



## **Address to Diakonia- Challenges of Social Inclusion**

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I grew up in exile and in so doing developed a sense of 'other'. I often experienced the sensation of being half a beat of time. I imagine that the millions of people who are in some way excluded economically, emotionally, materially and socially are exiled in some way. They are strangers in their own land.

The dominant human rights discourse speaks of the idea of citizenship related to access to health, education, work, refuge in times of war, the right to associate with whom we wish, to articulate our aspirations and to claim our place in every sphere of life. As many people grapple with obstructions in accessing these basic rights we are forced to ask 'what is citizenship' for us?

For we who have been dispossessed of our land, removed from our ancient abodes, invaded in our bodies and displaced in social structures - what or where are we? Are we formless people caught in a twilight world of junior or quasi citizenship that can only be fully qualified depending on our marital status, financial standing or the ability to negotiate complex social power relations?

An easy talking point is what citizenship offers us especially for youth today in this country. They are speaking volumes by declining to vote both in national and local elections. A niece of mine who was then 20 said that she felt taken for granted by politicians and coerced into voting. Her 18 year old brother concurred saying that he felt excluded from conversations and marginalised by adults - except during elections. "They talk at us", he said.

At a time when the education system is in many respects as appalling as thirty four years ago the elders are not engaging young people. We must consider whether we have constructed the kind of nationhood and identity which is compelling to young people.

Political power has so far failed to yield fruits of Social transformation. Youth unemployment stands higher than the 40% national average. Up to 59% of the unemployed have never worked and most of these are youths.

Education and social transformation is skewed along racial lines. Township schools, rural schools and suburban schools are almost as much conceptual ideas related to entitlement and state obligation as they are demographic realities. Millions of people

are thus born less equal than others in opportunity, access and possibilities. For them social exclusion is almost inevitable.

Confronted by the complexity of our development challenges, one of the biggest limitations of the development discourse is a lack of trust, common vision and consistent leadership between the various sectors and among different people. South Africa remains a profoundly polarised society, in which the fault lines of race, class and gender run deep. Sixteen years after the political end of apartheid, there is still insufficient policy coherence.

Some leaders in government, business and civil society still lack a basic understanding of the role or potential of other sectors. The current standoffs between organised labour and the State illustrate underlying patterns of hostility, arrogance or indifference.

As someone who has moved from state to state over years, the sense of home and identity is one that resonates. For the refugees and migrants moving between countries, the neo-classical construction of rights as related to citizenship rings hollow. As women, as working class people, as dispossessed or disillusioned, we need to deconstruct and reconstruct our own definitions of citizenship that enables us to access our full humanity and experience full citizenship and all its benefits under every circumstance.

In this climate of social fragmentation, many anti-poverty interventions fail to bring all the relevant players to the table. Too often, inclusive processes are sacrificed for "quick-fix," project-based solutions. Some initiatives are top-heavy on policy but lack community wide delivery mechanisms. Others are premised on principles of centralist social engineering; top-down technocratic approaches or "one size fits all," market-based models. Very few initiatives profoundly address systemic blockages, re-channelling the resources and creativity of all sectors, and working for popular , social transformation.

Even where progressive policy frameworks, positive intentions and partnership structures exist, the results of anti-poverty work are often disappointing - marked by:

- Inefficient utilisation of available State resources
- Creation or perpetuation of unwieldy bureaucracies
- Failure to move resources and power to community level beneficiaries, that is, 'real people'
- Lack of real public participation including popular movements
- Failure to capitalise on the diverse contributions, innovation and civic energy of different "stakeholders."

The World Cup illustrates the extent social inclusion is such a vexed question. This should have brought us closer together. It should have been the opportunity to bring sports, nutrition, well being, social planning and accessible transport into a national discourse. Instead the Gautrain has no connection with most African townships and the money that could have been used to improve or at least connect with the existing train service seems ill spent.

A ride one way on the Gautrain is R100. Rea Vaya has had limited uptake despite its speed. Schools with no sports grounds and limited physical education programmes have not yet been offered the use of the stadia. Some stadiums built at a cost of over one billion rand were used for only three games.

The quick fixes we saw include removing the homeless out of the way so as not to scare our international visitors. Ten years of housing expenditure were used to host the World Cup. Are we any closer together? Have the two nations found each other?

### **Systems change requires inclusive partnerships**

The rhetoric of "partnership" is popular development speak. There is growing acknowledgement that no one sector, or set of actors, can take exclusive responsibility for meeting the challenges of entrenched poverty and social exclusion. It is critical to move beyond the conventional discourse of "public-private partnership," that often amounts to little more than a technical model or a variation on the privatisation of public services. A wider and more inclusive notion of "partnership" and "the public interest" is needed, premised on the requirement for broader public accountability, transparency, good governance and inclusiveness.

South Africa's constitution outlines a compelling vision of a more just and giving society, entrenching basic civic, socio-economic and cultural rights. It also proposes a leading role for a robust, democratic and truly developmental state.

