

Arriving home?

South Africa beyond transition

And reconciliation

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Fifteen years into our liberation from apartheid, it is indeed necessary for South Africans to reflect on their experience of being home, having arrived back in 1994. The sense of home is a complex experience made up of many facets of our varied private and social lives. One part of that experience involves the ability of the new democratic state to meet a variety of basic needs which the apartheid state deliberately ignored over decades of institutionalised discrimination. Against this background, the achievements of the new democratic state were spectacular. Within a short space of time, millions more South Africans had access to water, electricity and telephones; more of their children attended school and university; citizens travelled more easily across the land transacting all kinds of business; they enjoyed a free and robust press; and they had more than a million houses built for them. These achievements opened many opportunities for newly enfranchised citizens, extended the range of personal options in their daily lives and, according to many surveys, left many to feel optimistic about the future.

These achievements are significant in two other related ways. First, they helped to establish the anticipated value of the new state in the eyes of millions of previously disenfranchised citizens. It did so by bringing to them the real possibilities of freedom. Citizens also got to feel that the state could be *for* them, rather than against them – that the state could be a home as opposed to something little more than labour hostels, farms and mines that devoured black lives. But these early achievements did more. They gave the new government an opportunity to demonstrate its capability to govern and rule. This was vital for a new black government. Its success had the real potential to send centuries of racial stereotypes tumbling down dramatically and irrevocably. Mandela's government had to project strategic focus, provide intelligent and sensitive state management, and ensure efficient delivery of services. It had to convince all citizens and the world that with the Constitution, good governance and the rule of law, South Africa would become a sustainable democracy.

The governments of Mandela and Mbeki did an outstanding job in affirming the citizenship of the newly enfranchised, as well as in providing energetic and focused leadership in signalling the capability of government to meet the needs of the South African people. State legitimacy in the eyes of citizens and government capability in meeting the

needs of citizens were crucial factors in establishing the initial sense of home for South Africans.

If the post-apartheid state could demonstrably promote the interests of the newly enfranchised citizens of South Africa, did it follow that it was also designed around such interests for the long term? In other words, are the conditions which allowed the state to demonstrate initial success the same ones that will ensure sustainable success into the future? The emancipator objectives that have driven the liberation struggle since the establishment of the African National Congress have much to do with how successfully the universal sense of home is derived from more than the meeting of basic needs through urgent infrastructure provisions; it is also about whether the state is designed to meet fundamental emancipatory purposes in the long term.

Designing the state around sacrosanct emancipatory goals requires that the state develop a radical understanding of features of the inherited state that can either hinder or enable the achievement of long-term objectives. This is necessary in order to manage the risk that the state cannot sustain its remarkable initial successes over the long term. This would happen if the new state became unduly dependent on the delivery instruments of the old one, at the cost of frustrating sustained innovative intent. The management and operational energies of the new state may be consumed by inherited institutional work cultures found to be initially indispensable and immediately attractive. The risk is that short-term utility might translate into medium-term and even permanent dependence, resulting in the constriction and abandonment of long-term thinking and objectives. Inherited management and administration, 'demanding' their own maintenance, may subordinate strategic objectives with potentially devastating consequences. Government may then become obsessed with administrative goals, such as affirmative action targets and their politics of blame, which begin to substitute for long-term emancipatory projects. The credibility of government may be progressively eroded.

My opening reflections raise the issue of what we might call resilient factors in social transitions. These are elements of personal or institutional behaviour which resist change by simulating it in such a way that in the end there is only the impression of change. It is a form of resistance that goes hand in hand with good intentions. The risk that resilient factors pose is that within a short space of time, a country in transition, such as South Africa, may enter into an unintended state of inertia in which change is genuinely sought, but the complexities of transition delay movement beyond it, such that the sense of transition actually becomes permanent. The state of inertia may generate its own politics, which may be as vibrant as any but actually dances on the same ground.

I would like to consider a few of the resilient factors which I consider to be at the heart of the strivings of South Africans for a society built around the needs and aspirations of newly enfranchised citizens who have, locked in them, energies and capabilities with a potential to re-energise the South African state.

First, there is the resilience of the inherited apartheid landscape. For a people so extensively traumatised and anguished by settlements created for their dehumanisation, newly enfranchised South Africans have displayed an exasperating lack of urgency in their commitment to changing these conditions in radical ways. The townships, as these settlements are popularly known, are dormitory enclaves which house subjects in the process of state formation over the last hundred years or so. Dormitory enclaves are by definition built to export their energies. Not by any meaning self-referential, they are necessarily orientated, through various forms of compulsion, toward an outward reality.

Dormitory settlements are minimally administered enclaves lacking in formal institutional complexity. This is because the span of allowable social interest is limited to basic housing, under-resourced schooling, limited entertainment, limited formal medical facilities, limited shopping and trading facilities, extensive religious participation, high birthrates, and a network of transportation to export labour out of the dormitories. This basic conception of township settlements still remains fundamentally intact fifteen years after liberation and after decades of conditioning black people's expectations of human settlements. Dormitory settlements were not designed to stimulate the social imagination. Consequently, post-apartheid provision of housing has not produced bold models that represent alternative conceptualisations of settlements. The statistically successful provision of houses has not extended the horizons of social imagination. When we built houses, we forgot that the building of houses should have been more about building communities.

But even in the most dispiriting dormitory environments, there was always something restorative, something precious which imaginative government policy could capture as the kernel around which to try out modelling new communities. I am referring to strong social bonding among residents living in clusters of about three township streets. These clusters form a small but important unit of community life. But they have always remained informal bonding units seldom evolving, in interaction with similar clusters, a formal institutional character of the kind that leads to increasing social complexity, which requires higher levels of social organisation to maintain them. Such levels and kinds of social organisation require strong institutions to sustain them. Training institutions can then be located not too far from where the need for them is located. Decisions leading to the provision of such institutions could emanate from transparent, democratic interactions at community level, self-motivated instead of imposed by an external government source, be it provincial or national.

The townships have numerous nascent forms of social activity that have the potential to be organising principles for the establishment of a complex of institution designed to meet equally complex sets of community needs. We see these nascent institutional forms in informal burial insurance schemes, self-help groups of various kinds, cultural groups, social movements and the steady growth of employment sources in the townships. Perhaps the most visible forms of higher-level institutional organisation are

football clubs and taxi associations, for example. A successful evolution of formal institutions would mean that dormitory settlements have the real chance to become self-organising settlements with an integrated tax base drawing more and more community members into a new formal economy. The overall effect of such a trend would be a progressive reversal of the historical tendency of dormitory settlements to export their energies and talents in what has been an almost structurally permanent process.

It is this sense of permanence that has to be broken. Failure to break it would mean the persistence and resilience of soul-wrecking settlements whose continued existence will have a devastatingly corrosive effect on the morale of newly enfranchised citizens, a sense of disillusion that could lead to a fundamental questioning of the depth of change and the ability of government to direct such change. Social movements that have emerged around the country in the last decade may have their origins in such corrosion. The corrosion has much to do with the fact that the spatial landscape of apartheid, as one of the most enduring features of our country, will not disappear overnight, and as such will continue to exercise a dominant impact on the shaping of our consciousness of the South African landscape. What South Africans perceive of it has a major effect on how they assess possibilities for change. What they can see makes people either excluded or included; trapped or freed; centred or marginalised; observing or observed; despised or respected.

Perhaps nothing better illustrates the fundamental issues at stake than the current, fraught interaction between the government and the taxi industry. My thinking leads to a bold assertion that if there is one thing that has the potential to push South Africa towards a historic and sustainable redesigning of the economy around a new locus of social energy, it is the taxi industry. If we accept that the taxi industry is a multibillion-rand industry; if we accept that it is one of the few genuine and successful acts of high-scale entrepreneurship to have emerged from the townships; if we agree that it feeds hundreds of thousands of people who make up the families of taxi owners and drivers living in the townships; if we accept that for those it feeds, it opens up further lifestyle opportunities; if we accept that it has become one of the key communication nerves of the South African economy, taking citizens across the length and breadth of the country for business or leisure, then we have to accept fully the implication that the taxi industry may have become one of the key pillars of the South African economy.

Appreciating this situation can help us evaluate the stance the government has adopted in its engagement with the taxi industry over the rapid transit system being introduced. Does it seek to 'mainstream' a significant but, from government's perspective, marginal entity that has to be 'regulated', by structurally tying it permanently to the traditional, inherited economic centre which continuously sucks away township energies? Or does it recognise the possible emergence of a 'new mainstream' that can retain local energies and even pull other energies towards a multibillion, township-based economy? Depending on the government's approach, its interactions with the taxi industry may either create a new

sustainable reality or prolong an old unsustainable one. The long-term economic scenario that underpins the government's approach to the taxi industry needs to be clearly outlined.

This issue has far-reaching implications for the country's future. It could put township dwellers at the centre of a self-organising initiative to create new living and thriving environments, new urban identities for South Africa's millions of township citizens who will progressively and structurally move into the centre of national economic life through the integrity of their active community lives, as they radically move away from a soul-killing dormitory inheritance to the creation of new, complex, integrated human settlements. There, a more viable tax base could be established, one which introduces new taxpayers into a local environment where they can experience the immediacy of accountable governance directly emanating from community-based decisions. In this setting, the challenge of community-based local government is the creation of an institutional infrastructure with which to manage and regulate local community initiatives. The resulting reimagining of Soweto as a contemporary urban space could be fundamentally life-changing for entire communities and represent change of epic proportions. Could this represent the kind of home we sought to return to when we began to reshape our world in 1994?

In other parts of the country, there are similar economic activities emerging from the townships which have a similar potential as the taxi industry. One of them is the boxing economy of the Eastern Cape. Another appears to be the construction industry in KwaZulu-Natal. Progressive government policy should be about identifying such economic trends around the country which yield increasing returns that establish a basis for sustainable change.

There is a second resilient factor that warrants attention. It is the capacity of our human skill base to reproduce successful, high-yield, high-scale change initiatives. I have already offered the hypothesis that the significant intervention by the new state in infrastructure provision was based largely on a managerial and technical capacity already in place, but subject to a new political authority. It was clear that the Mbeki government was aware of the vulnerability of its implementing capacity when it developed the notion of the Joint Initiative for Priority Skills (JIPSA). Earlier, the establishment of Sector Education and Training Authorities in response to the Skills Development Act was equally intended to address this vulnerability from a sustainability perspective. The conventional view, though, is that this admirable initiative has not delivered what was intended. Huge unutilised funds point to severe difficulties in the pursuit of this project. The risk of continuing failure could be devastating and increase the corrosion of citizen confidence in the state. It is a situation that prompts key questions. What has happened to the skill and management base behind the initial success? Was it maintained or eroded? If the latter, how? If the former, how did we maximise increasing returns to the largest scale possible? These questions tell us that

the building sustainability of the national skill base remain one of the fundamental strategic objectives of the new democratic state in meeting its emancipatory project.

These questions also raise the issue of how public policy aspirations are managed in the service of political ends. A case in point is the matter of 'affirmative action'. In so far as building the national skill base is concerned, a disproportionate amount of attention has been placed on 'affirmative action, a short-term measure that may divert resourceful energies from long-term thinking. This happened when 'affirmative action' became synonymous with 'transformation' in the pressure to deliver success in education and the workplace with the same speed and visibility as in the case of infrastructure delivery. While there may be a sense of immediacy about the benefits of infrastructure provision, such immediacy is not easily replicable in the fields of education, training and the workplace, where there is a built-in time lag that precedes expected outcomes. Indeed, there should be no assessment of affirmative action without the context of a full plan against which expectations can be measure and evaluated.

Even more, the assessment of affirmative action measures should include the full context of demographic shifts under way. These demographic shifts indicate that the increasing entrance and participation of black people in the spectrum of education and training institutions are irreversible. Affirmative action interventions are primarily intended to assist such evolutionary processes by bringing political pressure to bear on institutions as steering mechanism, as long as such pressure does not become an end in itself. When short-term intervention runs the risk of being elevated beyond its capacity to deliver what was expected of it. The real goal is not affirmative action at the workplace. The real goal is universal social enablement in which the net of opportunity and state support is cast as widely as possible over the ocean of South Africa's human talent. Such a strategy in education, for example, would see us produce a surplus of graduates to meet the ever-widening needs of new economies across the country.

Instead, under the pressure of a short-term strategy, many institutions are expected to meet impossible targets overnight. High expectations for low returns have become the order of the day. Such pressures are essentially unproductive and can exert high anguish with minimum output. They induce many institutions to think up ways of 'looking good'. Legally binding reporting rituals begin to look like games of illusion in which exposure and defence generate much heat but little light. The resulting failure induces disappointment, frustration, self-blame and cynicism on the part of many institutions which feel routinely untrusted by government. A decline of confidence in government policy sets in. Where institutions are seen to be incapable of delivering, government will itself be seen as incapable of enforcing delivery, because, for sure, it is unable to enforce delivery at all cost, particularly if it genuinely desires qualitative outcomes. The result is pervasive inertia: the sense of not getting anywhere, from being required to get somewhere.

It is such inertia that characterises the psychology of permanent transition. It is possible that as a country we can lock ourselves into the frustrations and gratifications of a transitional moment and in the process slow down and even weaken the momentum of achieving our emancipatory goals. Unless, of course, we have come to the conclusion that such goals no longer matter at this point. It is vital, nevertheless, that we either affirm them or abandon them.

A third resilient factor is the phenomenon of the 'black' South African, in particular the continuing sense of alienation among segments of the new 'black' elite. That the South African population should be subject to a system of colour-coding is historically understandable. But that the colour-coding should continue to be perpetuated in 'black' – designated organisations with self-declared transformative intentions may be indicative of a serious crisis of either identity or understanding or both. The use of the word 'black' to describe activist organisations is a throwback to the struggle times when the word was the assertion of a rediscovered sense of humanity and pride in a world that denigrated black people, who emerged every morning from their dormitory settlements and returned there every evening. Many members of today's 'black' organisations no longer live in dormitory enclaves; they are part of the new ruling elite, participating in the power structures and networks of a post-apartheid state; having experienced a significant growth in their buying power, they are highly influential in the new state.

Yet they seem profoundly unfulfilled. This may emanate from the high likelihood that the word 'black' no longer connotes pride, as such, but has instead become an admission of powerlessness at precisely that moment when the power of the newly enfranchised must be made manifest and celebrated in the achievements of a post-apartheid state. 'Black' implies the targeting of 'whites' with a message of injunction to deliver to 'blacks', as if the capacity to induce such delivery was not already in the hands of the 'blacks'. Perhaps the unintended renunciation or denial of this power has to do with the possibility that both 'the blacks' and their government are locked in the management of a transitional state, grappling with the after-effects of a negotiated settlement and a generalised goal of reconciliation. In the process they have lost sight of the longer-term emancipatory objective.

There is therefore a disjuncture between the relative power of the new elites and the powerlessness implied in the nomenclature 'black'. In reality, 'the black' ceased to be formally 'black' in 1994 and became human. The formal cessation of 'blackness' in 1994 signalled the beginning of our strategic engagement with the future, where the achieved life of apartheid's 'black' now in a free society would be the defining feature of South African life by default, not by self-assertion. The continuing phenomenon of apartheid's 'black' represents the resilience and persistence of the state we have inherited and the fact that we have unintentionally made that state, and not the one we really desire, the focus of our attention. Validation is sought not in what is to be achieved by 'black' in power but in what

'blacks' have to be given by those to the nomenclature 'black' is intended to be read as threatening. In reality, it is a weak threat. The real threat to 'whites' who still hold enormous economic power is in the potential of a refocused economy to deliver to the universal needs of the newly enfranchised.

A similar situation can be observed in a fourth resilient factor: the success of the South African trade union movement, which has evolved its own type of inertia. Since 1973, the trade union movement gave tremendous impetus to the anti-apartheid struggle inside South Africa. Its impact has been in the key sectors of the economy: mining, health, manufacturing, education and transport. It has consolidated itself to take full advantage of the democratic spaces created in a post-apartheid state. But its engagement with the mechanisms of a capitalist state appears to have locked it into a logic of redress and redistribution in which the quest for a high value-driven society, as envisaged by the goals of emancipation and carefully designed around the needs of the vast majority of South Africans where the bulk of union membership is located, has been subordinated to the struggle for higher wages.

Only from this perspective can we understand why endemic strike action seems intended to delay the redesign of many institutions vital to the creation of the intended new order. In the quest for such an order, the means of achieving it are inseparable from the ends desired. It is difficult to understand why, driven to extract the last cent from employers, unions can embark on prolonged strike action which accentuates the systemic dysfunctionality of certain aspects of some state sectors and institutions, in health and education, for example, thus ensuring that these sectors never actually recover to the degree that prepares them adequately for sustainable service. Overall, the union action shows no indication of a commitment to the elimination of the dormitory in which millions of their members live.

How does one explain a strike action that for prolonged periods closes schools where the children of the strikers are being educated? Or the shutting down of state hospitals where the neglected sick are largely from working-class backgrounds? We can now even envisage a situation where the armed forces embark on industrial action in the face of an invasion of foreign armies. These actions can only make sense in a situation where the short-term, transitional state has become permanent; and such permanence ensures permanent instability. It presents us with scenario in which the envisaged South African state will never achieve the minimum levels of functionality needed to reach its fullest potential. It suggests that the end of history may have arrived much sooner than we thought.

Short-term objectives appear to be in fundamental conflict with larger objectives designed to ensure a sustainable future for workers. The tradeoffs that have to be made in pursuit of this larger objective are demanding and complex and require a fundamentally new disposition towards engagement. Perhaps all this is symptomatic of the failure of the

state to convince newly enfranchised citizens that they have a long-term stake in a redesigned state; it may also suggest that the state is unable to manage diverse conflicting interests towards the coherent and overriding goals of a collective interests.

I have argued that according to several measures, the transitional periods in the first fifteen years of South Africa's new democracy has been largely successful. We have had a remarkably stable transition, during which we laid strong, visionary policies to achieve a state and a society which decades of struggle prepared us to imagine. But we have yet to arrive home. And the difficulties of arriving home seem to originate internally, from within the broad forces that lead the national transformation project. The strategic mistake is in continuing to identify the problems 'out there', a deflection that reduces responsibility and accountability for agency of self. Home is not only about identifying problems out there or in others; it is also about recognising them in ourselves as well, and then confronting them. The masses of South Africa's people are the new makers of history, not its passive objects. Their leaders must conduct themselves with the requisite sense of confidence and conviction in the continuing value of the emancipator project. And this is the difficult part.

It leads us to ask by what means we can reduce the impact of resilient factors on the project of emancipation.

The conundrum at stake might be illustrated by some contradictions placed in front of South Africans by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, its historic hearings and its reparations recommendations. The issue turns on the definition of 'victims of gross violations of human rights' who, according to the definition, qualify for 'reparations'. The unresolved issue pertains to the tension between the pervasive social impact of apartheid on the oppressed, on the one hand, and on the other, the specific experiences of suffering that were exposed, acknowledged and documented within the relatively restricted legal framework which governed the work of the TRC. Thus, the specificity of the TRC's mandate can be seen, in retrospect, to rest uncomfortably with the general social consequences of apartheid's oppression, a suffering that defies simple ranking.

The focus on the relatively few instances of 'gross violation of human rights', predisposed us to frame the drama of the hearings within the spectacle of public witnessing. Capturing our attention and that of the world for a prescribed period of intense observation, the hearings temporarily closed out the social pervasiveness of apartheid's horrors as the focus for transformative policy-making. The specifics of 'gross violations of human rights' may well have reduced the scale and sense of the larger social impact of apartheid, particularly where the restricted pool of victims was then 'rewarded' with 'reparations'. This is more so because it is impossible to 'reward' the rest of the previously and legally oppressed in like manner. Perhaps as a result of this, South Africans conceptually began to look for other kinds of similar restricted 'rewards' in the notions of 'redress', 'affirmative action' and 'black economic empowerment'.

