

South Africa: Corruption gives birth to a new social movement!

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Mainstream media, opposition parties and many of us in Main Road South Africa are labeling the corruption practices of government officials, party bosses, those connected to the ruling party and their WAGS (wives and girlfriends) as a moral epidemic sweeping like a virus. Many are infected. High profile faces of the ruling alliance are not immune.

Motlanthe's son, Mandela's grand-son, Zuma's WAGs, sons, daughters and nephews, Harvard educated Attorney Seth Nthati, Juluis Malema and even Vavi's wife are allegedly among the endless list of those suffering from tendernitis or have a touch of briberuis(bribery). We gasp in disbelief as millions of Rands disappear into the pockets of individuals, their shelf companies, their off shore accounts, their tender agreements. Time and again we witness how charges against them are dropped, in payment for who knows what.

It has come to a point when all these scandals begin to lose their shock value. Like TV violence, we become immune to the moral violence of these actions, as if we are watching entertainment. Indeed, the killing of individuals who stood in someone's way used to be political. Today, killings have evidently turned economic in some parts of our country, even when politicians, leaders and officials are the target of hired hit men.

Why is all this happening? There is much to the saying: "behind every great fortune is a great crime" Corruption has become endemic because capital is still apartheid-era Capital enmeshed in whiteness. The apartheid ruling classes also once acquired their first wealth and economic power through plunder, bribery, theft and murder. Today they have the power to let a stream of money trickle down from the commanding heights of the economy to junior BEE partners. Ordinary business deals, illegal bribes, or contracts which blur the line between moral and immoral, between law and lawlessness, are mixed into a chaotic mess of old alliances and new loyalties. This is not enough for the platoons of wanna-BEEs. They try to break their way through the barriers of apartheid Capitalism but this fortress is too strong. The only way to accumulate productive wealth for these aspirants is through a parasitic, and generally corrupt relationship with the state, whose top structures are today controlled by the ANC.

What is the force which moves this avalanche of corruption? Let us suggest that we are witnessing the formation of a social movement – presently the most lucrative social movement in South Africa. Corruption in SA today is the surface expression of this social force. It is a social movement that is anti-social.

To stress the deep social underpinnings of what is happening is not to rule out the fact that membership to this new social movement is voluntary. There is a moral choice to make. And the aspirants choose to align themselves with politically positioned individuals to reap the benefits of membership to the movement. This social movement also demands that you defend its guiding principles of self-interest and wealth amassing with fervor and passion. Julius Malema admits this freely when in his *M&G* interview (26/3) he says he lives on 'handouts' and poses before the camera with his quarter million Rand watch. Whatever the political interventions of the ANCYL may be in

the public arena, this watch has become Malema's most important message to the youth, and a powerful political metaphor for this new social movement. Its meaning is well captured by political philosopher Steve Biko:

'This is white man's integration – an integration based on exploitative values. It is an integration in which black will compete with black, using each other as rungs up a step ladder leading them to white values. It is an integration in which the black man will have to prove himself in terms of these values before meeting acceptance and ultimate assimilation, and in which the poor will grow poorer and the rich richer in a country where the poor have always been black.'

When Malema 'doesn't have food' he calls upon powerful friends such as the premier of Limpopo to help him. 'That's how we have come to relate to each other', said Malema, seemingly unconscious of how in this statement, he has pinpointed the economic nature of today's relations in the ANC-family, which have turned comradeship into cabalism.

In this context the words of Franz Fanon in his book *The Wretched of the Earth* is prophetic.

"But since then [independence] this party has sadly disintegrated; nothing is left but the shell of a party, the name, the emblem and the motto. The living party, which ought to make possible the free exchange of ideas which have been elaborated according to the real needs of the mass of the people, has been transformed into a trade union of individual interests."

At the centre of this new social movement is the old and powerful idea of individual wealth embodied by apartheid capital. Today, this idea is propagated by the ruling alliance and top leaders in black South Africa. How ironic that success and wealth is still measured by an apartheid era benchmark which calls for dispossessing others to enrich yourself.

No moral preaching can stop this social force; no reading of the law to culprits. What can stop this is an attack from a counter social movement, which potentially counts millions of citizens as members. From Balfour in the North, to Butterworth in the East, Masiphumelela in the South, and the many sites of struggles across the country, the forces for a social movement from below is gathering.

By Amandla Staff

P.S.

* From Amandla!:

<http://www.amandlapublishers.co.za/home-menu-item/277-corruption-gives-birth-to-a-new-social-movement>