

R:Ed

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Protest



R:Ed Magazine: Protest

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Reproductive Rights: Making the Case for Legalised Abortion in Namibia and Kenya

Maya Szaniecki

The right to abortion is something that has been fought for around the world for years, with countries still having different laws around it, today. Despite the historical and continued prohibition of abortion in many countries, the practice still takes place on a widespread scale. In fact a study found that, between 2015 and 2019, 61% of all unintended pregnancies across the world ended in an induced abortion. An induced abortion is when a specific procedure is done or medication is taken, to terminate a pregnancy, showing that many abortions are still taking place even without there being proper legal and safe care.

The consequence of this is that 7 million women in the so-called ‘developing world,’ are admitted to hospitals every year, because of unsafe abortions which cause complications, often leading to maternal deaths. This shocking figure is especially pertinent to regions such as Africa and Latin America, where 75% of abortions are considered unsafe, and in particular, Africa, which has the highest risk of death from an unsafe abortion. It is therefore no surprise that the topic of abortion continues to be controversial and highly debated within Africa, with different countries disagreeing on what the severity of abortion laws should be.

Last year this divisive topic caused protests to take place throughout several countries, with differing demands voiced.

In Namibia, for example, abortion is legalised in many cases including rape and incest, to preserve physical or mental health, or prevent foetal impairment, intellectual or cognitive disability. It is not, however, legalised upon request from someone pregnant. In situations where it is legal, it must be authorised by two health professionals. Activists in the country therefore took to the streets in 2020, asking for more lenient laws to legalise abortion in all cases, as they believe it should be freely and safely available to all.

The movement is being pushed forward legislatively by Namibia’s Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services, Esther Muinjague, who put forward a motion in the Parliament of Namibia for the legalisation of abortion. Alongside her are the country’s activists and feminists supporting reform of the abortion laws. A petition has been started, which now has over 60,000 signatures, and support from several organisations fighting for women’s rights. In July 2020, hundreds of people took to the streets to show support for increased reproductive rights. These were asking for similar rights to those given to women in Mozambique and Ethiopia, where pregnancies can be terminated up to sixteen weeks, or in South Africa, where abortion on request is legalized up to thirteen weeks of pregnancy.

These calls for more lenient abortion laws demonstrate a thirst for change in Namibia, but these weren’t entirely without retaliation. In the same year as these protests took place, there were counter anti-abortion

protests on the streets of Namibia, with many citing their religion as the reason for opposing abortion upon demand.

Yet these anti-abortion views are even more discernible in Kenya, where abortion is illegal in all cases but in those of rape, to save the mother's life, or to preserve health. Kenya has even stricter laws than those in Namibia. And despite a study showing that nearly half a million illegal abortions took place there in 2012, there continues to be a strong aversion to relaxing these laws.

Esther Passaris, an MP for Nairobi, is one person who has been asking for abortion upon request to be legalised, arguing that access to safe abortion is vital to protecting everyone, particularly those who are poor. The MP is also a leader for SheDecides, a global movement that campaigns for female empowerment in relation to reproductive healthcare, and beyond. However, in a country where 85% of the population is Christian, Passaris and the SheDecides movement have faced backlash from conservative and Christian campaign groups. A petition was launched by these groups in 2020, asking for an end to the campaign for abortion on demand, which currently has just over 6000 signatures.

It is striking that both Namibia and Kenya have displayed such passionate protests both for and against the legalisation of abortion. Physical street protests have taken place, and petitions have been circulated and gained traction. And they are not the only countries where the subject is still a heated one. 2020 saw protests take place in countries such as Poland, Mexico and Argentina too, with vehement opinions shown on both sides of the debate on legalising abortion.

While it is clear that there are still mixed attitudes towards abortion, it is time to acknowledge that legal access to it upon demand is essential to ensuring safe birth - both for babies and those who are giving birth. Studies have shown time and again that criminalising abortion does not decrease the rate at which it occurs, but instead simply increases the potential risks associated with it, to mothers and babies. Access to safe abortion is a matter of public health and should be a human right and choice to all, yet the path to this becoming a reality worldwide still seems to be a long one.



RESPECT MY
EXISTENCE OR
EXPECT
RESISTANCE

A History of Africa - The Power of Protest

Arun Denton

Protest has played – and continues to play – an important role in African history. This article will focus predominantly on the second half of the twentieth century, a period in which Africans across the continent protested for a wide range of reasons: they demanded civil and political rights, better economic conditions, an end to corruption and government mismanagement, the dismantling of systems of racial segregation, or a combination of all of these. These protests took many different forms, ranging from peaceful street demonstrations to more violent acts such as riots and rebellions. The extent to which protestors were successful varied. Often, governments unwilling to concede to popular demands for change responded with violent repression, but in some cases mass protests helped to catalyse far-reaching reform, most obviously in the ending of apartheid in South Africa.

