

People's True Power

More often than not people are unnecessarily abused. Abusers of innocent, and sometimes ignorant people, have utilized every tool at their disposal to inflict emotional pain to 'defenceless' people. Once people realize that they are not defenceless, action is summoned, and cruel abusers find no space to hide and realize that they are standing on sinking sand.

People have got true power vested in them. Imagine a 15-seater commuter omnibus carrying eighteen (plus one) passengers. Plus one, yes, I mean it; a tout is just crouching or leaning over passengers sitting behind the driver. His language is full of vulgarity; eighteen passengers keep quiet. Some may even share laughter with the abusive tout. The vulgar music in the omnibus is not music anymore; it is a pain on its own. People are dropped far away from their drop points. Who cares? Those who dare to voice are yelled at and the whole omnibus share the laughter still. People are paying their hard earned cash to maintain abusers.

In the picture Kubatana showed us, people are crammed on one side of the balancing plank. On its own, this is unfair. Such a huge crowd to be on balance with an individual! It is clear the huge weight of this individual symbolizes too much resources stashed to an individual at the expense of everyone else. Surprisingly, people continue to support one person, and sing praise songs to his admiration. He is joyfully pointing to the skies promising them heaven and the earth - false promises. Look at the distance he has kept between himself and 'his' people. He is too big to mingle with them. He must be a politician or perhaps a pastor of the modern church. Like a king, he treats people like his subjects; they come trembling before him.

But, there is still hope. Some have started to realize that their big leader is now too far away from them and they have become disenfranchised by slogans. They begin to move away. Who is going to remain balancing the 'good' leader? Oh, one by one they will surely leave! I shudder to imagine the thunderous fall of the dear leader once people claim their true power. The good leader will fall into an abyss of darkness and be devoured by yet to be known beasts of darkness.

If only, and if only! If only people could realize their power all shameless abusers would flee, even from their own shadows. How can one dirty person harass eighteen people in an omnibus, eh? Thousands of people being abused by few individuals who loot everything, eh! In the picture, people have surrendered their power to one person. They do not have a say in their lives but the good leader has. People should limit the power they invest in one person. They should summon their leader to come closer to them. Our leaders should be amongst us, and be accountable to us. We should not fear our leaders, NO!

Busani Nkomo

People don't...

- I think I'll go and buy some airtime.
- really? That's what you think that guy's thinking?
- which guy? No, actually, I really think I am going to go buy some airtime.
- that's funny, actually. Airtime. Even better, Buy Airtime. Almost brilliant.
- funny how?
- you don't get it. Are we both looking at the same cartoon? Don't you think most of these sorts of things are just that, buying airtime? Some delusional guy standing in front of a bunch of equally delusional guys yabbering on about a whole lot of delusional nonsense.
- how come there aren't any women in the group?
- what?
- there all men. And if you look closer, they are all the same guy. Even the twit behind the podium.
- it's a cartoo-ooooon. That's the format, stupid. It's like a quick drawing, ... sort of. It's not about the detail, it's abo...
- don't call me stupid, STUPID! How lazy can you be? THE PEOPLE...all men...DON'T KNOW. Period. You know, you were right, a bunch of stupid GUYS listening to an even more STUPID GUY.
- eeeeeeish sha, panties in a twist and all.
- no man. Look at it. Really. How can this seemingly innocuous little drawing decide who 'the people' are?
- you're missing the point.
- who's point...pray do tell?
- the point being that, erm, it's kind of random I guess...shit, actually, they are all the same guy. Wow. That is kind of weird.
- it is quite unnerving. Sort of a subliminal comment on ubuntu.
- what?
- well, he IS because they ARE.
- I'm not getting you.
- I'm not sure I can actually articulate, ... I'll try...think about it - in some grand spiritual sense, we are...well, all the same. What really separates us is how we develop, or in the case of this image, how 'we' can regress.
- and so?
- and so, leaders are not really those that decide to stand in front of us, yabbering on about some delusional stuff, leaders are...well, it's so obvious, leaders are us. I'd even go one step further, and say that it's not about 'power'; it's really about choice. And then courage to believe and follow your choice.
- so, he's choosing.
- who?
- the guy who's stepping away.
- maybe. Or maybe he's just going to buy some airtime.
- how can you be so random, so nonchalant?
- because it's about so much more than just stepping away. Stepping away to what?
- freedom?
- really? You getting that from this cartoon. Guy, who looks like all the other guys, even the guy teetering, well not yet, on the edge, is stepping away to freedom?
- ya, I guess. I do.

- and what about the rest of them? What's going to make all of them decide to step away?
- what, like en masse?
- ya.
- teatime.
- stupid.....I'm going to buy some airtime.

Souxii's Phrend

The people don't know their true power

It's amazing how much we can do when we are united in strength as a people. We are able to overcome obstacles in our lives through unity of will and unity of purpose.

The most amazing thing is how much of a force for good it can be when people work together. I am not talking about the greater good as some abstract noble concept but about the tangible things, which we can see, on a day-to-day basis.

The picture shows a mass of people arrayed facing a speaker who whilst in a position of relative authority, is also in a position of relative insecurity, because the people are arrayed in a manner which influences the speaker's overall stability and position.

When people work together for good, things, which appear in authority in our lives, are actually controlled and defined by our actions.

The ability to change even the biggest of obstacles is emphasized by the simple act of standing together in unity and in one accord.

I don't think that people are ignorant of the power they have but that it is something which needs a moral focus and a determination. The most amazing way to do this is through finding a church where people can assemble and learn about God and how living a life following him as a people can lead people to understand that there is such a thing as a corporate blessing.

The ability to understand the term corporate blessing is an aspect which when it applies to a people as a church, can apply to a people as a parish; can apply to people as a town, as a city and as a nation.

Understanding that walking in a manner where you can receive a corporate blessing and then apply a corporate blessing on a nation by your actions then helps create an attitude and a culture where what you have the ability to do as both an individual and as a group enables you to work and enact all that you do in a spirit of unity of purpose founded on humility which is one of the most important lessons you receive from God anyway.

When you really want to understand why people walk in ignorance of their power you really have to understand that the disunity you see is a sign of their separation as a people who no longer understand and appreciate that unity of faith expresses unity and harmony of life.

Nothing is more expressive of that power than when a people are motivated to act out of love rather than self-interest or independent will. It is rather the knowledge that I am my brother's keeper, which makes me care about the consequences of my actions against him, not just as an individual but also as a united group.

James Magwojo

Abuse of power

This is my observation on the picture. On the left is a group of desperate people whom I think are workers at a company. At the far right is the manager who in this situation I can call the BOSS of the company. The Boss is raising his finger as a command that no one should attempt to get closer to where he is.

The employees are trying to approach the Boss with grievances written on lifted banners. These employees do not have a workers committee to represent them so they decided to go as a group with written grievances on banners. No one has the guts to approach the boss or speak from the crowd, so if something is written on the banner, no one will be pinpointed for influencing others.

