

# RACIALISM PREACHED AND RACIALISM CONDONED

## INTRODUCTION

Lakela Kaunda, a journalist, wrote in the "Echo" of 9 August 1990:

"Natal President of the United Democratic Front, Archie Gumede, is in trouble again . . ."

This statement referred to the blatantly racialistic attack made by Mr Gumede against South Africans of Indian descent who are commonly called the Indian people. The attack was made in a television programme presented by the SABC TV. The whole programme was a disgusting piece of racialism which grotesquely distorted the values and aspirations of the Indian people.

## OWN AFFAIRS APPROACH

In accordance with a practice which has developed over the years, matters affecting the Indian people are dealt with by Indian members of the UDF. A sort of "own affairs" approach. Expectedly, therefore, only Indian members of the UDF responded to Archie Gumede's racialism. The rest of the membership apparently did not regard the racialism as any of their business. One wonders whatever happened to the unifying slogan of "an injury to one is an injury to all"? It appears that the use of the slogan is reserved for chanting at rallies and in meetings and *not* for application in the real world.

## RACISM — A CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY

The whole world regards racism as a crime against humanity. It was in the name of "race superiority" that millions were killed. The killing was justified on the grounds that the victims belonged to a sub-human group. During and after World War II the words "Aryan" and Herrenvolk became amongst the most hated words in the world because they were soaked in the blood of six million Jews who were murdered mercilessly by the Nazi juggernaut.

Racialism is a product of racism and we are no strangers to it. This sick and cruel prejudice has permeated the whole country and has bedevilled the population living in it. We have lived with racialism since birth and have undergone indescribable suffering because of it. Hence, while the basis of our oppression is economic exploitation, the most powerful rallying force is the struggle against racialism in its myriad manifestations. The UDF itself was formed to fight against the Tri-cameral system which is *par excellence* racism in action.

The entire liberatory movement has publicly committed itself to seek and destroy racialism in any shape or form. The last thing one would expect is for a member of the liberatory movement, let alone a President of its largest segment, to mouth racialism. And yet that is precisely what happened. Mr Archie Gumede, one of the Presidents of the UDF did the unthinkable. His unjustified attack on the Indian people came as a severe shock. The people ask: *Is this the man who is part of the ANC's negotiating team?*

## **RESPONSES TO GUMEDE'S RACIALISM**

More shocking than racialism has been the response of Mr Gumede to criticism and of persons who regard themselves as champions of non-racialism.

### **Mr GUMEDE'S RESPONSE**

According to Mr Gumede:

"If I said anything offensive about the Indian people, it is contrary to my personal and political views . . . It was unintended and I retract it unconditionally and apologise to all who might have been offended."

*(Tribune Herald: 5 August 1990)*

### **OUR COMMENT**

- a) **WHY** the conditional apology: "If I said anything offensive . . ."? There can be no IF about it. The remarks *were* clearly offensive.
- b) If his anti-Indian remarks were contrary to his personal and political views, Mr Gumede has yet to explain *why* did he make them in the first place? How can a seasoned politician like Mr Gumede make blatantly racialistic statements and *not intend them?*

### **2. Dr FAROUK MEER'S RESPONSE**

Dr Meer is from the Natal Indian Congress. He considered Mr Gumede's anti-Indian remarks as "unfortunate", but gives him credit for apologising.

### **3. Mr STRINI MOODLEY'S RESPONSE**

Mr Moodley is from Azapo. He also regards Mr Gumede's remarks to be "unfortunate", but goes on to state that the people should be grateful because Mr Gumede had retracted his remarks.

### **4. Mr BENNY ALEXANDER'S RESPONSE**

Mr Alexander is from the Pan Africanist Congress. He too regards the racist remarks of Mr Gumede as "unfortunate". He believes that Mr Gumede should be forgiven as he still had a contribution to make to the struggle.

## OUR COMMENTS TO THE ABOVE RESPONSES

- a) The choice of the word “unfortunate” to describe racialism is clearly incorrect. It is *unfortunate* if the battery of one’s car is run down; it is *unfortunate* if you miss your bus to work. To spout racialism is just not unfortunate. It is downright *criminal*.
- b) We do not recall the liberatory movement or any section of it ever describing the racialism of the ruling class as “unfortunate”. As for being grateful for his “retraction” or apology for his remarks, we must stress that the retraction has no meaning. Racialism from a man like Archie Gumede is not a thing of impulse. He must have believed his remarks to be true. How then does one retract racist remarks?

It is our view that a person who has engaged in racialism has to *purge* himself of this disease. And that is done with thorns and fire. The first step is for the offender to resign from all public positions. If he is reluctant to do so, he must be assisted by having him removed from all public positions. That must be followed by an intensive study of the origins, development and horrendous consequences of racism. When that has achieved the desired result, then there has to be a clear and unconditional public self-criticism. Having done that the offender then has to go into the field to educate the people of the dangers of racialism; the absolute need for the unity of the oppressed and the sharp vigilance required against the agents of the ruling class who sow racial discord among the oppressed.

It is only after doing all this that we can hazard the statement: “He has retracted” or “He has apologised.”

## CONCLUSION

Demanding for anything less than the measures suggested above would amount to covering up and a condonation of racialism. He who condones, covers up or plays down racialism is himself guilty of racialism. In a new and truly democratic South Africa (not the nuwe Suid-Afrika of the Nat-ANC alliance) racism and racialism will be made a crime which will invite severe punishment on the offender who knows the difference between right and wrong.