We can say then that the process of defining 'victims of gross human rights violations', according to the recommendations of the TRC, and the sense of how considerably restricted was the field within which the TRC could work, may have resulted in an unintended substitution of personal reward for the sense of shared achievement originally intended by the collective struggle for liberation. Beyond that, it is possible to ask from an even more specific perspective: could the reparations component of the TRC have contributed in some measure to the demobilisation of social activism and the withdrawal of citizen initiative, for which the world of social grants was substituted? The masses that marched for freedom in huge numbers over the decades then began to wait for 'redress', for the benefits of 'affirmative action', 'black economic empowerment' and, the biggest manna of all, the dream of 'delivery'.

Against this historic context, transformative change in the last fifteen years can be seen to have been a well-intentioned but positive blunt instrument in its encapsulating reach. No area of national life was untouched by new policy: education tax collection, housing, health, defence, water, energy, justice, policing, budgeting and others. The extensiveness was evocative of the new era. But once we had these policies in place, we realised, perhaps not too fully, that we needed something more, a deeper dimension of human transformation to push South Africa into a new dimension of history. We seemed not to have the wherewithal of inner resources to take us to the next step. Because we invoked 'the nation' in such expressions as 'the national democratic revolution' or 'the masses of the people', we did not explore fully the operations implications of breaking down 'the nation' into its constituent provinces and municipalities.

Indeed, beyond the nation you begin to work with increasing levels of specificity and diversity. Knowledge of the environment increases in geometric proportion according to the respective provincial and local government conditions. At the national level you extrapolate common trends from regional data, as a principle for achieving and maintaining coherence, but allow for the fullest diversity of action and expression at provincial and local levels. That understanding necessitates a willingness for South Africans to accept a large measure of provincial and local autonomy. This approach distributes responsibility, accountability, knowledge, expertise and opportunities for resourcefulness to the greatest number of actors where they are located. It is an approach that cannot succeed without an equally resourceful system of education and training and a focused delivery instrument made of government, the civil service, civil society, and educated, trained individuals. And this is where the significance of the TRC emerges with special poignancy.

It was with the TRC hearings that for the first time in our history the pain of the oppressed individual, as opposed to groups, was formally and publicly acknowledged. Previously, the reality of individual pain disappeared in the sea of collective pain, and thus could not be fully contemplated. Although we knew of many in the townships who had been arrested, tortured or killed by the oppressive state, it all remained in the realm of private

knowledge. With the TRC hearings, the private not only became public and official, it also acquired legitimacy. We knew publicly who had been tortured or murdered. We knew whose father or mother, son or daughter they were. Even the perpetrators ceased to be anonymous, pervasive evil of the kind which dominated the consciousness of the oppressed and peopled their nightmares. They turned out to be fathers and sons of specific people, with a social circle of churchgoers, schoolmates and friends.

Specific human evil perpetrated by specific people can be contemplated. One of the outcomes of such contemplation is the humbling knowledge of just how humanly close is the possibility of evil emanating from each of us. The humbling and levelling effect of such knowledge indeed drives home the meaning of human equality, rendering suspect any prejudices and biases we may hold about others. It tells us that the potential for good and evil is one of the realities of the human condition. Either of them requires a cause on behalf of which instruments of state can be deployed. The capacity for the good or evil of the state becomes accessible and more understandable through the prism of specific forms of human conduct. It is how state is preconditioned to make a choice that is vital. Currently, the conditions for making choices in South Africa have been severely compromised by a mixed transitional environment and the forms of inertia that characterise it.

