

Timeline: Rags to riches

7 April 2008

Julius Malema defeats Saki Mofokeng by 187 votes to become president of the ANC Youth League (ANCYL).



13 May 2008

Malema registers the Ratanang Family Trust with the Master of the High Court in Pretoria. He is the sole trustee.

1 August 2009

Malema buys an upmarket house in Sandown for R3.6 million. A bond worth R1.5 million is registered on the property through Absa and he settles the outstanding R2.1 million in cash.



19 February 2010

The Star reveals that Malema bought the Sandown house and also owns a R1 million house in Polokwane.



21 February 2010

City Press reveals that SGL Engineering Projects, a construction company linked to Malema, received R140 million in government tenders from various Limpopo municipalities in two years. Malema first denied links to SGL, then claimed his signature was faked on company documents and finally resigned as a director.

26 March 2010

Malema tells the Mail & Guardian he lives on handouts. "I've asked that the leadership of the state, be it treasury or police, if they go to my account and find millions, they must take those millions and put them into institutions that can help children of the poor."



CITY PRESS SAYS

Public figures get public scrutiny

Ferial Haffajee

In turning down ANC Youth League president Julius Malema's attempt to interdict City Press yesterday, Judge Colin Lamont also affirmed that the youth leader is a public figure – not the private citizen he has claimed to be this week.

Malema said any probing of his private affairs was unjustified as he is a private person not paid by the public purse. But Judge Lamont said that while Malema had a right not to be defamed, "he is a high profile public figure ... he has made controversial statements at times."

"At present, there is a discussion in the press concerning whether or not his income justifies his expenses.

"The question of Mr Malema's income is topical and relevant ... the public is entitled to have full disclosure by persons who stand in a public position, who are high profile personalities (and) who invite comment about themselves."

Quoting case law and legal authors, the judge added that by his personality, status and conduct, Malema had exposed himself to such a degree of publicity that intrusions into his private sphere were justified.

The interdict attempt therefore failed.

It is City Press's view that Malema has an über-role in South African national life. Research by Media Tenor reveals that Julius Malema has the second highest media profile in South Africa – pole position is held by President Jacob Zuma. This is often attributed only to his media profile but he is no more a

media construct than the founding president, Nelson Mandela.

Malema has crafted his persona on a blend of raw populism and significant political nous to reach the point he this week described.

"I am the only national political figure who can go into the squatter camps," he told a news conference geared to respond to a growing list of questions about how someone who earns no more than a deputy minister can sustain his life of opulence.

Malema's view – that because he is not paid by the public purse or elected by the public, and that therefore we can have no interest in his personal affairs – is simplistic.

The legal author, J Neethling, has argued that "the fact that a person is a public figure ... diminishes his or her right to privacy ... public figures are persons who, by virtue of their

status, office, occupation, grant the public a legitimate interest in information regarding not only their public life ... but also to a certain extent their private lives ... publication of private facts concerning persons who deliberately expose themselves to the limelight will be easier to justify than the publication of private facts concerning persons living largely in seclusion".

Malema does not live in seclusion. He plays politics loud and large; he parties loud and large; he lives large.

Moreover, he is president of the ANC Youth League, which is in power, if not in office.

Because of the league's effective lobbying, its campaigns and positions have morphed into policy deliberations and are very likely to result in changes to the law.

His positions have shaped relations within the tripartite alliance. He is not a man of the

times but *the* man of the times.

You cannot court the interest, influence and attention of the public, seek to shape the state of the nation and then shut off communication when it becomes inconvenient.

Malema lives in inconvenient times now.

While he presents himself as a man of the poor and paints a picture of a person heavily mortgaged to the capitalist banking industry who has never seen a million in his life, the truth is somewhat different.

He has knocked down his Sandown home and is building another, much better, one.

We reveal today that Malema also has a Limpopo farm, bought for cash.

He has a garage full of cars that total millions in value. He changes his cars as often as he changes his watches, which are of near similar value. Who wants to be a millionaire?

How did Malema get this

wealthy and why is it in the public interest?

He is the ultimate political patron, a man who leverages his obvious political talents and his magnificent networks to a personal end. Then he plays the Robin Hood who gives to the poor – Malema has used his contacts to have a home built for the athlete, Caster Semenya, and his family trust has built a church.

He and his network of young entrepreneurs play the tender system like the most dexterous of capitalists. Last year City Press began to reveal how Malema's companies had won massive tenders. Faced with an outcry he has changed business strategy.

Now he allegedly secures tenders for others, who pay him a commission into a trust.

Why is this in the public interest? Tenders are public money which we, the public, can still follow even when it

enters private pockets, according to a recent judgment of the Supreme Court of Appeal.

This is not to suggest any impropriety but to make the point that Malema is acquainted and influential in the state tendering system.

He is a known beneficiary thereof and to follow the public money trail is in the public interest even after it is paid to private tenderpreneurs.

The South African Revenue Service is involved in a lifestyle audit of Malema.

Senior leaders in South Africa have noted that the state tender system can do with more, and not less, public oversight.

Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan has pointed to weaknesses, as have Auditor-General Terence Nombembe, and the SACP leader, Blade Nzimande, who is also a Cabinet minister.