In the decades after the Second World War, Africa underwent a process of decolonisation. The authority of colonial powers such as Britain and France began to crumble in the face of nationalist sentiment and demands for independence and sovereignty. Initially, unrest in the colonies took the form of labour militancy: there were strikes on the South African gold mines in 1946, and the railways of French West Africa saw a five-month strike in 1947-48. In 1947, peasants in Madagascar rebelled against the French rule; 100,000 Malagasy died during the brutal counter-insurgency campaign, foreshadowing the violence which would soon be brought by various wars of national liberation. On the Gold Coast, however, the British authorities allowed nationalist politicians to dictate reform. After urban rioting destabilised the colony in February 1948, anti-colonialism politician Kwame Nkrumah formed a mass nationalist party. His call for independence was vindicated when he was elected leader of the country in 1951, serving to inspire nascent nationalist movements across Africa.

In the 1960s, there were protests in former colonial territories as populations struggled against the one-party, authoritarian states which were often established in the wake of national independence. Students were frequently at the forefront of these protests. In Tanzania in July 1968, for example, students in Dar es Salaam led an anti-imperialist protest against a governmental agreement to receive American aid, while in the same year in Dakar, Senegal, students led mass protests due to falling living standards and rising unemployment. In Ethiopia, Emperor Haile Selassie faced student unrest and demands for political and social change at the university of which he was Chancellor: Addis Ababa University. These protests took different forms: at Student Day Ceremonies in 1962 students read poems critical of Selassie's regime; there were mass demonstrations in 1963 and 1964; and in 1967 the University Students Union of Addis Ababa – the unified voice of the student movement – presented a list of ten demands to the government, which included the overhauling of the education system. Selassie made minor concessions but ultimately cracked down forcefully on the movement.

In the southern parts of Africa, protests were directed against the settler colonialism of the white minority regimes which had maintained their grasp on power.

In South Africa, the ruling National Party had implemented a policy of apartheid (meaning “apartness” in Afrikaans) to govern relations between the white minority and the non-white majority after their ascension to power in 1948.

Often referred to as “separate development”, apartheid was a system of racial segregation which provided legal sanction for political and economic discrimination against non-whites, who were categorised as either Bantu (Black Africans) or Coloured (those of mixed race) by the 1950 Population Registration Act. A further series of laws systematically deprived Blacks of civil and political rights: they were excluded from white areas, limited in their employment opportunities, and their schools had lower educational standards.