The Boss is very abusive of his powers and thinks that since he is the boss for this company, he has the right to hire and fire anyone at any given time if they do not listen to him. The picture shows the workers who are very fearful for the loss of jobs and the boss. The workers have decided to take up courage and approach the boss because their grievances have not been attended to for a long time. The workers are underpaid despite the hard times they are facing. One of the workers who may be one of the passive workers committee is holding a manual, which indicates that workers were supposed to get increasing half yearly.

The way the workers are parading is not a sign of respect but fear of the boss. Only one of the worker's realizes his rights that he cannot be tossed around like that and leaves the group. What the boss fails to understand is that he is there because of the employees. If they all leave the company his life is at risk, he will definitely fall into the endless pit as revealed by the picture. He is only maintaining his status quo because of the workers who balancing off things at work through the services they provide each day.

If the boss leaves the company, the workers can still survive, they are still safe where they stand. Another good manager may come in and run the company very well or they may leave the company and get better jobs elsewhere. To conclude, one has to listen to what the subordinates are saying because they hold your future.

There is a hand raised from the ground, its encouraging workers to exercise their rights and approach the boss. One should be bold enough to stand up for his or her right, that's what that palm is indicating.

Hwisaisai Tembo

The people don't know their power

Inspiring leadership, even if it is lonely; but only at first
Inspiring action; even if others are not looking
It is not about what others think, but what is embedded deep inside of me
If I stay with the crowd, look how my posture postulates
A tired, fed-up attitude; almost resigned
Shoulders down, a crooked neck – that will surely give me a herniated disc one of these days
I look and feel so bad
I look and feel like the crowd
Almost like a penguin, dawdling along, with fins alongside my body
A penguin that lives in a land of only 2 colours; white snow and blue water

But I live in a beautiful, colourful world
Why am I not choosing those colours?
Why am I not hungering after them?
Why am I not asking to see them?
Why am I not asking for them to be taken out of their hidden shelter?
Why am I cowering away, allowing lack of transparency to take over?
I need those colours
Because I am unique
Unique in my ways
My beautiful hands to raise, palm up, blocking away offences
Because I have had enough
My beautiful legs that I can use to walk the other way
Because they are still functional
Away from the plank that's dictating my life
The plank that is taking all of my weight
The plank that is allowing me to support those I shouldn't be
The plank that stops me from being unique
I come off that plank, because I am unique
I have beautiful hands that will help me balance as I get off the plank
I have lovely legs that will move one foot in front of the other as I get off this prison plank
I walk towards colour
I reclaim it and hope that others will look back
Follow me with their gaze, into a transparent world where no planks keep us formed in one place
Away from a plank that has no room for me to move
Away from a plank that recycles bad air because there isn't much room
I get off the plank, because I am important
I have rights
I have insight
I am special: wonderfully and fearfully made
It's time to act
The time is now
Turn around; let's get off the plank
Towards a world of freedom, free speech, free from dogma and dictation
A free me, a free country, a free you, a free continent, a free brotherhood

The loving planet
Turn around...get off the plank

I have the power; I am a leader
Into colour I walk, away from darkness
Into freedom I lead
Because I am fearfully and wonderfully made
Of a people with true power!

Barbara Mutedzi

Hope

I wrote this poem for Zimbabwe and us her people...

Hope

My hope slips away like a whisper
A broken faded inaudible song of freedom
Hope fades away as my head touches my pillow
Though enchanted in my dreams
I am a hero

Hope dances in thorny platinum-rose bushes
Pricking away my dreams and my people's wishes
Yet diamonds flow like blood from my wounds
This bitter meal is my people's riches

This Timid hope drains my wailing souls
Till all that is left is shrivelled bones
A death a hunger so painfully slow
Hope awaits he that is not bold.

Karl Chifokoyo

We'll win in the end

It was clear during the 1980's that the totalitarian societies in Eastern Europe were not doing well economically, but their formidable apparatus of control seemed intact. As the decade progressed those elements of civil society who managed to sustain and organise themselves in the face of the onslaught from the various state organs seemed to lose their fear bit by bit.

The early stages of the communications revolution, even then, made it impossible for the governments in countries like Poland, Czechoslovakia and East Germany to hide all of their crimes. These governments knew that they held power only by terror and they knew that if the terror ended so would they. Ordinary citizens were not allowed easy access to telephones. Fax machines were licensed and a private citizen could not own one. Radio, TV, newspapers and periodicals were only for the state. No private person could legally publish anything to a wide audience. This was not enough.

People crossed borders, satellites spied from the sky, samizdat newsletters were passed from hand to hand, Voice of America and the BBC broadcasts came through in spite of massive jamming efforts. The deeds of heroic figures like Lech Walesa and Vaclav Havel became widely known. The authorities were no longer able to conduct murder, rape, beating and imprisonment in secret. Everybody knew what a massive failure the dictatorships were. How the leaders lived in palaces while the sick died for lack of medicine. How people who were in free countries lived and acted compared to the poor downtrodden citizens of the dictatorships.

Soon even to their own ardent supporters and beneficiaries the dictatorships were nothing but a cruel ironic joke. Compare an East German Trabant to a real car. Russian made clothing to what people in the free world were wearing. A state department store to a real shop. A holiday in some state boarding house to a real holiday in a real hotel. A state owned propaganda mouthpiece to a real newspaper or magazine. If you don't laugh you have got to cry.

People lost their fear. As the year 1989 progressed every seemingly impregnable bastion of dictatorship fell, or simply dissolved. The border guards stopped shooting innocent citizens; soldiers stopped obeying their murderous orders. Soon the dictators were either in prison, on the run or dead. Everybody was left wondering why if it was so easy it had taken so long for freedom to come. The answer is that once fear has been banished anything is possible.

Here in our own continent we can see the same process happening in country after country. South Africa – who thought that the national party government would go as soon as it did to be replaced by a stable democracy? Kenya, Ivory Coast, Senegal, Zambia, Tanzania even Liberia. The forces of freedom are step by step winning a victory over fear and dictatorship. African economies are now featuring in the race for growth and prosperity. More and more Africans are getting a chance to vote in elections that are real. Is it even remotely possible that our own country is different, that we will be the North Korea of Africa? I do not think so.

Stewart Mackinlay

The power of ordinary people to effect change

Most 'ordinary' people are decent, yet somewhat apathetic individuals, concerned only with the issues and directly affect them, living their own little lives of 'quiet desperation' amidst job and financial pressures. Still we somehow want to make a difference in the world (and want our lives to count for something), but we don't know WHAT to do and HOW to do it. Because we usually underestimate our ability to make any difference and effect change for the better... in our own country and in the world. And that is why so many people do not even exercise the greatest privilege they possess: the privilege of the right to vote. World history rests on the myriad of seemingly insignificant decisions (or lack of decision) of millions of "the little people" throughout the world. Would world history have changed if more people had voted in the US elections of 2000? Would Iraq, the Middle East in general and the world now perhaps be a far safer place?