If perpetrators became disturbingly human, so did many ordinary human beings emerge from beneath the veil of honour draped over them in the fight for liberation; those ennobled by the ideals that drove the liberation struggle turned out to be traitors, others corrupt syndicated thieves, others gripped by vanity and arrogance, yet others purveyors of falsehood in official statements carrying the imprint of the state. There they were before us, all as human as the apartheid perpetrators they once fought. Many have remained ennobled by being members of organisations that protect them. This fact points to the realisation that the group is as corruptible as the individual. Our historical tendency to believe in the sanctity of groups, a belief which can be accompanied by an uncritical belief in government as a group enterprise, needs a radical revision. The individual and the group must become interacting agents in the quest for an ethically grounded politics that does not bypass the specificity of human experience in the achievement of group purpose.

This understanding leads us to ask specific questions, for example about specific actors in a socioeconomic drama that involves government and taxi associations. The group of taxi drivers and owners is seldom disaggregated. As a result they can potentially be dismissed without our having to grapple with the complexity that arises from dealing with the individualities that constitute the group. So who indeed are the families of taxi owners and drivers? What schools do their children go to? Do they consult Western-trained doctors or traditional healers? What is their preferred cuisine? How do they entertain themselves? What is their favourite style of clothing? How do they run their businesses and monitor their finances? What are their political and religious preferences? Such questions enable us to break down the stereotypes we have internalised about taxi owners and drivers as groups.

Not without some justification, we have come to associate taxis with mindless violence, traffic lawlessness and almost nonexistent customer relations. They are dangerous and should be arrested and driven out of business, despite the multibillion-rand size of their business. They exasperate provincial authorities which compete with one another in displaying various degrees of toughness with the taxi associations. Nevertheless, the relative unavailability of the social profile of members of the taxi associations makes it impossible for us to visualise the actual social coordinates behind their demands. The specificities of their human attributes help to balance the collective danger they seem to represent. They render them explainable and provide a lever to hold them to account for their apparent disrespect for the laws of the country. But why do they behave the way they do?

Indeed, who really are the young white men who committed the outrage at the Free State University when they gave black women food into which they had allegedly urinated? Who are their families? What churches do they go to and what sermons are they likely to hear in them? Where do they hang out? What schools did they go to? What is the class distribution of their extended families? I can ask the same kind of questions about bands of boys in the townships who abduct young girls and rape them? But we have been conditioned not to ask such questions but to cry 'crime' and 'racism'. These conclusions do not substantially enhance our knowledge of the situation and do not give us a yield of insights for a fresher and even more radical approach to possible solutions that are more likely to render sustainable solutions.

There is equally much that is hidden behind the rhetoric of 'affirmative action' and 'black empowerment': apparently rampant trade union activism, corrupt law enforcement officers, and politicians who use instruments of state to settle political scores and sometimes subvert transparency requirements 'for the good of the nation'. And so, a part of us is a nation of glitz: superficiality and posture poised to become the defining attributes of our identity. Could it all come from the understandable inclination of oppressed people towards a display of self-worth? Answers to this question ought to lead us to the specificities of individual actions where responsibility and accountability are vested. It is about the emergence of values based on the primacy of individual cognition: self-application, rigour, expertise, sensitivity, intelligence, honesty, sincerity, and their opposites: betrayal, cruelty, brutality, vanity, arrogance. None of these attributes can be expressed or experienced on behalf of individuals. It is possible, though, that groups can select those attributes by which their members may be required to distinguish themselves from members of other groups. But even this cannot spare the individual from the specificity of his or her own experience. Democracy, ultimately, is about this. It is something with which South Africans have yet to grapple and which, I sometimes believe, they fear. It remains the challenge of moving beyond the reconciliation of the kind associated with the TRC.

We are now called upon to lay the foundations for a post-reconciliation South Africa. I suspect that such a country is about creating a humanised public space beyond the postures of a politics habituated by struggle. It is about democracy of individuals with a public conscience, who enable us to transcend group stereotypes by discovering the value of individuals. It is about black South Africans finally having no obligation to prove themselves to anyone but themselves. It is about their reconnecting to emancipatory goals that are in danger of being forgotten. It is about assailing the resilient factors with passionate intelligence and ethical resolve. It is about their finally arriving home by seizing this moment to avoid the risk of being permanent second-class citizens subordinate to their own dreams, in order to become the chief architects of the future of their country.

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