



SOUTH AFRICA NEEDS INCLUSIVE JUSTICE

City Press Opinion article
11 September 2016

The recent local government election surprised many who were not paying attention, but the results were largely predictable. Given the nature of a neocolonial state everywhere, liberation movements gradually lose power if inclusive justice remains elusive. People seem to give liberation movements about 20 years and then, understandably, throw in the towel.

Liberation movements lose sight of what they were fighting for. They become complacent and corrupt, and senseless infighting kills the movement. The voters are making a point that the ANC has not delivered where it matters most. The percentage of Africans living in poverty is still high. The economic inequality appears to have increased, while the levels of human development are constant. In addition to this, restitutory, reconciliatory and restructuring measures, and, more importantly, equitable sharing of resources, have been unsuccessful.

For so long, people have waited for the restructuring of the economy so it can be more inclusive, and are troubled by the views of the beneficiaries of apartheid suggesting that apartheid was not too bad. In addition, political inequality is a challenge as it is largely associated with patronage.

At issue is the inability of the ANC to effectively transform society so that all population groups coexist harmoniously, to the greatest extent possible. In the past 10 years or so, the reconciliation project has fallen flat and, lately, the myth of the rainbow nation has been unravelling. Development also appears to have fallen off the agenda, though the rhetoric pulls the wool over our eyes.

Part of the reason for this is that the ANC has taken its eye off the ball: all efforts must be about dealing with the ramifications of apartheid colonialism, and ensure that whites never come back to power. It is in this context that the outcome of the recent local government election should not be celebrated as "democracy at work", as some seem to see it.

Indeed, it is encouraging that a new and young party such as the EFF is making significant inroads. It would be better if the EFF became an alternative, should the ANC fail to address the pressing issues. However, it is problematic to celebrate the DA taking over municipalities. Over time, this could result to political power returning to whites – whites already have a lot, if not all, of the country's economic power.

In an African country where whites are a minority, it would be an indictment on the many lives that were sacrificed for liberation. The peaceful coexistence among the different groups in South Africa must happen with Africans leading the transformation project. Given the racist and white supremacist ideals of many whites in South Africa, only Africans can deliver inclusive justice.

The three centuries and many decades of a brutal discriminatory system suggest that only those who have suffered this injustice can bring about the necessary improvement

in wellbeing of the majority. The challenges confronting South Africa require that Africans are prioritised in public policies and programmes. Unemployment, for instance, mainly affects the black population. The transformation programme, therefore, has to address the economy.

South Africa has not had a robust economic policy for a while, and there is no social policy to talk of. Actually, there is no industrial policy, no labour market policy, no trade policy – nothing – so the transformation programme is failing. Although there are the bigger challenges of global capitalism and white monopoly capital – both linked to imperialism – robust public policies would go a long way to lessen the burden of hardship for the majority in the country. This is an area that is not receiving enough attention.

Given the complexity of our society, getting policies right is not a piece of cake. Even more cumbersome is ensuring an appropriate balance in power and influence by all groups in South Africa. Whites, through the DA, could deliver better public services, as they are likely to do in the metros, but having them lead society as a whole would plunge us into a fissure that South Africa might never recover from.

The liberation project should not be betrayed.