I believe to effect change, we the ordinary people of the world, have to raise the bar of what we will and will not tolerate - by our leaders and authorities. At a local level, a national level and at international level, as common citizens of planet earth with a shared spirit of humanity (hopefully noble and generous).

We need ACCOUNTABILITY and RESPONSIBILITY...and it all starts at a personal level - in our minds with what we will and not accept as our highest standards in our OWN HEARTS. Things change only when a mass of people, join together to take action in a united initiative for the common good, a worthy cause to make for a better world. In so doing in "democratic societies" they can put heavy pressure on their leaders, the decision makers to take effective and right actions. We need a shift in MINDSET of world leaders - a new way of looking at the immense problems of the world.

PASSION + PURPOSE = POWER ([O.P.P] ORDINARY PEOPLE POWER)

Name withheld

The people do not know their true power

Standing there, on the edge of a political cliff, he addressed the crowd, clueless as to the pain and suffering in their hearts and minds. Their eyes were empty, the flame he once ignited in them long since extinguished, and even the ambers themselves, giving up the struggle to light up and burn fierce and strong. It was a turning moment for us then, as we were torn apart by conflicts in our hearts, minds and very souls. One by one, the people departed, not understanding the full scale of their desertion, that his very life, his position, relied on the cement we created by our feet holding up his podium, It was like a balancing act, an act so beautiful in its paradox, that only an observer with an aerial view could see the fate that lay ahead for us all. If he re-ignited the flame, and drew the passion from our inner cores, we would surge forward to embrace him, but alas, only to fall in the abyss beneath. What then was he to us? A saviour or the devil himself? Here to lure us to an untimely death. But wait, maybe, just maybe, we can coax him away from this pedestal of death, and reel him to safety, but how can we do this wordlessly? Will he understand our gestures? Is he reading our signs? It dawns on me as I stand in the middle of the crowd with my placard in hand. His ignorance and pride, are preventing him from reading our signs, we are saying come to us, we will give you safety, we cannot stand here and support you any more, our feet have grown weary, our minds are troubles and wandering, we want to rest, we want a safe place, we want to go home to our children, come over and get safety, we cannot stand to support you anymore on this treacherous cliff. But alas, he did not look, he did not read, he did not feel the atmosphere of weary and despair. Then it dawned on me that it was a lost cause, so I too put down my placard and begun to step away. I realized that when enough people were left to support this foolish act, then everyone would go down too. You can talk your way into and out of anything, but you cannot cheat the laws of physics. At some point in time, there would remain enough people to create equilibrium, and then like the last dying breath, the equilibrium would be lost. Someone could shift their weight, the speaker could stamp his foot in emphasis, either way, this would end badly. And even if we stood there and continued to support him, someone or some people would need to remain behind to support that podium, oh what foolishness we contrive to weave, when we lay out such complex structures that kill the very people that we wish to address.

The Philosopher

The people don't know their true power

The picture depicts two sets of people who are far away from each other, one being an individual who seem to have everything to his advantage – a podium signifying an officially recognised and authoritative position to speak and a technological advantage signified by microphone which can amplify his voice. On the other side there is a crowd whose only voice is the placards. They do not seem to be in a position of authority but have a numerical advantage and are actually supporting the authoritative person.

I take the authoritative person to symbolize any form of leadership eg political or anything that seem to have dominance or authority on people eg an idea or paradigm that seem to be having its way unchallenged and accepted by a people.

Perhaps the most striking truth the picture depicts is the fact that politicians or dominant ideas or people don't know how precarious their position is in relation to the people they lead and lord over and seem to take for granted. The people actually support the pedestal he is standing on but ironically are unaware of the power they wield.

It's both tragic and inspirational as we see one man who has awakened to this truth departing from the platform signalling the gradual, apparently imperceptible but inevitable downfall of the obviously arrogant demagogue on the podium. It's a matter of time before the whole crowd leaves and he plunges into oblivion.

Another inspiring gist is the fact that the confrontational approach may not always achieve desired results but rather lead to the demise of the very people who want to change the status quo. Should the people here individually or collectively confront the speaker by moving to his side they will fall together with him and be defeated.

Quietly abandoning him is more effective. Apparently insignificant responses may bring long-term results. The gentleman in question is going to give his audience to a different paradigm or is pioneering his own paradigm.

There is always a ray of hope in 'hopeless' situations in that there are always individuals who see beyond the norm and are prepared to set new trends even though they may seem unnoticed at first like the gentleman in the picture. It will be a question of time before the crowd follows suite. It's unlikely the politician or authority figure notices him leaving and perhaps would have done so if he was in the front row but one doesn't need to be at what people regard as a vantage position to initiate change. Any one can do so.

The politician or authority figure's situation isn't totally hopeless as well. He must simply step out from behind his podium and walk towards the people. The closer he draws towards them the safer he is. This would enable him to relate to them in a more personal manner rendering gadgets like the microphone redundant while ensuring his position and influence safer and more guaranteed.

Wellington Njerere

People don't know their true power

Sometimes as human beings who need to be led, think that we have no power and yet according to me we have more power than those leading us. Why exactly do I say so? Leaders cannot lead where there are no people and they exist because of people. If we take a look at the picture, the crowd you address as a leader can be for or against your leading. To show that they are against your leadership, they turn their backs on you or just move away. You will be lucky if they decide to quietly move away because some will cause havoc within the crowd. The moment they move away it means the leader's downfall, as the equation will no longer balance. It is therefore crucial for a leader to rely on people though they might seem useless, uneducated, poor, etc. It is also important for a leader to know that whilst people can seem to be obeying the rules and paying attention, there is room for opposition or criticism. Backing off is thus a sign of opposition. As a leader, one should understand that not everyone is happy with the leader's leadership skills. While one may have acquired the necessary skills to lead it is very important to get opinions, suggestions and views of the people you are leading so that you can develop and improve on your skill. A good leader accommodates negative and positive ideas to show that he is not selfish. He should not expect everybody to be a 'YES' man even if they are not happy with the situation. When I was a child, I used to think that the teacher is always correct since he is senior in both age and education. What I didn't know was that I was wrong because you do not have to agree on everything even if its not true or agreeable.

We also face problems in situations like from the above picture where people do not know that their voice matters and has the power to change a lot. Some will just stand behind others saying, "what can we say, we just follow what has been said?" Physical abuse and harassment will also contribute to that fear in people. One would keep quiet fearing for his/her family's life. Many will only suffer quietly wishing if only they could live a life of freeness and fairness. So, leaders hear the voice of the people and avoid talking always, giving instructions and leaving no space for discussion and opinions. People should exercise their rights but should always remember that leaders were chosen by God using us so we should obey them as much as possible. Leaders have people to feel free to say what they feel or think and you will lead them successfully. Finally I would like to say people do not live a life of fear, say out your voice and also leaders look up to those you lead and do not look down on them.

