

Zuma defeats Mbeki to lead South Africa's ANC

Special to Sentinel-Voice

POLOKWANE, South Africa - Jacob Zuma triumphed at the African National Congress at a crucial party conference that began Sunday, parlaying his charisma and widespread popularity to win the governing party's top job and put him in line to become the country's next president.

His overwhelming election victory — 2,329 votes to President Thabo Mbeki's 1,505 — came despite rape and corruption scandals that had threatened his political career.

Chaos and jubilation erupted as party officials announced the election of Zuma — a former guerrilla leader who turned an anti-apartheid song, "Bring Me My Machine Gun," into his anthem.

Then he and Mbeki, both 65-year-old veterans of the ANC in exile, mounted the stage and embraced. But the contest was the most bitterly divisive in the history of the party, and Mbeki's loss raised questions about whether he would remain the country's president for the rest of his term.

Zuma was acquitted of rape last year, but could still face bribery charges in a multimillion-dollar arms deal. His supporters say he is innocent and that the scandals were part of a political smear campaign that should not prevent him from becoming ANC president.

Zuma had rallied ANC members who wanted a change from Mbeki, who

guided post-apartheid South Africa to sustained economic growth over the past few years, but has been accused of moving too slowly to lift millions out of poverty and being too aloof from the grassroots.

Much has been made of the personality and class differences between Mbeki and Zuma. Mbeki is a foreign-educated academic who sprinkles his speeches with Shakespeare. Zuma had little formal schooling, was a leader of the exiled ANC's military wing, and, like former president Nelson Mandela, served time at the Robben Island prison.

Zuma spent months building his support among the ANC rank-and-file and the trade union movement, but also reached out to religious groups, White Afrikaners and the business community in the final weeks of campaigning.

Supporters of Zuma also won five other top posts, including Kgalema Motlanthe, a former trade unionist and powerful ANC figure, as deputy president, and a top Communist party official for secretary general. Given that Zuma may have to step down if prosecutors revive corruption charges against him, the deputy presidency takes on particular significance.

The ANC president is traditionally the party's presidential candidate, and the party is overwhelmingly popular. Mbeki is barred by the constitution from seeking a third term as president of Africa's political and eco-



Former ANC deputy president, Jacob Zuma, right, is congratulated by South Africa President Thabo Mbeki after winning the ballot to become ANC president and lead the party, on the third day of the African National Congress conference in Polokwane, South Africa, on Tuesday.

nomics powerhouse. But remaining at the helm of the ANC would have given him a say in who succeeds him and in the policies his successor adopts.

In the closing days of the campaign for party leadership, Zuma's supporters were at pains to try to calm fears that South African economic policies would lurch to the left, given the huge support Zuma enjoys among the trade union movement and Communist party.

Speaking at a press briefing before the results were announced, Zuma ally Motlanthe said there may be a difference in "emphasis," but insisted there "are no ideological differences"

within the organization.

Motlanthe clearly wanted to dampen expectations in the powerful Congress of South African Trade Unions, which strongly backed Zuma, saying the federation had no voting rights and so could not claim to have put a candidate in power and expect any "payback."

In an interview later, Zwelinzima Vavi, secretary

Poll

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between the Black median household income and the White median household income has slightly narrowed: Black median income in 2006 was 61 percent of Whites; it was 58 percent in 1976. Nonetheless, though it has fluctuated from time to time, the Black-White income gap now is about the same as it was in 1997, the survey surmised.

Other points in the Pew report:

—Most Blacks believe that racial discrimination still exists when applying for a job (67 percent), renting an apartment or buying a house (65 percent), eating at restaurants and shopping (50 percent), and applying for college (43 percent). Yet, by a 2-to-1 margin, Whites believe that Blacks rarely face racial bias.

—Blacks remain the nation's most segregated racial or ethnic group. Housing segregation in metropolitan areas in the West and South has declined over the past quarter century, but there is less change in the Northwest and Midwest.

—The poverty rates for Whites and Blacks were

general of the union federation, said labor had not expected wholesale policy changes, "but we want a better environment, a respect of different voices."

"We can't hide that we have a class agenda, that things have gone very, very wrong. We see this as a rescue operation," Vavi said.

The main opposition party, which often criticized Mbeki's policies, expressed dismay at Zuma's victory.

"It is an indictment on the ruling party that they could find no better candidate than Jacob Zuma to lead them," Democratic Alliance leader Helen Zille said.

Zuma has called for AIDS and crime to be "treated as national emergencies," something many South Africans have criticized Mbeki for not doing.

However, Zuma has been ridiculed by AIDS activists for testifying in his rape trial last year that he had unprotected, consensual sex with an HIV-positive woman and then took a shower in the belief it would protect him from the AIDS virus. He was acquitted of rape in the case.

