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“KILL THE COOLIES!”

**THE REAL MESSAGE OF NGEMA’S
SONG.....**

“ AMANDIYA”

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AN INCITEMENT TO RIOT, MURDER, RAPE AND PILLAGE!

INTRODUCTION:

South Africa is going through one its worst periods in its history. This is evidenced by the sad but frightening fact that it is probably the most violent country in the world. It is also a country where corruption is rampant and those in political control are spending the wealth of the land in an extravagant orgy of feasts and luxury of the most obscene kind. Those who control the political power have ensured that they pay themselves unbelievably high salaries, which should better be called daylight robbery. Unemployment is around 50% of the working population. Over 4 million of our people are HIV positive and yet the government has only now just begun to provide the required medication. Had they done so when they came into power in 1994, many hundreds of thousands of lives could have been put on the road to alleviation or avoidance of the dreaded disease.

To borrow a phrase from Charles Dickens : **It is the best of times** (for those in political power, the black (African, Indian and “Coloured”) elite or petty bourgeoisie, the newly rich, the fraudsters and wheelers and dealers) and it is **the worst of times** (for the unemployed, the landless peasants, the aged, the unprotected women, the sick, the hungry and needy, the poor, the homeless and the orphans and the uncared for children.

In the midst of extreme need and poverty, there is ostentatious affluence and luxury. At a drop of a pin, there is feasting. All the expense from the public coffers. There is no shame, no embarrassment and no sensitivity.¹

The “wretched” of South Africa’s earth know that a struggle was fought. They took part in the struggle. They had given their sons and daughters for the struggle to be sacrificed. They took part in elections when many promises were made. They have seen that the only serious beneficiaries are the new elite.

¹ Talking about sensitivity, Leon Trotsky recounts an incident during Lenin’s recuperation from the assassination attempt on him in 1918. After a meeting with Lenin, Trotsky prepared to depart in a car. At that moment, one of Lenin’s bodyguards placed pots of flowers in the car. Lenin became anxious and asked with concern whether he,(Trotsky) wont be uncomfortable. Initially, Trotsky did not understand Lenin’s concern. Bur when he arrived in Moscow, “the dirty, hungry Moscow...did I feel acutely ill at ease; was it appropriate to ride about with flowers at such a time? And just then I understood Lenin’s concern: he had anticipated my uneasiness.”

The people are fed-up. Their patience is at an end. Daily there is evidence of the end of their patience. There is anger – at broken promises; at the perpetual misery of their lives. There is increasing defiance of authority. There is increasing taking the law into their own hands because they have no faith in the police force; they do not respect the police.²

Whereas in the past, anger, impatience and frustration on the part of the oppressed and exploited had been held in check by considerations of reprisal by the then Police and army, at present people do not regard the Police and Army as oppressive agencies. More often than not, their sons and daughters and other relatives are in commanding positions of police stations and army bases. Illegal marches and demonstrations or demonstrations which go out of control,³ are not met with severe repression as was the case under the Nationalists or even the United Party under the so-called statesman of international repute - General Smuts.⁴

Here then you have the situation where the majority of the impoverished and exploited population are seething with anger, hate, frustration and burning impatience arising from the hunger and misery born out of their poverty. Ignorant of the forces in society, which have caused their wretched plight, the people are fed with the Great Lie that the cause of all their misery is the Indian people. The Indian people are a convenient scapegoat. They are close at hand; they are a minority group and best of all, they are not a people renowned for their prowess in battle or violence.

The explosiveness of the situation can be illustrated by a report in the Sunday Times (Extra) which relates to a case where an African schoolgirl is alleged to have been raped by an Indian pastor. The reaction has been to convert a case of rape into a racial issue. There are threats of retaliation against Indian schoolgirls. People are fleeing the area. There is racial stereotyping as is evidenced by one of the placards which read “.....Indians rape our children.”

In another incident, three robbery suspects were killed in a shootout with the police. Members of the African community from which the suspected robbers come have threatened revenge on the policemen involved who are South Africans of Indian

² In Cape Town, the police station in the affluent suburb of Claremont has a notice stating that that Police Station is guarded by “ADT- Armed Response”, a private security firm!

³ Like the recent COSAS demonstration in May.

⁴ The shooting to death of gold mine strikers in 1946 was Smuts’ doing.

origin. Again, a confrontation in a life and death struggle between the police and suspected robbers has been converted into a racial issue.

Yet, on a daily basis members of the White, Indian and so-called Coloured are being robbed, killed and raped by criminals who, in the main, are from the African community. How many of these crimes have been converted into a racial issue? Very few, if any. It is people who are looking for an excuse to engage in violence and who need to mobilise support who cry out : Racism!! People who have been victims of racial oppression will always want to rally around an issue, which is presented to them as a racial one.

It is in this highly combustible situation that a certain Mbongeni Ngema composed a song in the Zulu language directed against the Indian people. Any reasonable person who reads or hears with understanding the song will unhesitatingly conclude that the song is **an incitement to murder, rob, rape and pillage**. More of this later First we need to briefly examine the attitudes of the two racial groups.

In 1952, the Working Committee of the Non European Unity Movement addressed a call to the people of Natal. The call was titled:

RACE RIOTS AND THE NATION

This call is of great importance and value. It helps towards an understanding of the relationship between the Indian and African people.