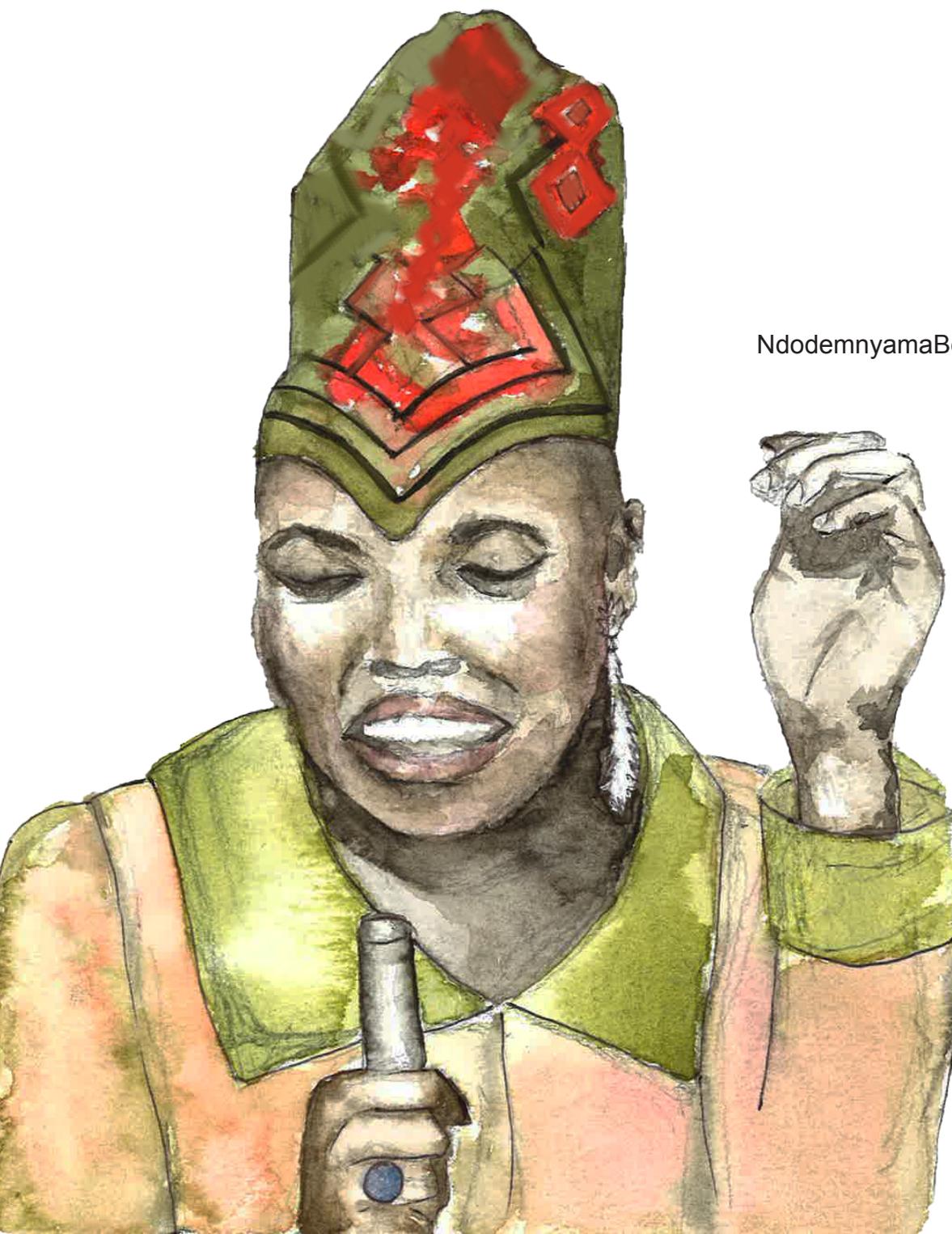
As apartheid became entrenched, it led to widespread poverty amongst Black Africans. The system was met with considerable opposition from its inception. In 1952, for instance, the South African Indian Congress together with the African National Congress – the main opposition group – organised a campaign in which protestors defied discriminatory laws by burning their pass books. Protests and strikes were also widespread, and were often met with forceful repression. At a demonstration in Sharpeville in March 1960, police opened fire on the protestors, killing 69 Black Africans and injuring many more. In response, mass strikes spread across the country: 30,000 protestors marched peacefully through Cape Town, while rural areas such as Mpondoland erupted in rebellion. The opposition, however, was hindered by the outlawing of the ANC and its leaders: activist Nelson Mandela was sentenced to life imprisonment on Robben Island in 1964.

Nevertheless, protests continued throughout the ensuing decades. The Soweto Uprising occurred in June 1976 in response to government efforts to make Afrikaans the compulsory language in schools for Black African students. The violent response of police and soldiers sparked a wave of protests across the nation. By the 1980s, South Africa was in crisis: resistance continued on the streets of the country’s townships despite brutal government repression; and as strikes and boycotts escalated, the opposition movement gathered an unstoppable momentum. Combined with growing international condemnation and a deteriorating economic situation, the government was placed under immense pressure to act. Accordingly, in 1990, South African president F. W. de Klerk began to repeal the apartheid legislation and enfranchise Black citizens. In 1994 South Africa’s first all-race national elections produced a coalition government led by Mandela.

The repercussions of events in South Africa extended far beyond the nation’s own borders. Mandela’s release from prison in 1990 signalled the prospect of meaningful reform in South Africa, and, together with the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, this inspired a wave of democratic protests across the continent in and around 1990. Citizens protested in 16 sub-Saharan African countries, demanding civic reforms and expressing discontent with economic hardship, political repression and official corruption. As popular demands became increasingly politicised, protestors began to call for the replacement of one-party states with multi-party systems. In Zambia, for example, President Kaunda was forced to move towards a multi-party constitution after unprecedented mass rallies swept through Zambian towns in September 1990.

Although the extent of political liberalisation varied considerably across the continent, the momentum of the reform movement led to multi-party elections in five countries: Benin, Cape Verde, Gabon, Côte d'Ivoire, and São Tomé.

The events of 1990 underscore the power of protest: in all sixteen countries where popular demonstrations occurred, political reform of some kind was implemented. In recent years, protests in Africa have had even more far-reaching effects. In the 2010s, the widespread series of anti-government protests known as the Arab Spring toppled regimes in Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt, and led to sustained street demonstrations in Morocco, Algeria, and Sudan. The role of social media in fuelling the spread of these demonstrations highlights how protestors have begun to harness the power of modern technology in recent years, with many of their underlying demands remaining the same.



