A new generation of citizens must step up and fill the gap left by our so-called leaders, writes Benedict Xolani Dube

PARAPHRASING ATheme from Chomsky, “The ANC KwaZulu-Natal is stumbling in the province around the issue of accountability.” Indeed, KZN is “headed to hell in a handbasket,” as TS Eliot might say “The citizens of KZN by and large are clinging to a threadbare doth that pitiful fall is imminent, the consequences of which we will endure for generations.

Regrettably, our so-called African leaders collectively feign blindness and deafness. They have formalised their leadership obligations. In so doing, they have increased the burden that the city, the natural progression of our community. O’Neill; in his book After The Darkest Night Comes the Daylight, change, quotes a heart-breaking speech by Martin Luther King Jr on March 31, 1968, when addressing the Southern Christian Leadership Conference at the Episcopal National Cathedral, Washington, DC. He said: “On some positions, Cowardice asks the question, ‘Is it safe?’ Expediency asks the question, ‘Is it popular?’ And Vanity comes along and asks the question, ‘Is it popular?’

Community lags as leaders fail

There was no “injury to one is injury to all”. Where is our Ubuntu now? eThekwini councillors are being pompous and arrogant. They pretend to know little about poverty. It is sad that almost all of them have forgotten that they come from the most humble background.

Contemplate in totality the repercussions of a man who says: “I am in debt now because I have to borrow money to buy groceries.” While these breadwinners, embarking on strikes, were confronted with failing to provide basic needs to their dependents, community leaders and politicians stuck their heads in the sand.

Church leaders, meanwhile, failed to stand up and defend the exploited. The recent crop of social justice and empowerment organisations, and black political organisations, have not helped. Subservient citizens fail to speak for the exploited, were conspicuously silent.

Simultaneously, the injustice was not meted out by Indian, white, or coloured businessperson. It was a company owned by an African family. The souls of our African academics, intellectuals and community leaders in covenant with our people, are expeditionary and vanity.

The hope and soul of the community is wearily laid bare for 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 by so-called leaders who masquerade as the voice of the downtrodden.

Who has the courage and the will to pick up the ethos of social justice among the current crop of African community leaders? Who monitors the most excruciating injustices meted out against citizens in KwaZulu-Natal?

The same spokespersons have been accused, by their own bodiesguard, of ignoring their claim to speak for the exploited, were conspicuously silent.

Dr Ruma Naidu of the Democracy Development Programme and Vusi Goundon of the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes have been at the coal face of untangling those social knots for decades. Their research institutes are non-partisan and financially self-sustaining. They operate outside the confines of traditional academic institutions. Professors Salim Abdool Karim and Quarraisha Abdoel Karim have deservedly been honoured internationally for their sterling work in health science research. Their Centre for the AIDS Programme of Research in South Africa has become an internationally recognised institution.

Dr Itumeleng Soolimani of Gift of the Givers is undisputed as far. Advocate Kessie Naidoo, Professor Hoonson (Jerry) Cowoodl, Ela Gandhi, Judge Zulakia Mohammed Yacoob and Professor Ashwin Desai are independent, determined, and honest knights in shining armour on behalf of their community.

All these community leaders have scars that bear testimony to the sacrifices they have made. They are the people who in the wake of the de-legitimation of colonial laws, the annexation liberation policies and the persecution into a super-social structure.

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