We quote the relevant sections:

“The unfortunate thing about Natal is that the Indians have not helped at all in breaking this isolationist and segregationist outlook of the Africans....The Indians, like the Zulus believed that they were superior and thus also embraced the *Herrenvolk*⁵ ideology of segregation.⁶ Instead of building bridges to the Africans, trying to find out their problems and ills, the Indians isolated themselves from other Non-Europeans and wrapped themselves up in their own interests and superiority. Those who have managed to climb out of the labouring class have even adopted the *Herrenvolk*'s arrogant outlook and behaviour towards Africans. Naturally the Africans, while forced to accept such arrogance from the white *Herrenvolk* as conquerors would most violently resent such behaviour from a minority who but yesterday were themselves slaves. Indeed, this

⁵ This means the so-called "Sir People" or the Master Race. The Whites only government of those days was referred to as the HERRENVOLK.

⁶ Before the Nationalist Party came into power, apartheid was called SEGRGATION.

arrogance came from only a small section of the Indians (now the merchant class). Nevertheless, the *Herrenvolk* were not slow to exploit the explosive possibilities in the behaviour of the Indians towards the Africans. Here we have in a nutshell, the background to the communal riots.”⁷

Before this quotation in the document, there is a description of the attitude of the African people in Natal:

“More recently the excuse has been made that “There is an Indian problem!” Now it is time to say what the real reason is, and to say it openly and loudly. It is tribalism. Nowhere in the Union, except in Natal, has tribalism withstood the onslaught of capitalist civilisation and economy, and survived almost intact. The acceptance of tribalism by the Africans in Natal has made it easier for *Herrenvolk* ideology, and particularly the idea of segregation, to get such a hold there. Tribalism has so much in common with segregation. Underlying both is the idea of superiority. White superiority finds its counterpart in black superiority, and the Zulus, particularly, were brought up for generations in the traditional tribal way, with the ideology of Zulu superiority. Even though defeated like the other Africans, even though robbed of their possessions, land, cattle, means of livelihood and even though forced to slave for the white *Herrenvolk*, the Zulus were induced not to look upon other Africans as fellows and equals, but to regard themselves as a superior race temporarily degraded.”

This was a description drawn 50 years ago. In our view, that assessment is substantially valid today. No current analysis of the situation between these racial groups can avoid acceptance of that assessment.

“AMANDIYA”

This is the title of Ngema’s incitement to murder, rape and pillage. Where it claims to present facts, it is a pack of lies.

- **Lie Number One:** “Indians don’t want change.” This is a bald statement, which is totally untrue. South Africans of Indian descent, like all other

⁷ This refers to the anti-Indian riots or pogrom of 1949.

human beings, welcome change provided change is not to their disadvantage. Where in the world have a people welcomed change when change meant uncertainty, insecurity, threat to life and property? Nobody in their right senses welcome change in the abstract or for its own sake or where it is to their disadvantage.

- **Lie Number two:** “Even Mandela has failed to change them” When did Mandela seek to change the Indian people? In what respect did he want to change them? We only know of Mandela’s attempt to woo the Indian people to vote for the ANC. Does agreeing to change mean that one has to vote for the ANC? _In a democracy people have the right to vote for a party of their choice.
- **Lie Number Three:** “White people were better” Ngema needs his head read! The whole world knows that the majority of the Whites in this country engineered a social system unmatched in cruelty, inhumanity and totally lacking in compassion.
- **Lie Number Four:** “They bribed you with roti and paku.” Many decades ago, non-Indians were exposed to the delights of the spicy Indian dishes. With such food it was possible to bribe a white train conductor (a beneficiary of the so-called civilised labour policy) to get on to a train without booking. But in this day and age? With shops every where selling Indian food, you can’t even bribe a beggar with such food.
- And what does it say for politicians who can be bribed so cheaply? Does Ngema know of such politicians? If he does, should he not report them to the Public Protector or to the leaders of the relevant political parties?
- **Lie Number Five:** “They (the Indians) don’t vote when we vote” This is not possible because there is no legal provision making it possible for any racial group to vote at a time different from when other racial groups vote. Where does Ngema cook up this rubbish? Does he incline to be hallucinatory?
- **Lie Number Six:** “They (referring to the Indians) are full in Parliament.” What does full mean? There is no number or percentage given. Parliamentary representatives are not chosen on racial grounds. They are chosen by political parties. Since there is no political party representing the Indian people in parliament, it means that parties whose membership is

mainly African or White have nominated the members of parliament who are of Indian origin. In any case, the majority of the members of parliament are Africans. So how can those of Indian origin be full in Parliament ?

- **Lie Number seven:** “Indians have conquered Durban.” No explanation is tendered as to what “conquered” means. Normally you conquer by force of arms. Is this what Ngema seeks to suggest? Do the Indian people own the whole of Durban? What an absurd claim! Durban is governed by its metropolitan council. The mayor is an African. The governing party of Durban is the African National Congress whose majority council members are African. One would have thought that if the Indians did conquer Durban, they would have called it Mumbai South or such name from India. Yet Durban has been renamed eThekweni. This is not how conquerors behave.
- **Lie number eight:** “They (referring to those of Indian descent) are oppressing us.” In what manner is this oppression being carried out? Political power cannot be in the hands of a minority in a democracy. It is not possible to oppress without political power. Ngema owes the country an explanation as to the political mechanism used by the Indian people to “oppress” the African people.
- **Lie Number nine:** “Indians keep coming from India.” It is true that there are people from India (and Pakistan and Bangladesh) coming to South Africa. This lie is in the form of a misleading impression sought to be conveyed, namely, that the only or principal source of immigration is India.