Miriam Makeba
NdodemnyamaBeware, Verwoerd!
1965



Protests and the Police: Fighting Back Against Police Brutality across Africa

Amy Leung

Yassin Moyo was only thirteen when he stood on his balcony and a passing police officer shot at him. The police officer was supposed to be patrolling to enforce the coronavirus curfew in Kenya. Instead, he killed Yassin. This was not an isolated incident, fourteen others across Kenya also lost their lives as a result of police violence during lockdown. While the officer Duncan Ndiema was eventually charged for the killing, many more officers faced no consequences for their violent actions. For many, police brutality is a daily part of their lives.

By definition, police brutality is the use of excessive force by police upon the public. Amnesty International emphasises the expected role of police as a force that fundamentally protects people and keeps loss of life to a minimum. Police brutality is a human rights violation and has emerged as one of the defining social injustices of our generation. When communities rally in support of friends and family who have suffered through the actions of police and take a stand through protests, the police often react with more violence. Conflicts endure and societies are pulled apart.

Many African countries face high levels of corruption within the police system which leads to a police force that lacks accountability. As part of Transparency International's 2013 report measuring people's perceptions of corruption by country, citizens were asked to rank their views on corruption of the police on a scale of 1, being least corrupt, to 5, being the most. The mean score of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) was 4.3. South Africa had a shocking score of 4.4. In the 2015 report, 47% of respondents labelled the police as the most corrupt public institution, the highest proportion of responses for any of the categories. In 2019, Transparency International reported that 75% of DRC citizens who had come into contact with police services had paid a bribe. Corruption in Africa is persistent and even normalised. However, this erodes community trust in the police, creating an unstable relationship which is only made worse through police brutality.

The killing of Nathaniel Julius in South Africa, a 16-year-old boy who was unarmed, had Down's syndrome, and was sitting near his home after buying biscuits, provoked an uproar in August 2020. Although his death was originally attributed to crossfire from a gang conflict, it was later revealed he had been shot by police. His apparent crime? He had not understood the questions of the police when approached, due to his Down's syndrome. The police officers involved were eventually arrested, but only after community protests erupted in Nathaniel's neighbourhood and an online petition garnered over 120,000 signatures condemning his killers.

In Sierra Leone, a group of young people peacefully protested against the movement of a youth hub of opportunities and employment from their village of Kabala to elsewhere. They were met with tear gas and bullets. Elsewhere in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the police decided to stop gang activities in Kinshasa through Operation Likofi in 2013. The reality of this operation was the raiding of houses and the killing of over 51 men and boys. 33 more were arrested and not heard from again. Many of these victims were not gang affiliated. The calls of relatives seeking justice and access to their loved one's bodies for burial were denied and covered up. Operation Likofi was deemed to have resulted in serious human rights violations by the UN in a report which led to the expulsion of the UN representative in DRC, Scott Campbell, by the Congolese government. Despite both national and international uproar, four more iterations of Operation Likofi were carried out in later years with more killings being carried out. There are countless more examples of police brutality and it is deeply troubling that this is such a widespread issue.

One movement against police brutality that attracted high levels of public support was End SARS, seeking to disband the Special Anti-Robbery Squad of the Nigerian police force through peaceful protest. SARS was notorious for their use of excessive force and human rights violations. While calls to end SARS began back in 2017, an international resurgence in support emerged in October 2020 after SARS allegedly killed a young boy outside a hotel and drove away, as claimed in a tweet posted by a witness. Riots were sparked, involving clashes with the police. On the 20th October alone, a crowd of protesters were fired at, with at least 12 people dead.

These physical acts of protest were accompanied by an online protest where thousands of people tweeted support and raised global awareness. The digital space of protest was also vital in sharing information and organising events and meeting places. Eventually, the SARS unit was disbanded and replaced with Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT), but this new development was faced with suspicion by the people as they feared this was simply a renaming of SARS that would plunge Nigeria back into the cycle of violence. While protests can lead to change, this only comes at the cost of conflict and loss of life.

A stable society requires good relations between law enforcement and the communities they protect, a relationship that is thoroughly violated by police brutality. Serious systemic change needs to happen both within Africa and elsewhere around the world in order to restore trust in the police. Until this is achieved, riots and civil unrest will continue to occur as a symbol of the desperate need for substantial change.



Interpreting Human Rights: The Individual and The State

Oliver Iskandar Banks

Advocacy for human rights is gaining momentum in Africa, but the birth of rights consciousness is not new. As the internet and social media spread during the 2010s, new forms of, and routes to, protest emerged with the accessibility to information increasing. When Mohammed Bouazizi set himself on fire in Tunisia in 2014, it was a globally attuned event precisely because of the networks of communication which technology has brought to us. Yet although the globalisation of self-expression has made knowledge propagate in whole new ways, we should be careful, when attributing concepts with a Western genesis to non-Western settings. Fundamental to the values developed in Europe during the Enlightenment was self-determination, an autonomy that extended not only into the governmental sphere and choice of one's leaders, but also to an autonomy of thought. It is in this vein that whilst we should not fall prey to separating residents of Africa from residents of the world, in that we are all of the same species, it is important to recognise that each place has a history, one informed by culture and climate, past and future possibilities.

