

Ons sal nooit ophou stry - Ellen Kuzwayo

"Ellen Kuzwayo is geskiedenis vasgevang in een vrou." So beskryf Nadine Gordimer die merkwaardige en indrukwekkende gemeenskapsleier van Soweto. Ellen Kuzwayo, wat die lewe van swart vroue in haar outobiografie "Call me Woman" verwoord het, se storie is meer as net die storie van die stryd teen apartheid. Dit is die storie van 'n vrou se stryd teen apartheid.

Op 16 Augustus het Ellen Kuzwayo haar storie in Pretoria kom vertel as deel van Idasa Pretoria se fokus op vroue. Sy is gebore in 1914, die enigste dogter van Phillip Serangsewene en Emma Mutsi Merafe. Haar kinderjare, wat sy beskryf as die basis van alles wat sy nou is, onthou sy as gelukkig en sorgvry. Sy het grootgeword op haar grootouers se plaas by Thaba Patchoa in die Thaba Nchu distrik in die Vrystaat. "Totdat ek so sewe of tien jaar oud was, het ons as die kleinkinders van Jeremiah geëet, gedrink, rondgeloop, gespeel en saam skool toe gegaan. Ons het so vry op die plaas rondbeweeg soos voëls in die lug."

Haar grootste hartseer is dat kinders, veral swart kinders, vandag nie meer met onskuld en sekuriteit grootword nie.

Die sekuriteit van die uitgebreide gesin, 'n gelukkige gemeenskap en die plaas, sê sy, het dit vir haar moontlik gemaak om ten spyte van moeilike en swaar tye met vertroue en oortuiging betrokke te wees en betrokke te bly. Haar grootste hartseer is dat kinders, veral swart kinders, vandag nie meer met die onskuld en sekuriteit grootword nie.

Haar hartseer, sê sy, het haar nie bitter gemaak nie. Sy sal ook nooit toelaat dat dit haar bitter maak nie, dit maak haar eerder sterker en meer vasbeslote. "Swart vroue in Suid-Afrika het besondere deursettingsvermoë aan die dag gelê ten spyte van hul verdrukking. Ons sal nooit die stryd gewonne gee nie. Vandag bly ons vasbeslote, net soos die vroue van vorige geslagte uit ons gemeenskap, wat vir ons 'n lewende voorbeeld van krag en integriteit nagelaat het."

"Selfs nou, op 70-jarige leeftyd, bewe ek oor wat die toekoms inhou vir my kleinkinders as dinge op dieselfde trant voortgaan as wat tans gebeur. Ek is net meer vasberade om by die stryd aan te sluit, en om met al die middele tot my beskikking te veg vir verandering in my land sodat die nuwe generasies 'n beter toekoms kan geniet in die land van hul voorvaders," sê sy.

"Die toewyding (commitment) van die vroue in my gemeenskap is my toewyding . . ."

Lou-Marie Kruger
Streekskoördineerder
Pretoria

FW: limited moves add fuel to fires

By Khehla Shubane

The recent elections have been regarded as different from past elections by many people. In the wake of the uninterrupted victory of the Nationalist Party in more than four decades, expectations of far reaching changes being introduced have been raised in many quarters both inside South Africa and abroad. Some have gone so far as to suggest that the present racially defined Parliament may be the last South Africa is seeing.

Expectations of change have been increased by events which occurred in the run up and after the elections. Campaigns of defiance led by the Mass Democratic Movement and the general re-emergence of popular struggles have strengthened the belief that a new beginning might be in the making. The government, this view argues, has refrained from relying on the state of emergency to detain activists and leaders as it was done two years or so ago. This has been interpreted to mean that the government is attempting to create an atmosphere of trust in which it would be possible to explore negotiations.

Mr F W de Klerk's accession to power has also revived rumours about the release of Nelson Mandela and other long term political prisoners. Hints of Mandela playing a role in the resolution of the South African question have been dropped frequently. This in turn has contributed to the expectations of imminent change in the country.

No less important has been the interpretation the ANC has attributed to the elections. In a recent statement the organisation was of the view that the white electorate voted overwhelmingly for negotiations. Both the NP and the DP went to elections seeking a mandate to negotiate with black leaders. The outcome of the elections, which resulted in about 69 per cent of the seats in the House of Assembly going to the DP and NP, signals a desire by white voters to negotiate.

The MDM inside the country viewed the elections as irrelevant. To the extent that almost 70 per cent of the country's population had no part to play in the elections, that process was irrelevant to that section of the population. Informed by this view, the MDM embarked on a series of campaigns aimed at, among other things, focusing attention away from the elections to popular struggles. The central question the MDM was attempting to pose through its actions was, what is the shortest and quickest route to the creation of a unitary, non-racial and democratic future.

Negotiations emerged as the key question in this election. For the first time in more than 40 years the NP fought an election on the basis of seeking to negotiate with blacks, drawing up a new constitution which will give every community representation at central government level and determining the future of the country in conjunction with all South Africans.

The kind of negotiations which the NP is proposing now, however, is no different from the notion they developed a few years ago. That notion finds expression in the proposed National Forum. The framework for negotiations set up by that forum is, it seems, the most the government is prepared to do.

Organisations which employ violence to effect political change will not, in the government's view, be part of the process of negotiations. In effect the NP approach will exclude large sections of people represented by popular mass organisations. The exclusion of the ANC by insisting they renounce violence, for example, will ipso facto exclude the MDM as well from the proposed negotiations.

This limited negotiation framework is unlikely to address key questions facing the country. The leadership role of councillors in township black local authorities structures will not suddenly be broadly accepted because they are negotiating for a new constitution with the government. Instead their alienation from township communities may increase, leading to ugly consequences.

Agreements reached with people broadly perceived as unrepresentative will not be embraced by the largest possible number of people. A constitution emerging from negotiations which exclude popular leaders may also be subjected to the same legitimacy crisis that the present constitution has experienced.

If the government has come to accept that the future of the country lies in negotiations, such a process must at least encompass real leaders of the disenfranchised majority. Those leaders exist and are well known to the entire world. This renders unnecessary one of the tasks the NP seems to be setting itself, namely to identify black leaders.

The re-emergence of popular struggles appears to have proceeded independently of the elections. An event which could stand out as extremely crucial in the emergence of the MDM is the hunger strikes which broke out earlier this year leading to the release of all detainees held in terms of emergency regulations.

That event blunted the most crucial of state's strategies in suppressing popular struggles. Mass detention of activists seems to have been ruled out by that action, at least for now. The government seemed to have buckled under pressure of negative publicity and possibly ugly consequences which might have ensued if one of the hunger strikers had died in detention.

Taking advantage of those releases, activists immediately started building organisations and campaigning openly. In the process the state of emergency was redefined to tolerate popular struggles.

To the extent that the elections played a role in this process, that role lay in providing an issue against which the MDM campaigned. The two-day "stay-away" was a massive success which continued in re-establishing organisation and a sense of cohesion with the MDM nationally.

The dialectic between reform and repression, however, is unlikely to disappear. The NP has committed itself to accelerated reform. This will obviously lead to popular organisations escalating their activities in order to demonstrate that it is not reform but the complete destruction of apartheid which is required. The old cycle of the state increasing repression to make it possible to move on with reform, as it has happened, will most likely repeat itself.

© Khehla Shubane is a Research Officer with the Centre for Policy Studies at Wits University.