It is common knowledge that there are millions of immigrants in this country. The overwhelming majority of them are from Africa not India. Has Ngema conveniently forgotten about the millions of Africa who come to this country illegally in search of work and a better life. What about those who come to this country to escape murderous and mindless violence? Has Ngema forgotten about the druglords and scamlords from Nigeria? What about the presence of the Chinese Triads? And the Mafiosi like Vito Palazzollo who has been entertained by leading members of the ANC? And the fraudster Harksen? God knows that the Indians from India are no angels. But why pick on them only when there are so many others? The answer is simple. Mbongani Ngema is a RACIALIST par excellence!

Here you have a song, which is full of lies. Ngema claims it to be a work of art. But art has to be based on truth, otherwise it forfeits the name of art. It becomes a

repetition of a tissue of lies and a propagation of that lie. Ngema has become a purveyor of lies; a purveyor of crude and rabble rousing anti – Indian propaganda.

MUSIC AS THE VEHICLE OF PROPAGANDA:

Music is known to be a powerful stimulant to action. The action may take the form of work, dance, arduous physical activity or as a preparation to face danger.

“Music was a means of stunning or exciting the senses, of spell-binding or spurring to action; it served to put human beings in a different state, not to reflect the phenomena of the outward world....

Of all the arts, music is the most apt to cloud the intelligence, to intoxicate, to create ecstatic obedience, or, indeed, a willingness to die.”⁸

Ngema has carefully chosen his target – the object of his propaganda. They are the unemployed, the illiterate, the wretched. Songs like the one in question provide in simple form the alleged cause of their misery and suggests volunteers to “confront” the Indians. And his purpose is, not to open a discussion, but unleash long pent up anger and to direct it against the Indian community for an orgy of murder, rape and pillage.

HOW DOES OUR CONSTITUTION APPLY TO SUCH SONGS?

Section 16(I) of the Constitution protects the freedom of expression which includes:-

- (b) freedom to receive or impart information or ideas;
- (c) freedom of artistic creativity;

But these freedoms are not without limitations. For:

Section 16(2) states that the right in (16 (1)) does not extend to :-

- (b) incitement to imminent violence; or
- (c) advocacy of hatred that is based on race, ethnicity...and that constitutes incitement to cause harm.

⁸ The Necessity of Art – A Marxist Approach by Ernst Fischer, Penguin Books, page 187

There can be no doubt that Ngema's song has offended sections 16 (2) (b) and (c) and therefore makes it unconstitutional and therefore illegal.

What are the authorities doing about an open violation of the Constitution?

FANAGALO:

"Fanagalo" is a verbal means of communication developed between non-Africans and Africans. The majority of words are derived from the Zulu language. It originated in Natal and spread to the gold and coal mines. This was how the White miners communicated with the African miners. The basis of Fanagalo is the failure of the Africans and the Non Africans to speak one another's language.

Fanagalo made it possible, for people from different cultural and linguistic groups, thrown together by the capitalist economy and having to work cheek by jowl, to communicate with one another even though imperfectly. That was the reality and even though purists may find the idea obnoxious, people have continued to communicate with one another through Fanagalo because otherwise the entire economy could grind to a halt!

A section of the African intellectuals do not miss a chance to sneer at Non-Africans, especially persons of Indian origin, about Fanagalo. Ngema has done it in his song. Mduzi Xakaza, a journalist has done it in "The Echo" of the 6th June 2002. Its all done in a manner to disparage the Indians.

But these gentlemen, part of the new elite, need to be asked a question: Have they ever mimicked in writing an African speaking broken English? And flowing from that question, another: Is there an obligation on Indian people to speak good Zulu but no obligation on African people to speak good English, or Tamil, Telegu, Hindi or Gujarathi? Is this not once again an example of practising racialism?

Let us make our position very clear. We believe that good and effective communication is absolutely essential for harmonious relations between the various language, racial and cultural groups. The obligation is on **all** the groups, not on just one or two groups, to try and speak the language of the other groups. Where this is not possible for whatever reason, people should be permitted to communicate as best as they can without allowing the intellectuals and petty bourgeois standing on the touchline to mock them. If the intellectuals and elite feel strongly about

Fanagalo, they should take active steps to teach the languages that are needed for proper communication. This, of necessity, entails sacrifice of time and money. So let them put their time where their mouths are.

WHO ARE THE OPPRESSORS AND WHO THE OPPRESSED ?

The oppressed and exploited people of this country are the:

- The toiling masses of the workers and peasantry
- The unemployed
- The sick and elderly who are unable to defend themselves against unbearable pressure from close relatives, robbers or smooth talking conmen and conwomen.
- Those afflicted with AIDS and malnutrition
- The non-unionised workers, especially on the farms, in domestic service and in the sweatshops hidden from the gaze of labor inspectors
- The unprotected women and children who are at the mercy of men who abuse them in the worst possible manner, especially sexually.
- The simple, the gullible and the ignorant who fall prey to fraudsters with their get-rich-quick schemes.
- Those who lack recognised skills and are doomed to be forever the hewers of wood and drawers of water.