Name withheld

People Do Not Know Their Power

32 years since Zimbabwe became an independent nation and the masses have little if not nothing to show for it. The people whom we elect turn to become our 'bosses' rather than our servants i.e. legislators and all other political office bearers. Recently the headlines in our local newspapers were screaming of the freezing of civil service salaries whilst the parliamentarians are clamouring for more sitting allowances and benefits. We have had sleeping legislators whilst some are debating on pertinent issues and developing their constituencies, however it is shocking that the same calibre of people get re-elected despite their low levels of seriousness.

Policies and Acts have been instituted against the will of the people for instance ESAP, ZIMPREST, Operation Murambatsvina etc but shockingly the masses have remained silent. Strikes, riots and mass demonstrations mainly from 1998 up to the present day have shown the incessantly increasing discontentment of the masses, only to be met with serious brutality from the law enforcement agencies working under instructions of those whom we have 'voted' into office.

The masses have lost hope in the politicians whom they thought would usher a new dispensation only to realize that these people have become part of the ghastly system. It is not only in terms of the government of Zimbabwe however let us also look at mass based organizations such as trade unions, students' unions and war veterans associations just to mention but a few have witnessed abuse by the elected office bearers whilst no action has been taken against such leaders.

History has shown the people always triumph over rotten systems despite how long it takes. In a democratic society all those who are elected into power are held accountable for whatever they have done but alas my fellow kith and kin have tolerated leaders going against their will.

On the international arena, leaders have been voted out of office for standing against the expectations of the people for instance Nicolas Sarkozy, regionally Gadaffi was overthrown for imposing tyrant policies and locally we have examples such as the liberation war struggle, the land invasions by the Svosve people and the mass demonstrations of 1998 just to mention a few are all examples of how the people have succeeded to fight against ill systems.

In the last held elections in Zimbabwe there has been serious voter apathy as the people have lost hope in the electoral processes, which are meant to give people the opportunity to choose their leaders. The continuous utterances by some government and ZANU-PF officials blaming the West for trying to effect regime change in Zimbabwe is simply a tactic to divert the people's attention from real issues as it is imperative that no one will triumph against the people's wills it only a question of when. When it dawns on the people of Zimbabwe that they have greater power than those 'leaders' of the day that is when development shall once again characterize our nation.

Grant Tabvurei (Former ZINASU National Spokesperson)

Power to the People!

‘Jobs for everyone, better schools for the youths, housing for everyone’blah , blah, blah..!

That’s what Kundai, an 18-year-old young woman seems to be hearing every evening from some political party in her community, Mkoba 15, Gweru to be precise. Once she hears such chants, then you realise that elections are just around the corner. But the most painful thing is’ will Kundai be able to find a way of questioning the political parties whether their manifestoes address her concerns as a young woman... eish! That’s another issue to deal with.

But looking at the picture, I also realise that it’s only men in trousers and I ask myself where the women are. Our society has become used to the fact that politics is for men only and women are just there to sing praises to politicians who will not even address women’s concerns. Liberia and Malawi has just proved to the rest of Africa that women do belong to politics, which either way they would want to define it!

Back to the picture, I learn that it only takes one brave woman/man to remove him/herself from the crowd and the more individuals become brave enough to disengage themselves from the crowd, the more it becomes so obvious that the politicians power is meaningless. At the end of the day, I ask myself, I am powerful in my own individual right and I have the power to change my circumstances... but that also needs people of the same mind to be brave enough to go against the tide!

The Occupy Movement in the US and the rest of Europe has taught me appreciate that power lies within the people irrespective of one’s gender, sex, tribe, ethnicity religion, creed. Can Zimbabweans rise to the challenge and start claiming our power back from the politicians! Only time will tell...but one thing for sure is that the wind of change is already here...lying dormant and waiting for the right moment to unleash itself! Hokoyo!!!!

Tafadzwa Muropa

People power will ultimately rule supreme

No matter any form of oppression that is subjected to a people by its leaders, people power will ultimately rule supreme. To me this picture depicts clearly events which we have seen occurring in many parts of the world and most recently the Arab spring. The picture clearly shows how dictators continue to trample on people's hopes, aspirations, rights and wishes, but like the legendary singer Bob Marley said, only time will tell. For example look at what happened in Romania,

Nicolae Ceausescu, who was executed with his wife on Christmas day of 1989, was a maverick and despotic Romanian Communist leader who pursued an independent course abroad and demanded slavish subservience at home.

For one of Eastern Europe's most durable dictators, Mr. Ceausescu's downfall after 24 years of repression at home and bridge building to the West came astoundingly fast, even when measured against the frantic pace of change in the Soviet bloc that year. Just a month before his death, tens of thousands of workers marched under fluttering flags to hail President Ceausescu's re-election as the General Secretary of the Communist Party.

Also the Libyan revolution is another perfect example on how people power will always rule supreme. The caption of the picture clearly spells it out: The people don't know their true power. The picture inspires me to motivate others to stand up for their rights and fight dictatorial rule and oppression.

Name withheld

Yes We Can!

Now I know the cost of liberation from insolent and arrogant tyrannical establishments. Confrontation. The success of the Orange revolution and the ongoing Egyptian transitional process are cases in point, where citizens have made their voices heard.

Citizens should be the, “change they wish to see in the world.” What it implies is; the onus is upon those who look for change to actively labour towards its attainment. Passive resistance, as peaceful as it is, leaves a lot desired in as much as change is expected. For the citizens to just hope our political leaders will wake up ‘born again’, without a fight, is like saying ‘a snake has beautiful thighs.’

What motivates me - to say this, is the confirmation of my long held realisation- the precarious positions of those in power. It is us who put them into these corridors of influence, making us responsible for their stay.

It might appear strange, especially with ‘firewalls’ around these ‘experts’ for maintaining a stranglehold on power at all costs, but they will go. Their seemingly invincibility, propagated by repressive legislations and machineries of violence, is but a clear manifestation of their fear of being flushed out by those they suppress.

Three years ago, who would have imagined the Egyptian strongman, would be a ‘once upon a time’, relegated to the dustbins of political desperation? Or perhaps that the ostentatious cult hero of Libya would for once plead for mercy from those he sarcastically ascribe to ‘rats’?

The people’s true power is to be underestimated at one’s peril. No one can stop something whose time has come! Only the wilfully blind and the intentionally deaf can dispute this.

Look, I am not a proponent of a riotous senseless push for change. What I stand for is for citizens to have the tenacity to participate in civic affairs since it is one of the democratic tenets - like what the Egyptians are doing. In showing they despise both the Mubarak era and its reincarnation in the Muslim brotherhood our Arab neighbours in the north, have occupied the Tahrir square.

