Who will stand up for us in this valley of silence?

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TO PARAPHRASE American linguist, cognitive scientist, historian and political activist Noam Chomsky, "The African is like a man stumbling around the province in a fog of mystification." A radicalistic assessment of KwaZulu-Natal is "headed to hell in a handbasket" as Brit- ish essayist TS Elliot might have said.

The citizens of KwaZulu-Natal by and large are clinging to a threadbare hope. A frightful fall is imminent, the consequences of which we will en- dure in the balmy future.

Desperation has primarily en- veloped the African community. Constant enfranchising rights of the condemned from the sinkhole of vulnerability and despair raise questions.

Frail hands of the ill-fated still endeavor to touch the fringe of our community leader's garments. Re- grettable, our so-called African leaders collectively feign blindness and deafness. They have forsaken their leadership obligations. And in so doing, they create the burden of shackles that pin down the natural progression of our community.

Journalist O Jeffrey in his book titled After The Darkest Night comes out with a heart-piercing speech by Dr Martin Luther King jr on March 31, 1968, when addressing the Southern Christian Leadership Conference at the Episcopal National Cathedral, Washington. He said this: "On some positions, Cowardice asks the question, 'Is it safe?' Bravery asks the question, 'Is it politic?' Vanity comes and asks the questions, 'Is it popular?' In the end, it is conscience answering the question 'Is it right?' And there comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor noble, nor popular, nor even polite. And you must do it because conscience tells him that it is right."

In the past, we rallied around political goals conceptualised from an ethos of ubuntu, the African concept of humanity which proclaimed "an injury to one is an injury to all". Does it still apply now?

We Africans must ask ourselves some hard questions, in particular: Why has our community gone terribly wrong in our prov- ince?

"We are sick and tired of working without being paid. Transnet is getting millions from Sefokwane municipality... but every month we are not getting paid on time," said Ntshizi Lbhongo.

Bhanga and his fellow drivers on February 1 in 2016 were referred to as "nursery" as they blocked the flow of traffic on Sefokwane city centre.

There was no public outcry re- garding their grievances. These breadwinners were stripped of their rights. Their demands were disempowered as the protectors and providers of their families.

The community must be serious in the re- percussions of a man who says, "I am in debt now because I have to borrow money to buy groceries." While these breadwinners, emb- arked on strike, were confronted with the situation of falling to provide the basic needs to their de- pending on such as school uniforms, clothing, and food. We need, community leaders and politi- cians stuck their heads in the sand. Church leaders, meanwhile, failed to stand up and defend the exploited. The recent crop of social media movements like Mazibuzo African Forum, In- jeni YamaZulu, Inbumba Business Forum, Amadalandokwabantu, Street Wisdom and many others is something the organisations that claim to speak for the exploited were conspicu- ously silent.

Meanwhile, the injustice was not meted out by Indian, White or coloured nationals. It was a government by a company owned by an African community.

"There was no "injury to one is an injury to all". Where is our ubuntu now?"

Sefokwane Municipality council - I am still waiting for a re- gnant. They pretend to know little about poverty. It is said that almost all of them have forgotten that they come from the humblest family backgrounds.

They are today's Marie Antoin- ette, the queen consort of Louis XVI. Remember, the aborted, sinful boat cruise where 49 councillors were expected to board the MSC Simfera for a cruise to the Portu- guese islands between March 4 and 7 in 2017.

That cruise was to have been at the expense of ratepayers. The aborted cruise is one of many humiliating blows to the ticks in the teeth of the destitute.

The same councillors have been caught up in the limelight of igniting challenges confronting their protectors: "We have been raising our salary predicament since 2005. We have raised it with management; the city manager is aware of it."

Are the souls of our African academics, intellectuals and com- munity leaders, intellectually cowardly, expendability and van- ity? And hope and soul of the commu- nity? That is why we bied just bare face the prophets of mirage to feast on. Our historical quest to attain social justice for all has been forsaken on the floor; to be stamped on by scoun- dwels who masquerade as voices of the downtrodden.

The African community is being courageous and the will to pick up the ethos of social justice among the current crop of African community leaders. They monitor the most excruciating injustices meted out against citizens in the province.

Harriet Martineau, in 1840, wrote Tousan L'Ouvrere's blog: "One of the Mon Tous- saint L'Ouvrere was a brave hero who led the slaves of St Domingo to "tousan l'ouvrer". We are stuck in an hour of de- spair. The Xhosa Institute for Research and Development still adheres to a belief that among the citizens of KwaZulu-Natal we have plenty of our own Tousan L'Ouv- rete, people who possess the spirit of bravery, honesty and integ- rity.

Benevolence

Africans cannot for ever survive on the benevolence of other community leaders. The silence of our community leaders was exposed by-aligning to the measure of an independent, people's representative of the Commonwealth Legal Education Association, who took their issues to the public sector protecting the public about the living conditions and ongoing killings in Glencoe in the district of Durban. He did not seek political leadership directives or a govern- ment meeting for approval to tackle the Glencoes (KwaZulu) dilemma.

Dr Rama Naitu, of the Dem- ocratic Development Programmes and Vasu Gounden, of the African Centre for the Constructive Reso- lution of Disputes, are waging a campaign against the cacophony of untangling these social knots for decades.

Their research institutes are non-partisan and financially self-sustaining. They operate out- side the confines of traditional ac- ademic affiliations. They are on the forefront of the political world, on the lookout for mercy from political leaders.

In the recent xenophobia out- break, the Cope, AD, ANC, IFP, and various political parties have babysat the concerns of church leaders, in their medieval regalia, being sheepishly whispering in the valley of nothingness by municipality officials and politicians. In the twinkling of an eye, we are facing a national solution emanating from their colleagues with municipality officials - a solution that does not define the identity, morals and ethics of any community.

The National Party and National Socialist Ger- man Workers’ Party are infamous in this scheme.

The point of analysis converges to the reality that a lack of fearless truth-tellers within the African community is because of fear of os- tracism. Let the conscience of Afri- can academics, church leaders, profes- sionals, the business community, forward thinkers and many more, lead them to do the right thing by warmly embracing the frail hands of the condemned. It is time for community leaders to take a “position that is neither safe, nor political, nor popular; but they must do what conscience tells them is right.”

Let us, as the belief that the African soul and integrity have not been devoured by the offerings of impotent political parties. It should be a call to all communities as commissions, boards and other non-consential committees.

Let each and every African citi- zen be Tousan L'Ouvrere by being brave and leading our beloved province to throw off the yoke of slavery. For the sake of the next gen- eration, we must depart from this KwaZulu-Natal we stopped Afric- ans from salivating for hand-outs and crumbs from leaders of other communities.

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