The reader would have noticed that in setting out who the oppressed are, no mention is made of the racial character of the oppressed and exploited. The reason for this is that no racial group is entirely free from oppression and exploitation of one form or another.

For example, many whites may be living affluent lifestyles, yet their womenfolk suffer at the hands of male chauvinists. White farmers are prime targets for robbery and almost invariable murder at the hands of criminals who are holding society at large at ransom.

Indian workers suffer exploitation at the hands of their bosses (the capitalists) of any hue or colour. Workers of Indian origin suffer like all other workers at the hands of the avaricious landlords and unscrupulous money lenders.

THE POOREST OF THE POOR⁹

The poorest of the poor in South Africa come overwhelming from the African sector. A much smaller percentage from the so-called Coloured sector and an even smaller percentage from the Indian sector. Poverty, misery and deprivation is not confined wholly to the African people.

THE AFRICAN POOR

The impoverishment of the African poor is a direct result of the Wars of Dispossession launched by the Afrikaners and the English. In defeat, the land, cattle and assets of the African people were taken away. Hence the deprivation of their independence. Hence their conversion from pastoralists and agriculturists, into wage slaves in the mines, factories and farms.

Those farms, mines and factories **were not owned by the Indian people.**

The Indian people also had to slave and labour in the factories, farms and mines. In Natal, the final defeat against the Zulu speaking people under Cetshwayo was administered by the English in 1879. **There were no Indians in Lord Chelmsford's army**, but there were thousands of Africans called Natal African Levies in that army.

So when Ngema sings that "We are poor because all things have been taken by Indians", he is engaging in a blatant, irresponsible and criminal lie.

WHEN IT COMES TO OPPRESSING AND EXPLOITING THE POOREST OF THE POOR, NO RACIAL GROUP IS FREE FROM PERPETRATING THIS INJUSTICE.. EVERY GROUP IS GUILTY!

WHAT FORM DOES THIS OPPRESSION AND EXPLOITATION TAKE ?

It is oppression and /or exploitation when a person:-

⁹ This phrase "the poorest of the poor" was first used by Joe Slovo, the leader of the South African Communist Party. It is a very apt description of the many millions of the worst off sections of the African and so-called Coloured people.

- Underpays an employee; underpayment is still underpayment whether it is by 50 cents or R50.
- Does not comply with conditions favourable to the employee in terms of the Labour Relations Act and/or The Basic Conditions of Employment Act and /or The Employment Equity Act and other laws which protect the interests of the worker;
- Is subject to violence and threats whether the aggressor is a robber, a male chauvinist or a politically intolerant person
- Is compelled to work for long periods of time and in direct contravention of the Labour Laws.
- Is struck down by deadly diseases like AIDS, TB and cholera because the State has failed to educate illiterate people about these diseases and how to avoid them
- Is struck down by deadly diseases and not given the required medical treatment
- Through ignorance becomes a victim of a whole range fraudulent tricks ranging from the three cards or tin caps to sophisticated pyramid schemes and loses his or her money
- Is deprived of his or her pitiful social pension by well organised robbers or civil servants who steal the money through theft or fraud
- Is told that due to lack of funds, certain services are not available (like police protection because there is no police vehicle.)
- Entrusted with State Funds misuses those funds either through reckless negligence or plain dishonesty. An appropriate example is the squandering of R14 million by the same Mbongeni Ngema. Those funds were made available for an anti-AIDS campaign and ended up in the purchase of a luxury bus, a new recording studio, oversea trips, renting of expensive mansions etc.
- Entrusted with State funds uses it for a junket like the one when the new C-Max Prison was opened in Kokstad. Over R2 million was used to fill the bloated bellies of politicians while many went hungry in the Province.¹⁰
- Entrusted with State funds uses it for celebrations or salary instead of applying them for the urgent satisfaction of the needy, whether they be patients in hospital who cannot be given medicines or clean bedding or for

¹⁰ How refreshing and morally uplifting if Messrs Zuma, Skosana and Ms Sigcau had brought two or four slices of bread with sandwich filling and asked to be provided with tea only. That is what millions do in this country.

children who are forced to take their lessons under trees or in cold and wet or sweltering conditions in cheaply and poorly insulated classrooms.

- Steals, without compunction, funds set aside for campaigns like Operation Hunger, flood victims or school feeding schemes.

THE LIST OF ACTS OF OPPRESSION AND EXPLOITATION IS ENDLESS!!

From the above it will be seen how complex, wide-spread and varied oppression and exploitation is.

From the above it will also be seen that certain sections from **ALL** population groups, the Africans, the Indian, the so-called Coloured and the White are responsible for the exploitation and oppression of the overwhelming majority of the population i.e. the poorest of the poor.

There are thieves and rogues in all racial groups; there are fraudsters in all racial groups; there are exploiters in all racial groups.

WHY SINGLE OUT THE INDIANS?

Viewed from this perspective it will be seen how narrow, misleading, dishonest and false Ngema's song is:

THAT IS WHY WE CLAIM THAT NGEMA HAS BASED HIS SONG ON A FOUNDATION OF DELIBERATE LIES.

A PIECE OF WRITING BASED ON LIES CAN NEVER BE DESCRIBED AS A WORK OF ART!

A PIECE OF WRITING WHICH INCITES A PEOPLE TO WAGE A RACIAL POGROM ON ANOTHER PEOPLE CAN NEVER BE CALLED A WORK OF ART!

SHOULD NGEMA'S SONG BE BANNED?

Our general approach is that the Freedom of Expression is one of the most important freedoms which should never be transgressed lightly.

As stated above, this freedom is enshrined in our constitution. There it states that everyone has the right to the freedom of expression. If the statement in the constitution

ended there, debate on the issue would have been academic. But that freedom is heavily qualified by the denial to this right being extended to expression which:

- is incitement to imminent violence, and
- is advocacy of hatred that is based on race,...and that constitutes incitement to cause harm.

Now, if we look at the words of the several translations of the song,¹¹ there can be no doubt that the effect of the song is to generate or to assist or further the generation of HATE AND IS AN INCITEMENT TO MURDER, RAPE AND PILLAGE. Ngema can perform his entire show of clumsy verbal acrobatics but when you appeal:

“Oh brothers
Oh my fellow brothers,
We need strong and brave men,
To face/confront Indians....”

it can mean only one thing to all reasonable and honest people.

We spoke above about the **effect** of the song being to incite to murder, rape and kill. However, it is necessary to go further and state categorically that Ngema had no other intention other than to incite to murder, rape and pillage.

If truth be said, what Ngema really meant to say but did not have the courage to say it, is: **“BULALA AMAKULA!” KILL THE COOLIES! The battle cry of the 1949 rioters.**

AGAINST THE BANNING OF THE SONG:

One of the most powerful voices against the banning of the song is Mr Yves Vanderhagen, an editor of The Natal Witness.¹²

He starts off by describing the racialism generated as a “pustule” which he finds chilling. Pustules ought not to chill. Carbuncles might. Cancerous cells and gangrene certainly would.

Whatever! Surely, the problem is more serious than a pustule, a pimple, a small swelling with pus!

¹¹ The Natal Witness, for some reason, had a sanitised version of the song. It commences with the line: “A brave man is needed to confront the Indians.” All the others refer to “brave men”. What can A BRAVE MAN do to a million Indians? Talk? Complain? Scold? But what can STRONG AND BRAVE MEN DO? That is another story!

¹² “Handling hate-speech” by Yves Vanderhagen written in the column “OPINIONS AND ANALYSIS” in The Natal Witness of the 1st June 2002.

Mr Vanderhagen states:-

“...Ngema is correct to have stood his ground in the face of the obvious hurt he’s caused and pressure from his own political chums. To draw a veil of censorship over the anti-Indian lyrics of his song would be to drive popular sentiment underground, and it would send out the message that art should not engage with racism, that it should steadfastly project a rainbow image even if it is no more than a fantasy devoid of truth.”

We have stated above that LIES can never be a work of art. The song has two purposes:-

- To make a lot of money – R38,00 for the audio tape and R59,50 for the CD
- To incite the Zulu speaking Africans of Natal to “face/confront the Indians.”

Furthermost from his mind was the need to initiate a “constructive discussion” that will lead to true reconciliation. There are a million other ways to initiate that discussion, except that then, he would not have made the money! That “reason”, namely, “constructive discussion” insults the intelligence!

In his various public appearances Ngema has denied that he is inciting the African people against the Indian. According to him the people do not need inciting because that is what they already believe. If that is true and if it is true that he wants to initiate a dialogue, then he must answer: **why was his song not directed to the Indian people. Why was the song not in English, a language understood by most people of Indian origin?**

Why was it directed entirely to Zulu speaking Africans?

The rest of Mr Vanderhagen’s article is devastating to Ngema, the song and the other racialists or persons engaging in racialism and getting away with it.

To return to the point made by Mr Vanderhagen concerning the driving of popular sentiment underground.

OUR POSITION:

- Because of severe sanctions, a large number of anti-social activities are driven underground.
- Going underground is a fact of life and is something of a necessary evil.

- Just because an anti-social activity will be driven underground does not mean that the sanction should not apply and that that activity should be legalised so as to prevent it from going underground.
- To discourage an activity from going underground should not become an end in itself.
- The tactic of allowing an anti-social activity to surface can only be justified if allowing it to surface can defeat the evil in that activity.
- Let us, for the sake argument, assume that the constitution did not qualify the freedom of expression. Then, let us further assume that an Indian song-writer decided to publish virulent anti- African songs. Let us assume further still that a white song-writer decided to pen lines which are against the Africans, the Indians and the so-called Coloured people. Another song-writer from the Zulu speaking community chances his or her pen against the Shangaan speaking African or against what he regards as the Xhosa-nostra. Where will all this end? There is going to be nation wide mayhem and murder. We are talking about bedlam not democracy.
- While we are at it, what about all those ugly name calling – Kaffir, Coolie, Hotnot /half caste, whitey, Basarwa. If Ngema’s song is to be allowed to prevent the sentiment going underground, will people be allowed to use these epithets to prevent them going under ground? In principle, if the song is allowed to breathe above-ground air, why not the epithets?

There are certain things so vile and abominable and so dangerous and destructive to society or to a part of it that they have to be suppressed. And if they go underground, then let them go underground and remain there, deep down in the sewers. There are numerous examples, which come to mind:

- Child pornography.
- Pornography with sadism and violence.
- Advertisement for professional killers.
- Advertisement which is clearly discriminatory on grounds of “race”, tribe, gender, religion where the inherent requirement of the work is not based on any of the categories.
- Incitement to violence and hatred against any community or group.

The freedom of expression can never be limitless. Society determines the limits depending on a host of factors like safety, peace, harmony and a sound moral foundation.

“REFLECTING REALITY.”

It is claimed that the function of an artist is to reflect reality and if in the process of doing this, racialism is espoused, then that is too bad. That espousal is a painful consequence of a work of art.

This approach is spurious to the extreme. The function of an artist is to **interpret reality**, not to slavishly replicate it. If it were otherwise, why bother to go through the arduous process of painting a scene. Why not get a camera and take a photograph? The painter will produce a scene as he or she sees it and interprets it. If interpreting the reality means communicating the racist thinking, the artist is also duty bound to reflect the falsehoods contained in that thinking. Otherwise, the artist merely becomes a propagandist of racialism and lies.

If, indeed, people do believe that the principle source of their misery and wretchedness is the Indian people, how can the banning of the song drive “popular sentiment” underground. Those sentiments are not found solely in the song. They are already with the Zulu speaking Africans. The banning of the song will not stop people from expressing those sentiments but it will slow down or stop the rapid the spread of the message.

The function of the song is not to reflect reality but to spread the poison of racist thinking far and wide and to as many people as possible. Now the message of the song is not being spread by word of mouth in discussions amongst people. Those people do not obviously discuss Indian people all the time. They do so at specific times, like in gatherings, shebeens, clubs etc. But with the song being on audio tapes, CDs and radio, hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people get bombarded with this hate song at home, in the kombis, in the trains, In the shops and where ever else people may assemble.

If it is the intention of an artist to interpret a certain reality like unpleasant accusations against the Indians, he cannot do so without bringing out the truth, viz the falsehoods, as well. In other words the whole reality must be brought out, not just a portion known to be untrue. The song of Ngema, at best, is a half truth which in many instances can be more deadly than a full lie.

Let us take the case of Germany of the Nazi era. The propaganda machine of the Nazis worked at full steam to demonise the Jews and to accuse them of the vilest of deeds. Would it then be in order for a Herr Ngema to repeat those lies and to then claim that it reflected reality and that as an artist he is entitled to put those lies in a lyric?

For the sake of argument and to expose Ngema's dishonesty, let us assume that as an artist he considers it his function to "reflect reality". The position is:

- The African people, like all other people, meet at various places for a variety of reasons.
- At these places of assembly, people discuss the news making topic of the day, or of the conditions at their places of work, unkind and nasty things said or done to them.
- Those who work for Indians will relate complaints when they have been unfairly treated or insulted
- Those whose dignity had been assailed will complain in anger and bitterness
- One thing is clear. Not all Africans work for Indians. Not all insults and nastiness emanate from people of Indian origin
- Equally it is clear that the topic of **discussion is not confined to Indians**. In other words, the African people in these places do not discuss the Indians day in and day out or all the time.
- People will talk about what affects their lives. They will talk about a host of topics:
 - About the gangsters who terrorise them and members of their family
 - About the taxi-lords who in their deadly scramble for route monopolies spray rival kombies with automatic fire
 - About the massacres taking place by rival political parties in the scramble for control of an area or for revenge
 - About the police who will not respond to their desperate call for protection or who want bribes or who rape women or girls who go the police to lay a charge.
 - About moneylenders, politely referred to as a microlenders, who are merciless blood-suckers.

- Ngema must tell the public which of these topics has been converted by him into songs reflecting reality?
- Has he written lyrics about the murderous and cowardly attacks by masked killers on defenceless men, women and children for no other reason than the fact that they happen to be living in an area known to be an ANC or Inkatha area or because a member of that hapless family is known or believed to be a supporter of a particular party?
- Has he written a song about what the people have had to say about these killers and the organisation they represent or claim to represent?
- Has he written a song about the gangsters who murder people at will, rape girls and women at will and who deprive people of their hard-earned possessions?

Ngema is not a fool. He knows that he can hurl all the racialistic garbage he can collect against the Indian people without any violent comeback. But he will not “reflect reality” of the other subjects that people talk about and which make their lives a misery. Those killers and gangsters will not have a “Constructive discussion with him about Reconciliation.” They will waste no time in putting an end to his earthly woes.

THE BASIS OF NGEMA’S INCITEMENT AND ATTACK ON THE INDIAN PEOPLE:

Mbongeni Ngema is a hate filled man. He really hates the South Africans of Indian origin. Why? Who knows? Was he or a member of his family hurt and humiliated by an Indian? Is it envy at the economic success of a section of the Indian population?

It has been said that that the overwhelming majority of the Indian people are not merchant class or capitalist. The latter, according to a recent claim, constitute only **TWO PERCENT OF THE INDIAN POPULATION!**

The likely explanation is that Ngema is articulating the aspirations and feelings of a section of the **NEW ELITE OR THE NEWLY RICH !**

The new elite among the African people have the same aspirations and values as the New Elite in a capitalist society anywhere in the world or in any time period. It is money and wealth that is the driving ambition. Luxury mansions, luxury cars, expensive designer clothes, sumptuous foods, jewelry, plush offices and so on. He sees a section of the Indians having all that he desires. But how to get it?

Most of the well-off Indians have what is called “old wealth”, i.e. wealth accumulated over decades. But our New Elite are not prepared to wait for decades. They want it **NOW!** This impatience will go some way in explaining the

unprecedented wave of outright and uncontrolled theft of public funds to finance an extravagant life style.

Ngema's song is a reflection of that desire but also a hateful rage at the slow pace. When Ngema laments Mkhize's futile attempt to get a business in West Street, Durban, he is not singing on behalf of Mkhize, a member of the proletariat or of the "poorest of the poor" but on behalf of Mkhize a member of the New Elite!

In the obscene scramble to accumulate, or rather to consume wealth, most of the basic values of the upbringing of the New Elite have been flushed down the toilet. Honesty, hard work, service, efficiency, simple living, patience and earning the right to wealth have all become **obstacles** and have to be removed. The shortcut to success i.e to wealth, became the over-riding outlook. That is why billions of rands of the taxpayers' money went into the pockets of the avaricious New Elite through outright theft, corruption and scams.

Ngema himself has added his effort to the disappearance of public funds. Sarafina II. R14 million of scarce public money. Ngema has still not accounted for that money. He has not yet apologised to the people of South Africa. R14 million was all squandered in one gigantic binge!

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

We do not for a moment claim that relationship between Africans and Indians is as well as it ought to be. The new democracy has emerged from a very fractured society. Regrettably, in one sense only, the struggle for liberation was terminated prematurely. The forces of liberation were not allowed to develop and mature. There is nothing more effective in welding people together than protracted struggle.

But the division does not only exist between Indian and African people. There is division through the length and breadth of this country. The task of building a nation is one of the most complex functions of the leadership of the country. There is nothing more farcical than jumping to swift conclusions about the task of nation building. We all remember with shame the acclamation by the press and the politicians when the Springboks (or was it Proteas?) won the world Rugby Tournament. The African people responded to this victory in great jubilation in the streets. The roar of the masses was: "Amabokoboko". This spontaneous reaction was interpreted as proof that we had become a nation in a matter of just one year from the birth of democracy. Of course, that jubilation and that optimistic analysis was short-lived. There were red faces aplenty.

IS THERE A SOUTH AFRICAN NATION ?

We fervently believe so.

Fifty one years ago,(1951) the Non European Unity Movement under the presidency of Reverend Z.R. Mahabane issued **“A Declaration To The People Of South Africa”**. In this Declaration, amongst other things, the question was posed and answered:

“Who constitutes the South African nation? The answer to this question is as simple as it would be in any other country. The nation consists of the people who were born in South Africa and who have no other country but South Africa as their motherland.They may have been born with a black skin or with a brown one, a yellow one or a white one; they may be male or female; they may be young or middle age or of an advanced age; they may be short or tall, fat or lean; they may be long-headed or round-headed, straight-haired or curly-haired; they may have long noses or broad noses; they may speak Xhosa, Zulu, Sotho, English, or Afrikaans, Hindi, Urdu or Swahili, Arabic or Jewish; they may be Christians, Mohammedans,¹³ Buddhists, or of any other faith. So long as they are born of a mother and belong to the human species, so long as they are not lunatics or incurable criminals, they all have an equal title to be citizens of South Africa, members of the nation, with the same rights privileges and duties. In a nation it is not necessary that the people forming it should have a common language or a common culture, common customs and traditions. There are many nations where the people speak different languages, consist of different nationalities with different cultures....All that is required for a people to be a nation is community of interests, love of their country, pride in being citizens of their country.”¹⁴

It is our view that the formulation of the concept of the nation is as valid today as it was 50 years ago. With political power being removed from the hands of the Whites Only oppressive regime, who formulated a Whites Only concept of a nation based on exclusiveness and race hatred, the task of giving reality to the concept of a nation as defined above ought to have become a great deal easier. Unfortunately, little or no consideration has been given to this all important matter.

WE ARE STILL A PEOPLE DIVIDED

The people of South Africa consist of a large number of different groups. The difference is based on culture, language, stage of societal development, economic

¹³ The followers of Islam wish to be called Muslims and not Mohammedans.

¹⁴ It will be seen that the concept of a Nation of South Africa was raised and eloquently formulated more than 50 years ago. It did not originate in the last two decades.

classes, political outlook and philosophy. There is also the difference based on racial characteristics.¹⁵

That we are a people divided cannot be disputed. In the past differences based on language, culture social and physical characteristics have been seized by the ruling class, first by the British oppressors and then by the Afrikaner oppressors to formulate and then to implement the notorious policy of “**divide and rule.**”

The African people are divided on tribal/ ethnic lines. Flowing from that is the notion of the Xhosa–nostra which is currently, a hot topic of debate in political circles. There is the division between town and country; between people who uphold tribal values and beliefs and those who have become detribalised; the difference between the poor and the well-off or affluent; the distinction and separation between the African, the Indian , the so-called Coloured and the White; the differences among the Indian community based on religion, language and culture; the difference between the Malays and the Christian “Coloured”; the more conventional divisions based on class lines – workers, petty bourgeois, capitalists, peasants, landlords etc etc.