For his part, Mbeki has been criticized for questioning the link between HIV and AIDS and was accused of

failing to provide leadership to fight an epidemic that has hit South Africa harder than any other country.

On foreign policy, Zuma has challenged Mbeki for insisting on quiet diplomacy over confrontation with neighboring Zimbabwe, where President Robert Mugabe is accused of ruining the economy, undermining democracy and threatening the region's stability.

Mbeki fired Zuma as the country's deputy president in 2005 after Zuma's financial adviser was convicted of trying to elicit a \$70,000 bribe for Zuma to deflect investigations into an arms deal. Charges were withdrawn against Zuma but the National Prosecuting Authority has indicated it may revive them.

During the decades it was an underground movement fighting apartheid, the ANC prided itself on presenting a united front, and the top party post hadn't been publicly contested in 55 years.

But during the conference, delegates loyal to Zuma booed Mbeki allies, carried pictures of Zuma despite a ban on partisan displays and repeatedly disrupted proceedings with "Bring me my machine gun."

Police

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seen in 30 years, dropping to around 400, as opposed to previous levels of about 1,000 a year.

Since Bratton has been police chief, the citywide homicide rate has dropped 35 percent; rapes are down 27 percent; robberies decreased 20 percent, and aggravated assaults fell a whopping 58 percent.

Also, during the five-year period, burglaries dropped 21 percent, thefts from vehicles fell 27 percent, other thefts went down 23 percent, and car thefts dropped 26 percent. These comparative statistics were prepared in response to a request by the Wave and presented recently by Det. Jeff Godown in Parker Center.

Cmdr. Patrick M. Gannon, head of South Bureau Operations and the one

in charge of homicides and gangs in South L.A., cited gang-related statistics that showed almost a 50 percent drop in gang-related homicides over the past five years. When Bratton was appointed chief in 2002, there were 169 gang-related homicides in South L.A.

As of Nov. 24, there were 85. There were five-year reductions in other kinds of gang-related South L.A. crimes: aggravated assaults down 34.9 percent; attacks on police officers, 54.8 percent; rape, 35.5 percent; robbery, 5.9 percent, and criminal threats, 19.5 percent.

The only category of crime that increased in South L.A. in five years was arson. One arson was committed last year, but two were reported this year.

Gannon gave his opinion why crime has taken such a

tremendous drop in South L.A. Gannon, who has been an LAPD officer for 30 years and who was captain of the 77th Street Station for two years before being promoted to commander, summed it up in one word: "Bratton."

"If the boss is looking at a particular part of your operation, then that's what you concentrate on," Gannon said. "Bratton came in and said, 'Reducing crime is my number one priority.' He made it simple for us. He's very specific about what he wants us to concentrate our time on, with crime being number one. So, when you have a boss who's constantly, every day, asking you questions about crime and expecting you to be impacting it, you do it."

Betty Pleasant writes for the Wave Community Newspapers.

lower in 2006 than they had been in 1980, but the Black poverty rate was about three times that of Whites.

—Nearly one in three (32 percent) Black households in 2006 had an income of at least \$50,000 — it was one in five (18 percent) in 1970. However, Black households making between \$75,000 and \$100,000 are 7.7 percent of the Black population; households making over \$100,000 are 9.1 percent. Households making less than \$15,000 are 24.4 percent of the Black population.

—Blacks are over-represented in virtually every aspect of the criminal justice system.

Blacks were about twice as likely as Whites to be a victim of crime in 2005 and are disproportionately likely to be arrested (28 percent of juvenile and adult arrests in 2006) and serve time in prison (almost 5 percent of Black men were in prison or jail in 2006, as opposed to 0.7 percent of White men.)

According to the Pew survey, 37 percent of Blacks believe that they are no longer a single race because the Black community is so diverse, while 53 percent say

they still see Blacks as one race.

The report also pointed out that Blacks have lost confidence in their leaders' effectiveness over the last two decades. Only 18 percent believe that national Black political leaders are very effective, a 9 percent drop since 1986. Meanwhile, 57 percent say Black leaders are somewhat effective, up from 54 percent in 1986.

Only 32 percent believe that the NAACP is very effective — 47 percent in 1986 felt this way. Today 41 percent say the longtime civil rights organization is somewhat effective, up from 38 percent in 1986.

Finally, when the respondents were asked about Black ministers and clergy being very effective, only 38 percent thought so, as opposed to 40 percent in 1986. Meanwhile, 42 percent say they are somewhat effective, down from 43 percent in 1986.

The entire Pew Research Center report on Black progress can be read on the Pew Center's website, People-press.org/reports.

By Charles Hallman writes for the Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder.