

## **The ANC should dig deeper into its 'Roots'**

**By Lisa Nel**

An individual conceptualizes an idea; his following creates the ideology. Gandhi and Mandela each representative of historical change which without them both would have left South Africans in a far worse society.. The former's statue was recently threatened to be desecrated and removed as an icon of colonialism. Mind boggling as he was the greatest and foremost passive protestor against enslavement in this country? What happens when the successors of that ideology remodel the idea and the followers then subscribe to that morphology?

Knowledge should be a surge protector against irrationality. Knowledge and its correlative reason have historically been equated with power. The more you know the greater the chances of making an informed decision or coming to a rational and thought out conclusion over an unpleasant or unjust issue. Unless that knowledge has been either sabotaged or stagnated in order to persuade people to follow the opiate of the claims of the orator. Welcome to the rhetoric of Julius Malema, President Zuma along with the 'historic' visit of Robert Mugabe a regionally known president of selective genocide, who publicly refuted the very xenophobia he instigated towards Zimbabweans who didn't vote for him and told a journalist who was trying to interview him that he didn't want to see 'white people.'

But.

What happens when education is subtly undermined and hijacked by an already extant morphed ideology? And the followers do not have the necessary means of discerning even the potential for their own inculcation? Or what happens when an existing historically transformative episode has been vicariously transferred onto subsequent generations or groups of individuals who independently have had no personal experience (of for instance: subjugation, enslavement or apartheid), but jump onto the framework or scaffolding of the previous generation's sufferings? Are they to rectify the cause or redeem the wrongs of the past even though their brave new world has been given equal opportunity? Is the opportunity equal and can it ever be when the power of persuasion is manifested continually by violence and aggressive actions and fueled by a recreation of the unrelenting stigmata of the white oppressor.

Where does the perpetuity end in either redemption of the past for the sins inflicted upon by the 'fathers' or conversely how are situations rectified by those who have always known had or been exposed to unlimited access to freedom, equality and opportunity?

So far 'whiteness' has perceptually conferred that privilege both in America and around the world. And even though that to many is a wholly indefensible assumption; the reality is whiteness automatically supports an autoimmunity to perceptions of privilege. In other words, 'we know we're better so we don't care what people think.' Even worse - to some- whiteness is accompanied by not just an epigenetic sense of superiority but with the necessary (over ) compensation towards other races and cultures as a pretext for achieving moral (if not materialistic) rectitude. The modern equivalent of addressing 'the white man's burden.' Evolutionary discourse has not been able to find a

viable substitute phrase or recompense for this term and or provenance. But it exists in real time and in a real way.

But when is compensation enough and in what form and for how long must it be effected and by whom?

Living as a white person in predominantly black South Africa, the issues of being owed have outplayed the forgiveness decades. Irrespective of the entrenched corruption which plagues the continent with an infection rate that no AID organization has yet to ameliorate, the ubiquitous feelings of being owed and somehow reapportioned material compensation for apartheid and colonialism have fueled rather than quelled the narrative of reasonable economic redistributive justice.

Countless books and articles and journal entries and local news reports envelop if not drown the unrelenting and to date profound consequences in which corruption in Africa has flourished. To date the book which comes closest to any plausible explanation is : 'Thieves of State.' However, it's thesis is the necessity of corruption as opposed to any potential for an unravelling. Elites ubiquitously can't be changed: they inherit corrupt practices from pre existing regimes whereby the allure of unchecked wealth offers impunity. The corresponding acceptance of the people into this system recycles its availability even though the status of the people remain worse than it was under a more dogmatic leader.

In a tribal kleptocracy. - dogmatism would be a welcome respite- everyone loses even those at the top: when the resources run out on which they've bargained the country's loyalty, there will be nothing left to barter.

In South Africa, currently the country is facing an energy crisis which has been so dramatically understated that people still live the lie of its long term and catastrophic consequences. The rich like the rich everywhere can afford to remove themselves from the national grid (there ONE supplier of electricity which the government is a major shareholder of). This works for and against the greater cause of preservation and supply. If money is not paid to the supplier 'Eskom,' ( the sole energy electricity supplier country wide), it cannot afford to reboot it's antiquated and prehistoric generators; well left in their graves since 1994. Yet these same people can afford to be relatively inconvenienced y a depleted energy supply. They get generators, solar panels, batteries, while the poor and the other 60 million people revert back to mud hut living surviving with the dribs and drabs of electricity which the waning system can supply.

Where has the money gone that was meant to supply the fuel for generators? 22 billion rand is owed from municipalities to Eskom. Let's play hide and seek.

Bribery to government officials, ministerial appointments, shadow companies with CEOs who don't even have the equivalent of an 8th grade education are the norm. Municipalities have reached so deep into the well of instant grants and wealth; well after the latest four by fours have been reclaimed and auctioned, the first class tickets to state functions have been revoked and their position 'suspended.' What people still don't 'get,' is the money is gone baby gone! It's like slapping a child on the wrist after he's eaten the entire box of Oreos? What good is it really? But worse still (in my view), is what has the lingering perception been and how can it change?

At Zuma's address to Parliament last month; the parade of ministers and dignitaries wearing the latest in cat walk design wear and adorned with the subtlety of expensive jewelry that only a camera can capture, was preceded by a circus of events which - so unfortunate for this country- made president Zuma look less like a puppet and more like someone who had either lost his script or

arrived at the wrong play. Initially there was a movement on the floor to unblock the cell phone access which would have allowed the free press to have followed and documented his address. That fiasco was dismissed by the speaker who clearly had no authority to effectively or legally unblock an act which was already a direct infringement on the constitutional rights of freedom of speech. Eventually reception was restored to be closely followed by the leader of the EFF (Economic Freedom Fighters), Julius Malema's insistence that the president not proceed with his address until such time as he could answer as to why he had secured himself into a presidential security palace, Nkandla, at the expense of tax payer's money: an expense that was exponentially unviable in any country and justification for which he somehow thinks is wholly unassailable.

Now, as usual, the case is 'pending further investigation.' That's the omnipotent phrase attached to corrupt transactions which have so many different hands on the till that before the finger prints can be erased another set has been made. The next on the overdraft account being a mini fleet of three new presidential planes to fly him where exactly?

And yet the normal upcoming democratically- minded- culturally -shifting black South African trying to make ends meet, work an honest day, educate her child who will be the very very first generation whose parents were born post apartheid, are screwed and screwed down to a skewed way of thinking about the leadership in this country and its associative ethnic viability and long term consequences.

And now for the recent sprint in the race to eradicate history, we are confronted with displays of violence and unrest which are diversions from and displaced reasons for retaliation. All the statues associated with the formation of the republic of South Africa are being desecrated, people from neighboring countries brutally murdered and ANC leadership which continually proselytizes a hatred towards whites as eternally representative of suppression and economic cleavage. We must not overlook other manifestations of discontent and their associative violence: stoning cars on the national roads have closed down highways, the throwing of the human excrement on the national road in protest to (illegal) squatters, and the deposits of the same at the international airport in Cape Town last year.

The means by which people are choosing to express their dissatisfaction with the economic and political recovery of this country are a worry.

Recently in the NYT (April 12) there was an article discussing Americans amnesia over the signature of confederate defeat against slavery at Appotomax.... An historical landmark where erroneously the civil war was meant to have ended. As we all know it didn't come close and has a long way to go.

Mt. Rushmore has the engravings of four transformative president's two of whom were slave owners; Jefferson had an entire dynasty with his African slave concubine Sally Hemings and George Washington refused to free his slaves or even allow them to buy their freedoms after they had done their 'servitude.'

But.

We don't see teams of dissatisfied African Americans trashing these historical sites? In the wake of the recent killings of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown and ...., the people in America lobby, picket, protest and form coalitions of lawyers, politicians and human rights activists, journalists and the media not just to help but to validate the unjustness of the crimes which have been committed. They don't resort to the lowest form of decimation and assault on property even if the iconological representation speaks to other inappropriately addressed issues.

But meanwhile in South Africa:

We have had another spate of ethnic unrest called 'xenophobia.' Where is pan Africanism? Should it not be a panacea for acceptance of ethnic difference beneath the widening umbrella of socio-economic change? The assumption that everyone will adhere to and embrace a westernized Protestant work ethics is a superfluous consideration. People cannot be force fed into a system which they can neither afford nor have evolved into. For example the street vendors at all the intersections selling their imitation Gucci glasses, and the spasza shops which are laced throughout the various townships supplying to all local customers everything from peanut butter to light bulbs to baby food to cell phones. They are like satellite shops of mini marts. Closing them down because of xenophobia under the accusations that those shops rob people of either jobs or going to the larger chain stores speaks to an ideological discontent aggravated by the over reaching economic woes of the country caused by its leadership. The lashing out and lynching of foreigners is a violent cry for help and dissent mixed with an endemic violence which has been fueled for years by racial discord and political corruption. The catch word of the Thabo Embeki days, pan-Africanism does not exist. It's a hollow ideology with no following because it does not and cannot exist.

But it gets better still.

After countless deaths by the sword upon unsuspecting immigrants from Nigeria to Somalia who are legally in this country; the next phase in the blame game scapegoat is.....colonialism. If we can't get away with murdering other 'brothers' with any plausibility or constitutional back up, we can always blame the 'white colonials.'

How does a democratic and civilized society address grievances and displays of this sort within the context of social cohesiveness. This is not just a protest. Neither is the foundation on which these statues stand: the protestors are composed of people who weren't even born when apartheid was dismantled. Secondly, the statutes of Cecil Rhodes and Paul Kruger (amongst others) have other history outside of the associative 'repressive' label which displeased people are all too willing to adhere to.

In the acceptable therapeutic language of the times: it saddens me to see this happening in a country which had so much potential for real change and which had an initial sincerity for rectifying the sins of its past as a nation. These expletives are re excavating the trenches which divided this country for years. They are reaffirming a method of violence and endemic hatred which rather than sanctifying a conviction is redefining the enormous gap which still exists between cultures in South Africa. At what stage does the legacy of the persecuted unjustly support the present day grievances of a deeply engraved hatred and distrust of white people or the past system which they seem to eternally represent.