

## CARPING POINT



# ‘Superheroes’ take centre stage

**KEVIN RITCHIE**

@RitchKev

SOUTH Africa might just have come of age during Covid-19 – on Monday night to be exact. We have always been a country of often manic extremes; overweening confidence offset by crushing despair, but this week we seemed to find a happy medium.

We are a country that loves its superheroes. We always expect someone to swoop in and rescue us just like in the comics.

For many that’s become Cyril Ramaphosa and before him, certainly Nelson Mandela. But there’s also a huge fan following for the arch villains, if Jacob Zuma’s 78th birthday on Sunday is any gauge.

Sometimes superheroes can become archvillains and then – if there’s enough time in the story – morph into wise old elders, like Thabo Mbeki. The government’s handling of the coronavirus crisis has been quite unlike his car crash management of the HIV/ Aids pandemic.

Ramaphosa’s done the right thing at the right time; he delegated authority to a properly qualified cabinet minister in Zweli Mkhize, who in turn has listened to proper scientists. It’s a far cry from Mbeki’s late-night pseudo-science and Virodene – and light years away from the current megalomania playing out in the White House in the US.

This week we were introduced to our latest super hero; Professor Salim Abdool Karim who calmly blew the bullshit right out the room in a unique press conference that addressed everyone’s questions (even the ignoramus who actually asked Mkhize if he was a medical doctor)

Karim gave us a master class that deserves to become condensed into a series of pinned tweets and posted across all platforms.

We have not won the war against Covid-19, even though South Africans living in BC (time Before Covid-19) would have been trumpeting the flattened curve to all and sundry – along with the William Webb-Ellis trophy. Nothing could further from the truth. We have had less infections, but we still don’t know exactly why or how. The rate of infection will still rise exponentially. People will still die.

How many depends on us. It depends on whether we keep to physical distancing, whether we actually keep to the honour system of the lockdown, because that’s what it is. There aren’t enough police to actually enforce it, only to randomly catch the offenders and through that hopefully encourage the others to stay home.

It’s like condomising or finishing a course of antibiotics. If you don’t and you get caught out, that’s on you. That’s how this virus is going to play out. The honour system is going to be even more important when the restrictions lessen; if we all look after ourselves, we give ourselves – and our loved ones – a far better chance of getting through it, but we will still not avoid it.

What a difference appointing experts makes. What a pity Bheki Cele was never a police officer nor Fikile Mbalula a taxi driver.

◆ Last week I wrote that Israel’s health minister Yaakov Litzmann had tested positive for the coronavirus a month after declaring it God’s punishment for homosexuality. It has been pointed out that he never made that statement. I apologise.

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*Ritchie is a journalist and a former newspaper editor*