To import half-heartedly the values of Western liberalism into deeply complex foreign contexts would be to redouble the post-colonial orientalism that Edward Said argued so vociferously against. Human rights are not about a utilitarian maximisation of outcomes. Their founding principle is the maximisation of individual freedom. What should be imported, taught to, and learned by those living under repressive or corrupt regimes; which is all of us to a certain extent, though there are some far worse than others; is the valuation of their freedom. This is not a freedom we can encapsulate in financial, proletarian, or purely physical terms. It is the freedom to develop one's powers as a human being, as an end in themselves. Those powers may be embodied in a craft you love, hobbies or activities you pursue simply for the sake of themselves.

When Mohamed Cheikh Ould Mkhaitir was sentenced to death in 2014 by the Mauritanian government for writing a critique of the caste system, he was attacking a system of power that upholds itself by making people unhappy. In a culture of unhappiness and mutually disadvantageous treatment, incentives are created to exert influence and control through violent, unfair means. Structurally, a state like Mauritania cannot uphold itself without clamping down on critiques that counteract the hegemonic narrative. Regimes do not stay in power because of force, they stay in power because of ideology. It is the belief that there is a higher authority ready to punish you, ready to disapprove of one's actions and enforce that disapproval paternally that keeps those who do not sit at the upper echelons under its thumb. Political prestige is, of course, backed by military might.

The harm which one person causes another as they abuse their position or role of authority, likely under orders of someone they depend on, for self-sustaining worth like income, is a physical, literal manifestation of organisational features that predispose such individuals to harmful acts.

The deep “othering” of the person subjected to a beating by the cops, or a writer imprisoned for his views, exists partly outside of the realm of intentionality, and is ultimately a product of the way we see each other. It would horrify, I hope, the cop that administers the beating to do the same to his brother or wife, but the separation between him and the person he hurts allows harmful acts to become permissible. It is because he does not see his dependence on his victim, as a fellow member of society, that he can do such a thing. And whilst it is true that those close to us can always and often hurt us, that hurt is felt by the both of you in a true and healthy relationship, familial tie or friendship, whereas for the unjust cop, the hurt that he should feel is repressed and internalised. It may haunt the back of his mind at night, and affect his relations with others in strange and subtle ways, but it is kept concealed by the othering which systems of authority and control teach him.

If we are to envisage a concept of human rights that does away with the absurdities of what old Western thought has taught us, it needs to be aware of the dependence humans have on one another, and make that dependence a starting point rather than a secondary feature. We need to say: yes, I rely on you for my freedom, for my wellbeing, for my income; you and I are not separable. And we need to say this to our leaders, to the authorities, and to every other person in the county, nation, world that we live in. This is not an idealistic vision of humanity. It is, if anything, a brutal one; because it requires us to take on responsibility for each and every act we perform, in the knowledge that something as small as buying one bar of chocolate over another can have a profound impact on the being or another. Little does the unconscientious consumer know that the first bar contains unsustainable palm oil, whereas the second did not.

Governments, like business operations, are the cumulative effect of countless tiny actions, ones which at each point we have the agency to change. By denying this we are only fooling ourselves. It takes true bravery to accept the guilt that living in a corrupt, capitalistic, un-nurturing world generates. By living in a broken system, we are always taking part in it.

The way out of this is a radical reformulation of the questions of rights and liberty. When the authorities put pressure on a political candidate like Bobi Wine before an election, we should not assert his right to be left alone, free from interference. Our duty is to first return to the question of why these coercive capacities of the state exist, and why they are being deployed this way. In reframing the state as a benevolent friend, a helper rather than the necessary evil that must be kept at arms’ length, we open the floodgates to a whole new form of critique. We can ask why the opportunities for dissent and debate are not there, because that is what we do when building healthy connectivity between humans. Our quiet friend who never expresses his preferences must be given a voice by their benevolent companion; else it causes worry. A proper and just polity is, at heart, a vivacious social environment.

Why is Africa Protesting?

Benjamin Salvo

Over the years, most of the African people have witnessed a decline in the effectiveness of their respective governing body in providing the basic necessities that will ensure growth and development of the country. With dismaying actions, laws and practices regularly performed by each governing sector, it has proven difficult to elevate the current state of affairs in each country to one of better conditions.

