiness, we are left in no doubt as to how they want the Indian group to behave. In private conversations many people have like the press said, why not give the Government a chance, it has the difficult chance of converting its religiously and politically indoctrinated followers to adapt to verligtheid. Why is it that one always asks that the one with the privileges and affluence needs compassion and time, whilst those who suffer from the terror of an unjust system should be allowed to suffer a bit longer. Why, should we be asked to give legitimacy to a form of convoluted reform, in which we will have no effective means of redressing the centuries long of exploitation and continued exclusion, in the vague hope that eventually things will get better, even if things first gets worse. Just, as many self-styled opinion-makers and survey-consultants, miscalculated the results of the SAIC debacle, we ask all honest people, including the press to reflect the clear situation in our communities and all deprived communities - we have a right to make our own value-judgements; we have the ability and capacity to think for ourselves; we believe in dialogue and discussion, but it has to be at a level of equality; we do not profess to have all the answers and being human make no excuses for making mistakes, wiser people than us have made many and will continue to make many; we are committed, like <sup>most</sup> S.Africans to a role beyond the narrow confines of group, race, minorities, opportunism and self-interest. <sup>Despite</sup> With the limited options and rights open to us, we will continue to espouse and act responsibly in our vision for a future S.A. determined by the <sup>invested</sup> leaders, mandated by all South Africans : black, white, brown, yellow etc. at a National Convention.

R.A.M. SALOJEE.

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we have covered a patch up part of a continent to do so  
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