The aforesaid case is a testament of a people more than ready to protect their vote. Not through the courts because they are made up of compliant officials, but through a peaceful mass uprising.

This is the only way forward in a society like ours, where the rule of law is more often than not, powerless in the face of those who have no respect for the law. We –the masses- should be the balance where the rule of force supersedes the rule of law. We have to show the face of unrelenting courage and iron purpose in the face of despotism. A moment of hesitation helps only in legitimising the illegitimate.

The basis of my rationale is very simple; voter indifference is increasing since 2000. Citizens are refusing to vote till they have confidence that their vote will be protected.

However, this boycott is doing more harm than good, as it makes us all guilty of 'compliance' towards an unjust course.

Wiseman Nyika

The people don't know their true power

As citizens choose their leaders who broadly chat their economic, social and political spheres of their life there's the existence of a social contract between the elect and the electorate. The electorate transfers the mandate of their welfare into the hands of the elected. They are rights and responsibilities to be fulfilled as well obligations to be met by the above mentioned contract partners. Real Power in the governance realm lies with the people. Their say is significant in the well being of this nation. Citizens have been subjected to unbearable socio-economic and political conditions over the last two decades at the mercy of politicians. In this regard false hope, promises and aspirations have been the order of the day yet the entire citizenry have been left pondering the future of their welfare, as there is relative uncertainty. This is true as depicted by the peoples voice in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya.

The balance of power lies with the people and as they spoke regimes crumbled and replaced by new political dispensation within a short space of time. The irresistible call for change by the people shall rise like a mighty storm sweeping away any obstacles in its way to the political doldrums. In this view the growing dissent of the people has been seen and will continually grow and is spoken until the day of reckoning. In **2000**, **2005** and **2008** people decided and possibly in the next 12 months they will speak again and this very hour sending the kleptocratic leadership to the political cemetery. As the winds of real of change heightens the political see saw tilts towards the political demise of ZANU PF. Needless, to say that as the power of the people simmers to the brim there is need for the politically sober minds to notice the signs of the times and distance themselves from the old rhetoric which has failed the country in the last 32 years.

What boggles the mind at this juncture is what vision can ZANU PF provides to the masses of Zimbabwe today, which they failed to fulfil in the last 32 years in power. Furthermore SADC LUANDA SUMMIT cemented the power of the people as no elections are going to be done without the necessary reforms. As the winds of change intensifies people should take heed by distancing themselves from political institutions like ZANU PF irrelevant to the current political order as they risk putting their political life to extinction. By doing so the political quagmire of the irrelevant clique is imminent and inevitable. As Mao puts it ***"In a very short space of time several million people will rise like a mighty storm that no power however great will be able to hold it back"***. People of Zimbabwe awaken as real political power lies within you to determine the future direction of Zimbabwe; the day of political change shall indeed come to pass.

Name withheld

The people don't know their true power

The next elections are coming up, and it is time to campaign to the fullest. Funding yes, funding is the initial stage, once funding is available, some educational qualifications and career or professional qualifications are at hand, and some public speaking and one realises that people pay attention when they speak, and add to that a couple of people who urge you to go for the stage and run the battle, it's why not. A survey around the country and listening to the public's grievances on what their disappointment in the current person in the office, where they are lacking and what the public feels should be done to bring their spirits up, the new candidate feels indeed they are fully equipped to go for the battle. All this is external work. What the eye sees, the ears hear and with the potential and funding one would have gathered all together provide the new candidate with essential tools to gather momentum for the election battle. This may be at church, to be a pastor or bishop, at school to be the next SDA chairperson or member, the local government, councilors, mayor, Member of Parliament, right up to presidential or prime minister post or any leadership post in general.

The dangers of battling to be a member of an organisation from the external world and realizing the weaknesses of sitting in members is that one does not know the hurdles the sitting in members are facing. It is easy to point fingers and label them 'lazy', but given the internal ground, does one ever ask themselves that they can jump those hurdles? Indeed there is a possibility, but with all the necessary resources, potential, one might find themselves having potential resistance either with the working team or authorities from higher offices that oversee the entire organisation. There might be internal forces that might stumble those efforts. All these stumbling blocks, the potential candidates, from inception, during their tenure and end their leadership role is supported by people whom sometimes they neglect once they enjoy power. Even though leaders continue to give false promises, pay a few to remain loyal to them and campaign for them, the fact is a leader cannot fully stand ground unless they have the support of the people. Like an old adage in sindebele goes umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu or in shona, munhu munhu, munhu vanhu. This means that a person represents the people.

A leader's ground will stand firm due to the people who would have elected them, and at any time should the same people or another group of people feel they are not being adequately represented, there is a danger of the leader tipping over to non-existence. And sometimes in that same camp, someone will always feel that they have more potential than the standing representative and will always form a party within a party. This happens everywhere even the most organised institutes. People are more powerful than their leader because they have the potential of elect and remove their leaders at any given time if their needs are unfulfilled.

N.M.

True power is there but we are not aware of it

People, true power comes from true belief. Without believing in our power to act in defending all manner of freedoms, financial, cultural, political and otherwise, the motivation to spur us to action is not there.

People have been beaten down, cowed and denuded of all confidence to enjoy fundamental rights by poor systems of governance, dysfunctional societies and broken homes. It is not one single element that denies us our identity and breaks our spirit to be creative, innovative and resilient but a web of issues and events. The main one is bad governance at any level. When people have the fear of death, if not worse, to elect and hold their governments accountable for protecting their rights, they have lost true power. When, people cannot have a government of laws but that of men, they have lost sight of where their power lies but they did not have that power in the first place. So wherein lies the true power and how do people get it? Who knows, maybe lets us the Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority (ZESA), their power seems true. When it is not there you feel it, when it is we all have the power to do go about our daily businesses. Awareness to the passionate energy to desire the enjoyment of life, the exercise and respect of your rights and the ability to have your voice heard is true power. Unfortunately we are not born with this true power but have to earn it to exercise it, even though others are content with smashing and grabbing it for their own ends. The act of one person who leaves the crowd triggers the collective action to make something happen and usually changes the status quo. But many a time, that true power remains unknown and hidden for a long time because we are not aware of it to exercise it.

Are we ransomed by the power of one, in this respect, one person's idea that leads many people to abandon their ideas and stick with this seeming 'non conformist'? The picture to clear, the balance of power not always tipped in the favour of the majority if that majority sticks together to keep a precariously sole orator pontificating 'bad verses'. The oratory of a demagogue contradicts, if not belittles, the strong message of displeasure that held up placards of the majority portray. But it takes one person to leave that comfort zone and start the imbalance that with the many more leaving the plank, the orator tips over into the abyss. That it is the discovery of true power, which makes things happen. To change an untenable situation you have to walk away from it in protest. Maybe risking being accused of cowardice. Yet, it is the power of one that sends a stronger and lasting message about making a decision to change your future, for the better. If many people believe they can do it, then they must do it and see if it will tip the scales. What is if it works?