Even though these laws and policies are enacted by the government, the people eventually are on the receiving end of the consequence of these decisions. According to the 10th edition of the Global Corruption Barometer (GCB) Africa, most people in Africa feel that political corruption has increased in their country over time instead of declining. A majority also feels optimistic that they, as citizens, can make a difference in the fight against corruption. This data accounts for 130 million citizens in the 35 countries surveyed.

Africans have progressively adopted the choice to 'speak out' through public protests in their respective states. Protests are typically peaceful demonstrations by the masses to force the opposition to hear their disapproval over a certain challenge. In the twentieth century alone, more than 10 African countries have witnessed massive future determining demonstrations, which were peaceful, disruptive, or violent in nature. Studying the causes of these protests, it is well noticed that the main theme or cause eventually points to a corrupt act or unresponsiveness of the government in rectifying an important matter presented by the public.

These mass protests organized by the people are almost entirely over noteworthy, recurring political and social-economic challenges that the government refuses to rectify over decades. The collective concerns expressed being poverty, law enforcement brutality, a high rate of corruption, and lack of essential amenities. All these instances are recurring problems that the citizens have had to bear for decades; all the while being promised by the government body in power that they would rectify these underlying issues.

A typical example of such protest urging for political reform is the 2016 – 2017 Zimbabwe protests. These series of protests began on the 6th of July, 2016 when thousands of Zimbabweans protested against government repression, high rates of unemployment, poor public services and political corruption. Their demands were noticeable political reform, which included the sacking of corrupt ministers, payment of delayed salaries, and lifting of road-blocks that residents say are used by police to extract bribes. The protests, which went on for a couple of months, resulted in the resignation of former President Robert Mugabe.

Another prominent protest that took a stand for political reform was in Burkina Faso in the year 2016. These protests were triggered as a response to the announcement that an attempt was in motion to change the constitution, which will allow President Blaise Compaoré to run again and extend his 27 years in office. After two days of ongoing protests in Burkina Faso, the President abandoned plans to amend the constitution to allow him a further three terms in office.



Political reform was also demanded through protests in Ethiopia in 2016. Protests were organized as a result of disapproval against the expansion of boundaries of the capital city into Oromia special zone. After the violent response from the government, the protests grew nationwide and the plan to expand was eventually put to an end. However, the protests continued even after the announcement. Deputy Chairman of the opposition Oromo Federalist Congress Protesters, Mulatu Gemechu demanded social and political reforms (including government killings of civilians, mass arrests, government land seizures, and political marginalization of opposition groups).

The rise of protests in Africa has mostly been orchestrated by the youths of that particular society. The UN's demographic projections reveal that around 13.4% of the total labor force is unemployed. More than 40% of young Africans consider their current living situation to be very bad or fairly bad, and 60% of Africans (especially youth) think that their governments are doing a very bad or fairly bad job at addressing the needs of young people. Judging on current circumstances, this data only seems to be presenting a worsening situation, rather than an improving one.

This compels the people to coordinate or participate in protests, as they believe they stand a chance to achieve actual results. Public protests seem to provide hope of changing infuriating cycles that the government seats keep repeating, regardless of who sits on the actual seat. These situations hope to change socio-economic and political challenges faced by average people in their environment.

However, these protests do not seem to harmonize with the governmental bodies they are directed to. They typically respond with the aim of disbursing the crowd using the brute force of law enforcement, or dismissing them with the promise of enacting the supposed change, only for the process to be entirely neglected all over again.

It is well recognized that the people who ran and still run the governmental body don't bat an eyelid for these young constructs, despite the existence of several platforms for participation and the expression of discontent.

In instances where some of the protests appear to have not brought about any meaningful changes or substantive reforms, the outcry seems to ease through time, with the challenge still at bay.

Young Africans hope for a day that their cries will be heard by the people they vote into power, a day that governmental bodies will hold their best interests at heart. Until then, there are no promises that these protests will diminish, even if they are repeatedly being met by unlawful arrests and violence from law enforcement officers.

Agents of Outrage: Why does the movement of Black Lives Matter resonate in Nigeria?

Marietta Kosma

Discrimination continues to plague society, even if experiences differ. The killing of George Floyd in 2020 raised a public debate over the killing of innocent citizens by the police during the pandemic of COVID-19. Floyd's death took place in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic which sparked the highest level of unemployment since the Great Depression in the 1930s and constituted an important historical change due to the unexpected convergence of different forces. During the global health crisis one of the most divisive political debates on race relations arose. Citizens of Nigeria, where racism was once legislated and condoned, decided to get mobilized and protest vehemently against police brutality, after the killing of George Floyd, an innocent African-American citizen by a white police officer. Floyd's death spurred nationwide concern during the pandemic against police's brutality and brought forward the devastating impacts of police violence against African Americans in this country.