Internationally, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) reinforce the importance of an effective public sector and pro-poor public policy. They provide government and popular movements, including the faith sector, with a powerful rallying point around which dynamic, long term and advocacy can be forged. For many people the constitution is proving insufficient as a measure of inclusive citizenship since there is a deficit between the written word and the lived experiences of most people in this country.

In the midst of this we must consider the terror of all wars that attempt to tear people apart and entrench divisions rather than inclusiveness. The terror of poverty, the terror of hunger, the terror of being a child left to fend for oneself, the terror of being orphaned by AIDS, the terror of separation of families and the terror of going to sleep with the hope that you will never wake up again. These are the true weapons of mass destruction.

While there is constant conversation about social inclusion and the two nations we hear nothing about the dangers of living so far apart from each other. What is the value of human rights in the midst of this? How do these advance our citizenship? What is the purpose of citizenship for the widow, the orphan, the landless, the disabled, the hungry, the Dalits, for women, or for people of colour? Do they serve any purpose if they add not a single grain of rice to our plates or a single inch of land to our farms?

Citizens' organizations, including community-based organizations, NGOs and social movements, play a vital role in giving voice to the poor, mobilizing resources and collective action, and taking forward agendas for pro-poor change. They perform a public service by ensuring independent monitoring of both government and business

performance in relation to poverty and social justice objectives. "Popular movement mobilisation" is not by itself a sufficient strategy for poverty eradication; but it is an important strategy for the achievement of more effective and inclusive collaboration to shift the systems that entrench poverty.

In South Africa, cooperation between government, business and community movements - including a vibrant culture of social giving - is a necessity if the past's massive and complex social deficits are to be overcome. Other than 67 minutes on July 18<sup>th</sup>, how often do we engage with the 'others'? More effective dialogue and partnership building is required to bridge deep socio-economic divides.

Governments and business in particular need to recognize the necessity for "bridging dialogue" with other social partners - to hear the "voices" of the economically marginalised and the civil society sector in both policy making and "delivery;" to protect and expand the public spaces in which the poor can access power and mobilize as citizens; and to create a more level playing field in which popular movements and citizens can play a meaningful role in constructing an inclusive and authentic citizenship.

Partnerships are not a substitute for politics, leadership and citizen action. New possibilities for social justice will continue to emerge from popular mobilization, socio-economic upheavals and the everyday struggles of politics, ideas and the economy. But if we can engage a representative cross-section of the actors that experience and affect a social problem; begin to perceive the problem anew through each other's eyes; and forge both trust and common purpose despite our many points of divergence; then the complex world of poverty and injustice just might be shifted enough to produce some everyday miracles in the lives of working class, underclass and marginalized South Africans.

These silos allow the state to retreat into empty rhetoric and celebrate abject suffering and absolute inhumanity calling it 'courageous and spirited'. It is a travesty that any teacher must nurture hundred young minds in one classroom with scant support. It is absolutely heart breaking to imagine that thousands of children walk up to eight hours a day to get to and from school in the midst of bitter winter and traverse the dangers of rape and abduction *en route*.

The objectification of the African child as a being devoid of humanity, incapable of feeling pain and perhaps as a result undeserving of love and equitable resource allocation is perhaps why my nephew opines that adults only consider him as a potential voter.

So perhaps construction of a co-dependent relationship between the State and its citizens is the praxis for a nationhood which is exciting and authentic. To find a 'place called freedom' requires more than talk shops and entirely state led platforms for change. A nationhood where young people and other groups find a reflection of huge possibilities and imaginative governance. This moves us away from objectifying young people to engaging them. It moves us all from entitlement and disinterest to active and energetic participation in creating a banner under which we stand counted and accountable.

## ***Call to Me, She and We***

*The enemies of self doubt and distorted self image  
and crushed self esteem and skewed body perceptions,  
and all the debris piled upon us by our diverse  
and brutal circumstances sit safely ensconced within our minds,  
within our hearts; none of us escapes their clutches  
without a hard and bloody fight.*

*We have to forge new and untainted definitions of womanhood  
from all our mothers for all our daughters.*

*To hear our voices from deep within returning us to the instructions of the Creator as  
guardians of the Mother called Earth.*

*The drumbeat and rhythm making us dance  
the dance of creation of ancient cultures now almost decimated.*

*We must speak to the ones yet to come about the things we have seen and heard.  
We must tell them to rise beyond the half truth and despair  
of lives lived beneath our selves.*

*Our bodies must be claimed back as sacred temples  
and our essence revered as the breath of life.*

*Our shared tears are a balm that cleanses the hurt,  
the devastation, the loneliness, the fear, the shame and the myths.*

*Let us lift our voices in celebration of the divinity within each of us,  
in affirmation of each other, songs in every tongue  
reaching every star and alerting the world that we do live,  
we do rise, we will conquer yet.*