Busani Bafana

Real power

Ever since time immemorial people have always faced a crisis between leaders and those they lead. This does not spare biblical leaders and this can be seen when Saul began to rule in Israel. Samuel the prophet then warned the people that the king they are requesting will subject his subjects to forced labour, take their daughters to be his wives, make some his army commander's ploughmen etc. Saul forgot that to be a true leader one needs the majority and must not make the same people your servants. The same people who would have chosen you have the same power and capacity to dethrone you.

The saying that be good to the people on way up the ladder because you need them when you climb down. Real power lies in the people who are hoisting you up and anchoring the pedestal. Often those who have powers vested in them by the masses frequently forget whose help they got from and abuse their rights to the powers and thereby jeopardising their positions. We all need the help of our fellow brother and sisters in the quest to hold higher positions especially public ones and whenever that help is withdrawn, the fall may be catastrophic. Avoiding such, for those in positions of power should get to the extremes of helping those that helped them get there and make sure their expectations are met. Violations of such simple morals will usurp the people's confidence in the leader. As I have pointed out, when you scale the ladder, one must not ridicule those that are at the bottom holding firm the ladder. Just as in the picture, the masses are the ones who secure your position and make sure you get the necessary support to keep balance. However when their support and confidence is drained, they then tend to recognise your flaws and will start to desert little by little. This is just like erosion, which takes place bit by bit until there is a visible gully. No house suddenly falls in normal circumstances, no tree suddenly falls but it is the small crack that when ignored will cause great damage.

It is the little worm eating up the roots of a tree that will ultimately cause it to fall in due time. When you begin to view yourself as immortal, invincible, and call yourself with various good names, then you give place to pride. You begin to be proud of yourself, your achievements and who you are in general. And when pride sets in, this then will be a sure sign that your fall from grace is imminent. True power lies in bringing people to you, gathering their confidence and without this; the way seems clear but as time passes becomes dark and finally it's black and slippery. As they say power corrupts, it is true when mishandled. Corruption or rotting commences from within until one is black all inside and then the outside will invariably follow suit, then a mighty fall.

Mafaro Kamukono

The people don't know their true power

There is no leadership to talk about without the led, no church without the laity, no headmaster without the students and no chieftainship without the subjects. The leadership is put in place to guide the masses towards achieving their prescribed goals through a value system yet the same leadership is now frustrating its subjects in achieving the same. The masses elect the leaders into public office so that the latter can take care of the interests of the former. This is the process of delegating power to a few individuals so that concerns of the people are addressed without consulting across the political divide, which might prove to be a cumbersome process.

The man who stands on the pulpit has harnessed just but too much power. The preacher is now failing to strike a balance. The preacher will not continue with the sermon without the audience. The people by far have underestimated their true power. The power of the masses lies in the fact that they are the ones who create the public office. The public office bearer now takes his masters for a ride. If the people do not give him his next pay cheque that would be a good reminder of who really has power. Booing down the man on the pulpit will definitely annoy him. Walking away in protest as he addresses the people will do further harm. If all would leave the address arena Mr Chairman is sure to take a deep plunge to his extinction.

What the people simply want is remedying of the situation, not sweet persuasive talk that does not yield any results. The main man does not want read what is written on the placards. He does not lend an ear to the shouts coming from the crowd but expects a standing ovation after the address. Any sane man would not take the subjects for granted. There is an old adage, which says there is power in numbers. The people should start becoming aware of the radical change that lies in them and to believe in it. The people are the ones bearing the brunt of the damage of supporting the public officer who is on wrong footing. Once they walk away from the arena the podium will crumble like a deck of cards. It is time to leave in protest to maladministration, trampling of the basic rights and inconsistent public policy that so ruinous to the nation and the basic tenets of democracy for which everyone aspires to enjoy in this new charter of Zimbabwean. It is time to walk away from the stand of empty promises and let go of candy-coated talk without action on the ground. The main man has to be made accountable to the general public, lest he is headed for a free fall.

It is indeed time for the people to turn their backs on a corrupt system and let it crumble to the knees of its natural death. Self correction and corporate governance have to be ushered in for public enterprises to return to normalcy and to stop feeding the deep pockets of those in authority while service has taken a nose dive to the deepest depths, as people watch in bamboozlement. One by one let each and everyone lift their foot from the podium of intimidation and join the bandwagon of social activism. Aluta continua the struggle of activism.

Delight Bengue

The sacred right of a citizen

*“Any people anywhere, being inclined and having the power, have the right to rise up, and shake off the existing government, and form a new one that suits them better. This is a most ... sacred right ...”*¹

Abraham Lincoln’s words come to mind upon seeing this picture. In my understanding, this is a metaphor on the power of citizens to influence government. As a human rights lawyer the picture inspires me to fight for good governance in Zimbabwe and Mother Africa for a future leadership that reveres humanity.

In this picture, the masses balance the speaker while standing on the solid end of a cliff, with the freedom to abandon him. In essence, it is the electorate’s prerogative to determine both an elected leader’s survival in office and their government. A leader’s support is dependent on his/her satisfying the will of the masses that elected him into power. This is the ideal, as democracy entails majority rule; *“a government of all the people, by all the people, for all the people”*.² The original concept of citizenship founded in ancient Greece allowed democracy³ in government as commoners were elected into power by citizens.⁴ Aristotle, defines a citizen as *“he who has the power to take part in the deliberative or judicial administration of any state.”*⁵

The gloomy picture of African governance in history shows an endless night of suffering for the masses; from slavery and segregation of colonisation to tyranny after independence. Unfortunately, the cry of Africa’s citizens has always been for total control over their own destiny. Independence failed democracy. The same resources they fought for are still unevenly distributed, birthing incessant armed conflicts.⁶ Greek founders of democracy would condemn us; *“Our Constitution is called a democracy because power is in the hands not of a minority but of the whole people.”*⁷

In my humble opinion, democratic leadership means servant-hood. The leader serves the people, not the other way round. He/she should adhere to terms in the constitution, working in reverence of the rule of law. Pericles, the famous Athenian General, said; *“... in public affairs we keep to the law. This is because it commands our deep respect.”*⁸ Nelson Mandela adds; *“Lead from the back — and let others believe they are in front”*-inclusive governance. Inclusiveness allows citizens to participate in state affairs through a justiciable bill of rights.⁹ Government as the guardian of that

¹ Abraham Lincoln, 12 January 1848, while delivering his speech against the Mexican war.

