



AFRICA-FRIDAY REFLECTIONS

"AFROCENTRIC THOUGHT"



BYSTANDERS - A SIDE VIEW OF THE REVOLUTION.

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I sit back and vividly remember my grade 9 History teacher speaking about the importance of not being a bystander. The conversation, of course, is failing to claim my attention as it competes with the ever so excellent cell phone.

But today I force myself to remember that conversation, and reignite whatever wisdom was planted in that classroom.

A bystander by dictionary definition, is a person who is present at an event or incident but does not take part in it. I know what you're probably thinking after reading that. That you, much like myself are a bystander, or have been one at some point in the long, complex history of the Republic. It is almost first nature for one to step back and assess the situation, or stand back in the hopes of securing their own personal protection.

But through this, one consciously, or subconsciously becomes a bystander. This unspoken alliance with the opposition is one that we find ourselves forming affiliation with, sometimes without our own knowledge.

Without having to use an outdated experience in my life as an anecdotal reference, I care to reflect on the week that passed and what exactly it represented. We found ourselves on the brink of a civil war; the genesis of systematic change; and the dawn of a new South Africa.

But less than two weeks later, all seems to be falling right back where it was just a week before the unrest. Does this now mean that the genuine objective behind the turmoil has somewhat been achieved? Have the socio-economic factors of discrimination that affect thousands of unemployed individuals been resolved? Have the contributing factors of last week's violence been addressed by the state, and a concrete way forward mapped?

The answer ultimately, is "no" to all of these questions. And if the answer is "no", then how exactly did we avert a civil war that was set in motion as a result of the cause and effect of maladministration from the state, and mistrust from the citizens?

Bystanding is how many of us chose to sit back and watch as the "Zulus" caused turmoil across the country, and we all sat in the comfort of our own homes, having discussions on how we got here as a country, and who exactly is at fault.

Through this experience of Self-aggrandizement, we have managed to further segregate ourselves as the Black majority and create the classic field and house negro principle.

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When the people decided to express their distaste with the government, and protest to show this distaste, certain individuals chose to consolidate their own egos and play a judgemental role of criticising the revolution and turning their back on the cause.

This reality then had me wondering: in the times of the 1976 Uprising; the Sharpeville Massacre; or when the ANC told the townships to be ungovernable, were these calls really supported by all those who were affected? Did all the youth of Soweto truly unite that day? When there was a call for the release of Mandela, was this sentiment unitary? Did this division in the revolution only begin now - post-democracy? I believe not.

I believe that there has always been an innate primitive sense of individualism in our society, where we are all united until true unity is required. We can all meet on social media and call out our government when they have looted funds, but when the time comes for us to show the government our displeasure, the task is delegated to the “activists” and “cadres”, and no is longer a sentiment shared by the majority. We have learnt to unite in evil, but we can never unite for a cause that is genuinely for our own benefit.

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As long as we do not share a common end goal, there will always be those who wish to destroy societal advancements based purely on their own personal insecurities. Hence when the opportunity came to revolt against the same oppressive system that has given reasons as to why its leaders are not fit to rule, there were still individuals that chose to dub these revolutionaries as criminals and looters, instead of seeing what they symbolised; and how without a majority support nothing would change the situation for the majority. You cannot save the people without the people.

For as long as individuals overinflate their positions in the face of others, we will remain bystanders in our own revolution. For as long as we struggle to love our own skin and existence, we will remain allies of the opposition. For as long as we remain unsure of where we want to see ourselves, we will fight anyone who displays more courage than us. Liberation remains a battle of the mind before the physical world.

To this day, we still have opposing views on the events of the week that has passed, and have further divided views on the direction we should be taking as a nation. For as long as we remain unsure of where we want to see ourselves, we will remain pawns of a sadistic economic battle, where neither of the victors have our best interests at heart. Tsoha, mo’Afrika! See the world for what it is; see reality for what it truly is. Peep behind the curtain and realise that you are alone.

“Only mental emancipation will allow you to see that motho ke motho ka batho.”

Only mental emancipation will allow you to see that motho ke motho ka batho. Nothing will be achieved in unison if we remain divided in intent. It is time we left the screens of our phones and sat down with members of our community to hear each other out and map a way forward.

The sense of community and oneness has dwindled and faded away over the years, and has been replaced with this relentless ideology that you are your own best ally and everybody else is an enemy of your greatness - a twisted, dangerous mind-set that detaches us from the essence of our existence; the essence of Ubuntu.

Indeed, the world may be changing for the worst, and prospects of a bright future are unlikely, but only through a combined united attempt will we aim to bear fruition of the revolution. For only once we sit down and understand each other, can we then map a way forward together. Only then will we see that amidst all this propaganda of division, we are one.

And through this pursuit of unique exclusivity, that we all form part of the big, united, beautiful human race, and only through combined efforts may we lead this planet in the right direction.

In closing, I would like to address one last factor of bystanding that I believe is the key element of delay in the revolution, and this is the mind-set that "politics do not affect me". One may believe that politics do not affect them only because they do not understand how much power lies in their own hands.

The power of politics is in the hands of the citizens, and these are the same hands that get impacted by every decision that the government makes, regardless of whether or not that impact is immediate or 25 years in the making. Ultimately, without making your opinion heard, you will continue to fall victim to the same things you complain about.

People should get out of the habit of unconstructive complaining, i.e. the art of complaining without furnishing any solutions. Too much energy is wasted away when one complains without solution. So let us as the people of this Republic dig deep and take it back to our communities. We need to unite, redirect, find common ground and build a village on it. For only together will we achieve our ultimate goal of emancipation.

Freedom has many faces and many voices, but that freedom will only bear fruit if each and every facet of it is listened to and taken into consideration. For who is the land for if not for those who live on it?

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Away with division, away with segregating in pursuit of overinflating our positions in society. We are marginalized and we are discriminated against. Just because you did not feel it does not mean that your children will not. We cannot continue to sit on the sidelines while our revolution is realised by only a minority while the sentiment is shared with the majority.

The time for unity is now, and unity is as simple as sitting with members of your community and finding solutions for the problems faced by your people. Eventually, we will all move forth in unison to the revised Republic; a place where all individuals have the right to dream and the responsibility to follow those dreams to the very end.

The bitter truth is that we can all play saint, and judge those who take to the ground to materialise our cries, but the reality is that we will just have another Marikana, Fees Must Fall and Zuma Must Fall, which all have genuine life changing premise, but end up becoming a public holiday of awareness of dead dreams. Take initiative and decide, which side of history are you on?



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