

Looting in the name of Mandela - what would Terry have said?



By [Ed Herbst](#)

15 May 2014

The *Sunday Times* recently broke a story alleging that millions of rands intended for honouring the memory and legacy of Nelson Mandela was diverted to ANC members.

"An inveterate and prolific letter writer, Terry loved to champion the causes of people who were cast aside or in need of a helping hand. For years Terry wrote letters about corruption in Bisho, culminating in publication of his book, 'The Bisho Letters - A Challenge to Thabo Mbeki', on 26 January 2000. This book was based on over 550 letters that he had sent in an effort to expose mismanagement, fraud, theft and nepotism in the Eastern Cape Government. - Obituary to Port Elizabeth journalist and councillor, [Terry Herbst](#)



I was pleased to see that the *Sunday Times* had finally picked up on the ANC scams in the Eastern Cape which allegedly saw huge amounts of money intended for honouring the memory and legacy of Nelson Mandela allegedly being diverted elsewhere.

The 11 May story by Mzilikazi Wa Afrika, Stephan Hofstatter and Piet Rampedi was headlined 'ANC, cronies cashed in on Mandela burial'.

"Millions in public funds spent on Nelson Mandela's funeral were paid to suppliers without official approval, sparking accusations that some of the money was used to bankroll the ANC's election campaign.

His legacy betrayed.

A Sunday Times investigation has established that the Eastern Cape provincial treasury deposited R250,000 into the bank account of ANC provincial chairman and finance MEC Phumulo Masualle. This was reversed five days later after questions about the transaction arose. Masualle has denied any wrongdoing.

The Daily Dispatch newspaper reported that businessman Mzwandile Sokwale was paid an inflated R6-million to transport 8,000 mourners to Mandela's funeral and that some of this money landed up with the girlfriend of Buffalo City's regional ANC secretary, Phumlani Mkolo.

A forensic report obtained by Sunday Times showed that R22-million in funeral costs, including for T-shirts, food and transport, was disbursed irregularly by the Eastern Cape Development Corporation through a secretive "Project X".

The corporation is funded by taxpayers.

A paper trail uncovered by Funduzi Forensic Services, which compiled the report, and detailed information supplied by several sources reveal that Project X entailed collusion between the corporation's top brass, provincial treasury officials and senior ANC politicians and their cronies."

I was equally pleased that the *Sunday Times* had paid tribute to the outstanding *Daily Dispatch* team whose exemplary investigative reporting on this and other examples of systemic ANC corruption in the Eastern Cape is deserving of the highest praise.

Finally, a response

The *Sunday Times* article finally elicited a response from [Mlibo Qoboshiyane](#), spokesman for one of the most corrupt

municipalities in the province.

Stating the obvious he said that the articles were an attack on the afore-mentioned Masualle.

"The propensity of the sources used by the newspapers and their attempt to caricature our provincial chairperson the way they did is clear opportunism of desperate proportions."

He said the media editors were "uninformed" and "armed with bias, and manipulated information, prosecuted by individuals inebriated by undefined personal interests.

"We will not be shocked if the peddlers of manipulated and wrong information will release another batch of manipulated information, paraded as factual information to unsuspecting editors gullible to anything appearing to be a scoop."

While Qoboshiyane's ire predictably feeds into the constant ANC narrative of the non-ANC-controlled media being an [enemy of the people](#), it is somewhat forced because both [Gwede Mantashe](#) and the [SACP](#) have, for months now, expressed alarm at this most pernicious looting.

What would Terry have made of it?

Reading Qoboshiyane's rant I wondered what my namesake and fellow journalist, the late Terry Herbst, would have made of it.



Hear no evil, see no evil, broadcast no evil - if it's from certain quarters.

For years he wrote to the Eastern Cape Premier - whoever happened to have the upper hand in the factional and internecine fights at the time - asking what progress had been made in investigating and prosecuting the host of ANC corruption scandals which bedevil the province every day. For years they wrote back saying that the matter was "receiving attention" which he knew and they knew he knew was not so. In the end the ANC got tired of the pretence and wrote to tell him that the correspondence was closed because the building housing the records had unfortunately burnt down - or words to that effect. Those ineffectual letters were eventually collated by him in a self-published book, 'The Bisho Letters - A Challenge to Thabo Mbeki'.

When the SABC transferred me to Cape Town in 1978 I was constantly asked if I was related to Terry even though he had left for Port Elizabeth many years before and I realised that he was held in high esteem as a reporter and remembered with respect.

National

Judge rules Pillay report be scrapped

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A judge has ordered that the massive Pillay Commission report on alleged financial irregularities in the Eastern Cape government be scrapped.

His concern about systemic and increasing ANC corruption in the Eastern Cape was vindicated by the June 2008 Pillay Commission report which was later nullified on a technicality. Despite the disappearance of R250m and allegations that leading ANC Eastern Cape politicians had possibly [unlawfully enriched themselves](#) with hundreds of millions of rands the ANC chose not to investigate the concerns articulated by

Judge Pillay.

R30bn a year... stolen

Had Terry Herbst lived I am sure he would be applauding the investigative reporting of the young *Daily Dispatch* team of reporters while, at the same time, acknowledging that their work will have as little practical effect as his book. Nobody will go to jail.

Rest assured that the ANC will prevaricate on the millions diverted from the fund meant to assist those who wished to pay their respects to Madiba. With R30bn a year being lost to corruption each year according to outgoing Auditor-General [Terence Nombembe](#), the party knows that another corruption scandal will shortly erupt and it will allow the Mandela burial scam to be quietly forgotten. What's the latest on the [Matilda Gaboo](#) scandal, for example?

The best that the *Daily Dispatch* reporters can hope for is that their work will be recognised by their peers and that they will be considered when the next Taco Kuiper awards for investigative journalism are adjudicated.

Their work and the appointment of Songezo Zibi as editor of *Business Day* are among the many tangible signs that transformation is occurring and that our journalists will continue to speak truth to power as they have done in many and different ways since colonial times.

ABOUT ED HERBST

Ed Herbst is an author and a prize-winning reporter. He worked for SABC television news for 28 years but left in 2005 without other employment in prospect because of the pervasive news and other corruption at all levels of the corporation. He is also a fly fishing enthusiast.

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