

Zuma picks Big Mac as his voice



By Stephen Grootes: @StephenGrootes

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President Jacob Zuma has announced a big shakeup in the premier spin-doctoring role in the country. From now on, the old-generation stalwart Mac Maharaj will be the voice, the public visage of the president. What an interesting choice.

Our politics has a way of surprising. It's a place where things you could not predict happen often. The announcement of the new presidential spokesman is one of such surprises.

Mac Maharaj is the most senior politician to be appointed to a spokesperson's post in our recent political history. We now have a former cabinet minister, the person who actually smuggled "A Long Walk to Freedom" out of Robben Island, after transcribing it from Madiba's words as a civil servant. We are talking about a real heavy hitter here, a person in charge of Operation Vula in the late '80s and who played a massive role in the negotiations that led to 1994.

More on him in a moment, but first, a comment on the job itself, and the person who used to hold it. Ziza Kodwa is his name, and a more personable man you will not find. He is close to Zuma and really shot to prominence as his ANC spokesman during the 2009 election campaign. Before that, he was the spokesman for the ANC Youth League, and thus is very much in the Fikile Mbalula camp. Yes, that makes him close to Julius Malema too.

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