² Theodore Parker, May 9, 1850

³ Democracy has also been defined to mean a form of government where the people rule themselves. See “explore more-government & the idea of citizenship”, *Explore the ancient world*, (2005), Ballard & Tighe; available at <http://www.ballard-tighe.com/eawweb/ExploreMore/EMCh15.pdf> (accessed 26 June 2012)

⁴See “Ancient civilisations: political organisation: the concept of citizenship” available at <http://library.thinkquest.org/C004203/political/political02.htm> (Accessed 26 June 2012 at 1459hrs)

⁵ Aristotle (350 B.C.E), *Politics*, Book III.

⁶ Rebel forces now fight for natural resources and international recognition, with foreign State aid, for instance the situation in the DRC.

⁷ Pericles, (Thucydides, 430 B. C. E.). See Warner R. (1986), “Pericles’ Funeral Oration”, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, New York: Penguin Books, 143-151

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Should include Civil-political, socio-economic and solidarity rights

constitution will be fully accountable to the electorate. A good constitution contains sufficient checks and balances to ensure adequate power sharing amongst all arms of government. Tyranny thrives on imbalance as the Executive has all authority, judicial independence lacks,¹⁰ security forces act arbitrarily and there is no accountability for basic services.

“Arab Spring” revolutions¹¹, particularly in Tunisia¹², Egypt¹³, Morocco,¹⁴ and Libya¹⁵ give Africa hope. Citizens can effect political change despite the obvious might of their executives.¹⁶ I conclude with some advice for our current leaders;

*“We cannot trample on the humanity of others without devaluing our own...’He who will hold another down in the mud must stay in the mud to keep him down.”*¹⁷

Marshal N. Mapondera - Founding Member of the *International Justice Initiative for Africa*, (IJIA), Nairobi, Kenya.

¹⁰ The Zimbabwe government is notorious for ignoring court judgements see for instance **CFU v Minister of Agriculture & Ors** 2000 (2) ZLR 469 (S).

¹¹ Ongoing political uprisings within the Middle East and North Africa, beginning on 18 December 2010 in Tunisia. See various reports on *Al Jazeera* and *BBC News* from these dates.

¹² Overthrow of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, 15 January 2011 and elections to a Constituent Assembly on 23 October 2011. (See *Al Jazeera* and *BBC News*, on these dates)

¹³ Overthrow of government on 11 February 2011, subsequent prosecution of President Hosni Mubarak, sons and former ministers for killing of protesters and lifting of 31 year old State of Emergency on 31 May 2012. Egyptian citizens have now democratically elected President Mohammed Morsi. See *New York Times* 1 May 2011 and the *Telegraph*, 31 May 2012.

¹⁴ Political protests from 20 February to November 2011. These resulted in political concessions by King Mohammed VI and a referendum on constitutional reforms. (*Middle East Online*, 22 February 2011)

¹⁵ Overthrow of government 23 August 2011 and killing of President Muammar Gaddafi on 20 October 2011 (See *Al Jazeera* on these dates)

¹⁶ Egypt for instance, has the largest army in Africa and the tenth largest in the world. Its police force has substantial authority to trounce civil uprising, but even this failed to stop the impending revolution.

¹⁷ Chinua Achebe, (2009), *The education of a British-protected child; essays*, London, Knopf.

Power and Influence

A picture is a poem without words and ironically it is also worth a thousand words!

Analytically looking at the picture, control and influence struck my mind. Based on my inference the picture paints a political rally where the minority, people holding placards are at the front, more vocal at the expense of the multitude.

This portrays a classic illustration of how, people in authority, mostly politicians, are the craftiest and most cunning of all con artists. They use a few, maybe paid supporters or ruffians to be on the forefront in their mission to control rational opinions and convince the masses to give them immense coercive power over other people, thereafter they have no regard for those who gave them the power. The political gimmicks begin! That said this presents a great opportunity to inform the masses of their power and their right to choose.

This invokes the need to educate people on how much power they have to influence any given cause. It is crucial to enlighten people by disseminating freedom information so that there are knowledgeable to change the system. The power of tyrants depends on the power they are granted by their victims. If a critical mass of victims were to remove their support, their power would collapse, consequently tranquillity will prevail. There is need to develop personal power which is the ability of oneself to act and produce desirable results, so that one can competently and effectively deal with anyone attempting to violate one's freedom. We need to be aware of the power within us and in other people, the power that we have to be able to influence where we cannot influence and how to navigate through that power.

The picture shows one individual walking away, someone who is obviously not in agreement with whatever is being addressed. People are afraid of expressing themselves for fear of victimisation or being the odd one out, hence will just 'eat whatever is put in their plate'. A multitude can generate more diverse ideas and are able to influence decisions in any given context. Sometimes people do not realise that working together as 'one whole' has greater influence than working individually; this also eliminates issues around fear of expression. Teamwork brings forth synergies.

Of late women in Harare are being arrested at night for allegedly 'loitering for the purposes of prostitution' which is rather unjust because an unaccompanied woman at night does not necessarily translate into a prostitute. In this case the powers that be and women should unite and fight this non-existent law. Women have the power to control their destiny lawfully and all they need to do is step away from the board and let this 'outrageous edict' and its makers take the plunge!

Conclusively, all the power and initiative to influence is embedded in one self, what is crucial is the creation of 'one whole' for any given cause to make an impact with one voice. Together as one!

Hilda Manokore

Where real power lies; the true centre of gravity

Strange things have been happening of late. Things that, only a few years ago, would have been very difficult to fathom, let alone to conceive. From Cape to Cairo, from super-rich Arab states in the Persian Gulf drowning in petro dollars, to volatile and war torn wastelands of Kabul and Kandahar in Afghanistan where tribal chiefs show their clout; People have spoken. Poverty stricken citizens of the global village that we now are have boldly come out and spoken in unison against injustice and tyranny. Long suffering and hitherto very silent masses, have awakened from a deep slumber and made their voices heard in one tumultuous roar. Downtrodden masses everywhere have decided that no longer shall they countenance lies and meaningless rhetoric from opportunistic politicians and business leaders, who promise heaven on earth by day but deliver flames filled with fumes of sulphur at night. Man, women and children of this world, tired of incessant lies and half-truths have awakened to the reality that time waits for no one and that 'People power' is real power and come out in masses to demonstrate their power. Though sticks and stones may break their bones, they have hit back harder by letting lying politicians plunge into a bottomless chasm where irrelevant and forgotten demagogues, who once were, now lie in absolute obsolescence.

Too often the podium has been abused as a place where fat cat politicians and greedy business leaders pursuing self-aggrandisement stand before gullible masses and lie with straight faces. People do not eat promises. Now is a good time to hold all orators, pedagogues and public speakers to account. To bring back sanity, integrity and honour to politics. Promises that are made frivolously and flippantly to impress 'delegates' during august gatherings should be brought to fruition. Gone are the days when world leaders from China, Italy, America, Russia, Britain, Germany and France would pontificate to docile and gullible audiences during global forums and expect people to lend them an attentive ear. People now demand delivery and action. In our own beautiful Zimbabwe, suffering citizens now want to see all those MDGs, ESAPs, ZIMPRESTs, MTPs, NEDPPs, GPAs and other forgotten blueprints that never saw light of the day revived, re-scrutinized and given a new lease on life. Lip services can no longer be enough.