Outrage over US racism resonates across Africa and especially in Nigeria, due to the country's history of colonialism and racism. Instead of solely focusing on police brutality in the United States, we should think about the legacy of slavery, colonialism and imperialism on a global scale. What about Black Lives in Africa, the continent mostly populated by black people who get excluded from Western narratives? Protestors in Nigeria take up action as they are part of a larger discourse, of a global movement.

In Africa, protests take place on a smaller scale, as a few hundred people participate in them. George Floyd was killed on the 25th of May 2020 which symbolically is a day set aside as African Liberation Day since 1963. His death triggered an anti-racism protest worldwide. There has been growing attention to the way that police brutality impacts black women since the Black Lives Matter movement. Subsequent to the BLM movement, #SayHerName emerged to highlight the impact of police violence on women, promoting inclusivity. Say Her Name was launched in May 2020 in order to bring to the forefront black women's often sidelined experiences of police brutality.

The 'Black Lives Matter Movement in Nigeria (BLMMN)' arose in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement of the United States. This movement started in order to challenge police brutality in Nigeria. More specifically, on the 2nd of June 2013, a small group of protestors holding a banner with the inscription 'Black Lives Matter Movement in Nigeria' (BLMMN) "marched to the United States embassy and Consulate in Abuja and Lagos respectively". The embassy employers have also supported the protestors in order to increase awareness on police brutality.

However, a criticism that could be posed is that protestors did not explicitly protest against police brutality even though Nigeria is experiencing a rise in violence and particularly in femicide. In addition, what is problematic is that it did not become known in activists' circles.

Another issue is that “the leader of the BLMMN march to the USA embassy in Abuja was the same person who attacked #RevolutionNow supporters in front of a federal high court beating up one of these supporters”.

In addition, the BLMMN is linked to the #JusticeForVeraUwaila and #JusticeForBarakatBello movements. These movements center around the issue of sexual violence, as they demand equality for a 21-year-old and an 18-year-old female student respectively. It is important to address the violence inflicted on these bodies because what seems to not have been taken into account is the way that the law underpins gender inequalities. What is interesting is that protesters took an intersectional stance towards the exposition of violence by seeking #JusticeForTinaEzekwe. Tina Ezekwe was sixteen years old when the police shot her dead in Lagos, Nigeria. The incident happened when a bus driver and his conductor were captured by two armed police officers because they broke curfew regulations during lockdown. The officers requested money from the driver in order to let them carry on with their route. However, the driver refused to pay that sum, so the police officer shot him. Then the police fired at the crowd that had watched the scene. People fled for their lives. However, Tina who was at her mother’s shop did not manage to escape the shooting. She succumbed to her injuries and died in the hospital. The question that I wish to raise is why was the police shooting at unarmed citizens in the first place? Do the police have the right to target innocent people and perpetuate systemic violence?

Unfortunately, Tina’s, Vera’s and Barakat’s lives have not been valued, as they died a meaningless death. Their names will be on a list with many others, as in Nigeria, mass shootings are an everyday occurrence. Shootings are used in order to force people to comply with governmental guidelines.

Systemic violence needs to be addressed. Despite an increase in mobilizations, Africa still remains peripheral to the analysis of the BLM movement. This article exposes the points of convergence and tension between Black Lives Matter and Nigerian uprisings, in order to highlight the global character of racism and discrimination. The exposition of structural violence throws light on the perpetuation of systemic racism and ethnicism, which continues to plague the 21st century. The Black Lives Matter movement has empowered the Nigerian population to gain agency and create similar movements, that can progressively effect social change, calling an end to systemic violence.



The Significance of Worth in Classrooms: Why enough is not good enough

Robyn McQueen

Children in South Africa have vastly different educational experiences, due, in part, to their own idea of what they are worth. Some sit in classrooms equipped with fancy technology while others share desks, chairs, and textbooks in overcrowded classrooms. This reflective article focuses on the millions of South African children who find themselves somewhere within this spectrum. These are the children who, despite Mandela's call to action through his oft-quoted "Education is the most powerful weapon to change the world", have not felt their worlds changed by education. Instead, South African education systems have so often entrenched children's norms and beliefs that their worlds have remained largely unchanged. They deserve better, but mistakenly believe otherwise.

In 1976, Black South African students protested against the use of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction (a language spoken by their oppressors). Officially, 23 lost their lives in this uprising, but it is widely acknowledged that this figure does not account for all the casualties. The 1976 Black students were protesting not only about language, but also about the systemic discrimination they faced because of their race.