So, while on the one hand we can say that we are blessed with a large variety of people with different cultures, languages religions – what politicians call a rich tapestry – such divisions can also be a curse which requires the highest degree of political skill, acumen, intuitiveness and human understanding to prevent explosive centrifugal forces from ripping this country into shreds.

HOW TO CONVERT THE CURSE INTO A RICH TAPESTRY?

There is no easy-fix to so complex a problem. We do not claim for a moment to have the answer. The solution to the problem will require the sincere and combined effort of the entire leadership of the state and of civil society.

Being in the political struggle for some time, we have some ideas on the matter. These are no more than modest and wholly incomplete suggestions:

¹⁵ We believe that there is only one race and that is the human race. We further believe that racial characteristics like texture of hair, colour of skin etc. have no relevance whatever to important factors like intelligence, skill, talent and creativity. But to many people racial characteristics are considered to be important. This attitude linked with language and culture have become a source of deep division in our country.

1. The starting point has to be the commitment that there must be respect shown for all people who are different culturally; who speak a different language and who have a different physical appearance.
2. The strongest measures must be taken against hate-mongers and racists/racialists and those who sow discord on the grounds of tribe, language and religion. Apart from hurling the full weight of the law against such people, they must be ostracised and treated as pariahs.¹⁶
3. Severe penalties must visit those using racialist/racist/tribal/linguistic or religious pejoratives. When words like "Coolies", "Kaffirs" etc are used, the utterer must be hauled before the courts and heavily fined for the first offence and then imprisonment for subsequent contraventions.
4. With the abolition of the Group Areas Act, racial groups are beginning to live next to one another. Residents have many problems in common, not least of all their safety and that of their children. Crime is a scourge which knows no racial group, tribe, religion. Criminals do not show such discrimination. Self preservation makes members of a multi-racial neighbourhood to band together in what is, literally, a life and death matter. Bonding in these circumstances is rapid and hopefully, the multi-racial neighbourhood will be converted into a non-racial neighbourhood.¹⁷
5. Increasingly, members of the country across the racial divide have to work with one another. Apart from neighbourhood safety groups, parents on school boards or governing bodies of schools have to meet to deal with problems confronting their children; so too in sporting bodies; the workplace compels all workers to function together in trade unions, shop steward committees.
6. Poverty and its attendant consequences is a powerful force of welding people together in times of crisis. We have seen moving scenes on

¹⁶ Take the case of Ngema. He was awarded an Achiever of the Year trophy as part of the SOWETO AWARDS after the CDs and audio tapes of AMANDIYA were marketed and sold. If one is serious about combatting racialism/racism, then the perpetrator must be swiftly dealt with. Ngema's award ought to be have been withdrawn.

¹⁷ The Sunday Times (Extra) of the 31 March 2002 has a front page photograph of armed African and Indian residents of Hopedale Close, Newlands West Durban who are from a "crime ravaged community". They have threatened to erect a boom to seal off their suburb. Adversity in the form of a common enemy brought these people together.

television of the Indian and African poor of Chatsworth Durban who have been persecuted by the City Council for failing to pay rent/water and electricity accounts. We saw African and Indian stand together in defence of their right to a house, to water and to electricity. The smooth tongued bureaucrats from the City Council were more than matched by intellectuals like Professor Fathima Meer, Dr Ashwin Desai and others.

7. In times of crisis, people will know their true friends. There will be gratitude for comradeship; from gratitude there will be respect. There will also be the desire to reciprocate. From the day to day battles and living together will grow camaraderie. And from camaraderie the outlook of "All for one and one for all" will emerge.

8 Underlying harmonious relationship is a genuine respect for one another and an equal respect for the customs and practices of neighbours.¹⁸

9. The process of nation-building is a slow, and often a tortuous process. There will be many obstacles, many defeats, but with perseverance and commitment and above all an unconquerable faith in its realisation, there will be success. At first slow, but with success, the pace will increase.

CONCLUSION:

It is appropriate to end this article with a quotation from that great Russian writer, Anton Tchekov. He wrote towards the end of the 19th century and believed that there was much change for the better in the 20th century. His writings gave indication that Russia and Europe were pregnant with revolutions and a new world. We quote from his "The Duel":

"It (the sea) flings the boat back," he thought, "she makes two steps forward and one step back; but the boatmen are stubborn, they work the oars unceasingly, and are not afraid of the high waves. The boat goes on and on. Now she is out of sight, but in half an hour the boatmen will see the steamer lights distinctly, and within an hour they will be by the steamer ladder. So it is in life....In the search for truth man makes two steps forward and one step back. Suffering, mistakes, and weariness of life thrust

¹⁸ A very remarkable and enduring relationship has existed between the various religious sections of the Indian community in South Africa, the largest concentration of Indians outside India. In spite of strong religious and cultural links to India, the communal strife which has plagued India and Pakistan has had no visible effect on the relationship between the Indians of Hindu and Muslim communities who have lived next to one another for well over a 100 years.

**them back, but the search for truth and stubborn will drive them on and on.
And who knows? Perhaps they will reach the real truth at last."**

11/6/2002