

# FEMINIST VIEW OF POLITICAL PARTIES

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### ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Womxn and Democracy Initiative is based at the Dullah Omar Institute at UWC. We identify as feminist, taking an intersectional approach to our work on realising social justice through active political participation of the public in the context of a participatory and deliberative democracy.

With this project we hoped to translate four political party's manifestos into information that womxn and gender non-binary people can access which is capable of informing their capacity to hold political parties accountable and punish or reward them, through their vote now and through holding them to account in future for commitments proposed in their manifestos and action on delivery.

We hope that this analysis will serve more than just at this time of the election, but will initiate deeper public discourse on these issues from a feminist perspective to deepen the idea of what a feminist agenda for political parties looks like, and through that increase pressure on political parties to do better on their manifestos, policies and programmes in future and importantly the action that we as womxn and gender-non binary expect from government and opposition parties in the future.

We considered the three top performing political parties in the last national election – the ANC, the DA, and the EFF as well as Women Forward (WF), a small women-led party that is contesting the elections for the second time on the basis of a women's agenda.

This research was done through analysis of party manifesto's coupled with desk top research on a sample of candidates put forward as representatives to parliament, and on track-records in their term as parliamentarians and other structures of leadership and governance where relevant.

Using a feminist framework which prioritises patriarchy as a system of power which undermines gender and sexual determination in particular, together with other key social justice issues raised through a feminist intersectional lens, we considered if the manifestos and track records translate in practical ways for ordinary people, womxn and non-binary people in particular. Great care was taken to put into context the parties offerings overall. To allow our intended audience to interrogate specific positions of the party on issues of concern to them and make a decision from that vantage point.

The project aimed to provide a feminist perspective on key political party manifestos – taking the questions beyond only what the parties are saying on issues that are commonly defined as gendered or 'women's issues' such as gender based violence and womxn's representation further, into questions of how parties have addressed a gendered or womxn's agenda throughout their manifestos from their plans to address unemployment, wages, land and home ownership, social security, education from ECD through to higher education, and health.

We have looked at how parties recognise and respond, through their manifestos, to the layers of exclusions and discriminations faced by different groups of womxn, Black womxn, poor and working class womxn, womxn living with or caring for other people with disabilities, LGBTIQ people, womxn living in rural contexts and in urban poor contexts. We've focussed further in on the question of if parties have specifically addressed the context of groups such as farm womxn, sex workers and domestic workers.

Our analysis then turns to internal party issues such as the track record within parties on womxn's leadership; on misogyny, GBV and sexual harassment within the party; and of the quality of people on their lists.

We attempted to provide information on track record so that we do not rely on political grandstanding of the manifestos alone – this was made particularly difficult in terms of the EFF and WF where information related to the track records of the party and their employees, and on the positions they've taken on many policies is largely inaccessible. We've looked at the question of populism and lip-service, trying to assess through the quality of what's written and promised, if the commitments are backed up by a depth of understanding of the context of womxn and if they are specific and targeted.

We looked at the following thematic issues to ground our analysis and overall assessment:

- Party track record in advancing and advocating for gender justice. This was particularly difficult owing to the lack of data/info with regard to previous and current structures of governed where possible as well as the difficulty of accessible public records in all 3 spheres of government.
- The quality of their analysis in their manifestos, particularly where patriarchy is concerned; are the promises they make backed up by recognition of what the challenges have been to past plans to implement those promises?
- The specificity and clarity of the promises / plans. Are they detailed and target specific?
- Are budgets allocated or is an indication given of how the promise will be resourced?
- Are there commitments to mechanisms for transparency, monitoring and accountability?

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