Fast-forward 45 years, and discrimination is still rife in the South African schooling system. Although 9 million children rely on school meals every day, these have not been reliably delivered during the coronavirus pandemic school closures. 80% of children attend no-fee schools which historically have under-resourced and over-crowded classrooms. Most of these children are Black. Nic Spaull's work has suggested that of 100 children who begin Grade 1, 50-60 will remain in school until their final high school year, 40-50 will pass the school-leavers' examinations, 14 will qualify for university, and only 6 will qualify with an undergraduate degree within 6 years. These statistics tell a story of system failure, not just one impacting children, but one constantly unsettling the economic and political stability of the country.

I have worked at a range of schools in South Africa and the following reflections are based on my own and colleagues' experiences in a variety of schools. Two schools particularly form the basis of this reflection. Both were attended by Black students, and all parents had made sacrifices for their children to attend these schools. Both schools offered boarding facilities and thus attracted students from many parts of the country. However, with one being a low-cost rural private school, and the other costing at least 10 times than the other and situated in an urban township, the children at these schools experienced education very differently. Class sizes were similar, but nothing else was. The thing that fundamentally altered these children's experiences was the feeling of self-worth.

At the rural school, children accepted whatever educational service they were offered, despite this often being below acceptable standards. They slept through lessons when teachers had not shown up to teach, accepted that staff meetings and sports events would regularly interrupt teaching time, and attended after-hours classes as if it was the norm. Comparatively, the children whose parents paid higher fees at the urban school felt more entitled to a higher quality of education. They enquired about teachers who were absent or not teaching them, and worked while waiting for answers. They prioritised teaching and learning over other extra-curriculars, and requested extra lessons only if they had failed to understand something in class.

Of course, I cannot even pretend to suggest that school environments are subject mainly to children's demands and parental expectations, but there is something to be said for children's responses (and lack of responses) to the services they are being offered. Those children who sit idly in classrooms waiting for education to happen to them probably do so because they do not believe they deserve any better. It is as if those children really are the empty vessels of Freire's philosophy, waiting passively for educational deposits. There are a few exceptions to this rule, who are hailed as Miracle Makers defying all odds to achieve educational success. Yet surely the education system which fails so many cannot be left to fester as it does; action can be taken to ensure that 'good enough' becomes 'better' so that all can benefit from education.

Other countries have seen examples of children and parents putting pressure on service providers to serve them with excellence. Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys in Uganda angered the population when they found out how budgets were being spent within the education sector. Since 2009, parents have felt empowered to question officials about how taxes are being spent. Kenyan schoolchildren and parents protested after their school was demolished amid a politicised land dispute in 2017. In 2019, Brazilians took to the streets to protest against state cuts to the education budget and political interference with the curriculum. And a recent investigative journalism piece published by the BBC tracks how one South African pupil is campaigning for better resources at her school after pupils were asked to clean their own toilets as part of daily school routines. When people gather together, their collective voice is louder than the sum of their individual efforts. These examples should serve as examples encouraging us all to work towards better education in our locales. We may not each be able to make drastic changes but our advocacy and activism will never be a lost cause.

Children should know that they are worth more, when teachers choose to eat lunch instead of teach. We need to advocate for more to be done for all children who find themselves in similar positions. A failure of education does not mean failure for only one child; it is a failure for whole families, communities, and countries. And one way for children to get better education is for their country, their community, and their family to entrench in them the feeling of worth – that they are good enough to be educated. They deserve more than enough; they deserve excellence. It is for this that children should learn to encourage each other to fight for what they are worth, and to expect the best from both themselves and the system that serves to educate them.

Dear Africa,

When do we destabilize the systems that keep people in 'boxes'?

The systems that label you;

That profiles you based on your skin hues , Religious affiliations, possessions, looks.

The systems that physically, emotionally and spiritually impound you.

And when do we do away with all which culminates into a waste Of the African intellectual resource?

The limiting thinking systems , The Blackman's algorithm,

Fastest to bring out all the wrong reasons

Why you shouldn't aspire for greatness.

Can we do without ethnic and tribal systems

Of ethnocentrism and tribalism?

Where some tribes actually do have reputations to maintain and as such, are stuck in their old ways?

Refusing anything innovative; anything new.

"We are a timid folk, you can't be wild";

"We've always been hot-heads, you can't be soft";

"We don't accept technology here, away with your gadgets";

"Our people don't travel out of our land, so don't";

You could go on and on about the wrongs

That need righted in Africa .

So, you know the narrative now

Needs a change.

Can we start by thinking differently?

Can we think of free quality education,

For every child?

And can we translate our thoughts into actions?

Because we face the future now,

A future of intergalactic and interplanetary exploration.,

A future of unprecedented technological advancement,

A future of undaunted progress,

That we cannot walk away from.

Where then, does Africa stand in anticipation of this future?

Samuel Manford