Politicians and greedy bankers in today's world who still think they can literally lie to save their lives, are in for a rude awakening (or slumber) because as recent events in Egypt, Yemen, Libya, Tunisia, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Syria, Greece, Italy, Spain, Wallstreet and London have shown, tired citizens will no longer lend a sympathetic ear to greed and deceit. To those who deliver on their promises, a bright future beckons. But likewise, opposition politicians who dream they can come to power through eloquently delivered and lofty promises of freedom, prosperity, justice and peace always remember to speak with your minds open and not shut.

David Mapenzauswa

There is power in the subordinates

A picture is worth a thousand of words. It conveys a multiplicity of meanings to different people. However, a dominant reading can be achieved if the picture has caption explaining to the viewer what could be happening in it. This is how I depicted a picture that I received through Kubatana.net shown above. While the picture is polysemic, the dominant inspirational message that came to my mind is that 'power lies within the people.' This is the message that I seek to explore in few words.

The picture demystifies the mythology that power lies in the authoritative forces or those in leadership positions. Such beliefs or myths have been in existence among humankind since time immemorial. For several decades men believed that his or her destiny was only depended on external forces like God if not gods, rulers or other powerful forces like ancestral spirits. While there is a grain of truth in these beliefs, the picture brought to light the fact that indeed there is power in the subordinated people and this power can either make those in the status quo stay in their positions or fall. In simpler terms the picture brought to light that even the general people, 'povo' so to say, though I do not mean to be derogatory, can make or break leaders.

While the picture demonstrates the power of the subordinates, it unmask the enormous dilemma that exists within them. This problem is failure to recognise the power, potential and ability to determine own destination by the subordinates. This is reinforced by the caption, "The people don't know their true power..." As a result they see power as being vested in their superiors. Little do they know that it is them who invest power into the status quo, therefore it is them who have the right take out that power from the same status quo. This lack of knowledge as suggested by the picture is in both ways. The leaders on the other hand seem not to recognise the origins of power. One is forced to imagine that leaders see the privileged of being in power as a natural gift; hence they view themselves as rulers rather than leaders. As a result of this knowledge deficiency, there is unbridgeable gap between the leaders and the subordinates signified in the picture through the gap between the group of people, who in my personal judgement, resembles the subordinated groups and the individual man who I believe represent the elite, minority but power invested status quo. Since the people do not recognise the power in themselves, procrastination becomes the business of the day. Well versed Christians would argue that the Biblical prophet Hosea was right to say "people perish because of lack of knowledge." (Hosea 4 verse 6).

Interestingly, the picture does not only highlight a problem, but it also suggests the solution. We are told that our destination especially the fate of our leadership is in our hands. It suggests the need for self-determination as indicated by the man moving from the rest as sign of individual reaction. We are motivated to think that one does not always have to wait for the majority. A brilliant idea of an individual may determine the fate of the majority. I am reminded of the young Mohammed Bouazizi who singly sparked a revolution in Tunisia, a revolution that led to ouster of President Zine el Abidine Ali before it spread like veld fires to other Arab nations and claimed heads of states. This does not mean that the picture encourages us to be violent. It only motivates us on the need for individuals to utilise the potential they have to define own fate rather than just complaining. This action can be politically, socially economically or culturally. Indeed we are motivated that "powers lies within us."

David Makacha

Holding our leaders to account

Contrary to what many people think it is very important and perhaps a social imperative for us to be able to hold our social political leaders to account for the various pledges that they would have frivolously made during public speeches and presentations. Often owing to the harsh economic climate and the resultant day to day survival issues confronting ordinary Zimbabweans, as well as to the general state of apathy towards anything perceived to be political, only a handful of Zimbabweans are now willing to voluntarily and actively take their leaders to task over unfulfilled pledges.

But how many people realise that the real power to change things lies not in a perfect constitutional document or a bill of rights, but rather in the ability of the people to organise themselves, coalesce their views and confront politicians and business leaders on matters that affect them. The podium too often is now misused to make promises that politicians know they cannot fulfil, just for the sake of winning votes. Outside of our Zimbabwean borders, it has come as a pleasant surprise that ordinary citizens in America and Britain, converging under the name 'We are the 99%' and operating as part of the now famous Occupy Wall street and London movements, have decided that no longer will they tolerate greedy bankers who lie to justify extortionate profits and bonuses while the rest of the populace suffers from unemployment problems and low wages.

We have also witnessed demonstrations in Euro zone countries, particularly in Greece, Spain and Portugal where suffering citizens have started to question the selective application of austerity measures by a few elite who unfairly make themselves immune while making life difficult for the rest. Politicians are often quick to call for belt tightening when they themselves continue to live ostentatiously and luxuriously. It is important therefore, that through various accountability structures available to us, the general populace should be able to call to question public servants on the many unfulfilled election pledges that would have made to the electorate. It is however not enough to just turn our backs to politicians who renege on their campaign promises as that in itself becomes tacit endorsement of the fake promises made. Members of the general public should actively participate in political public gatherings and debates to give immediate feedback on matters that affect their livelihoods so that communication becomes bi-directional. Gone should be the days where leaders are allowed to become pedagogues, making promises that they are well aware cannot be fulfilled. That is the essence of the new culture of participatory democracy that progressive forces are trying to foster in today's modern age. Important forums such as the UN General Assembly, which is a gathering of leaders of nearly all the countries in the world, should not be relegated to mere talk show status. We need to actively encourage an era of violence free but active debate where stakeholders engage each other constructively to benefit all mankind.

Shingayi Machiridza

The people don't know their true power

The picture reminds me of a story that took place in an African village.

Many moons ago in a village beyond the Chikapakapa hills there lived chief Musayigwa who ruled his subjects with love and wisdom. The great chief gained respect and honour even from villages on the other side of the mighty Gwemvuu River.

As years rolled by, the chief became old and frail. The villagers were sad because they knew that their great chief's days under the sun were numbered. The chief became very sick. "So were shall we ever find another great leader like chief Musayigwa?" the villagers would ask one another.

Although the chief had many sons and grandsons, he felt that none of them was fit to rule the village because of lack of wisdom.

Many nights went by, and chief Musayigwa begged the ancestors to show him a wise young man to succeed him when he departs for the land of the ancestors. Then one morning, the great chief rose before the sun and went to inquire from the renowned witchdoctor, Gatsi.

Gatsi solicited his diviner's bones for an answer from the ancestors. "The ancestors said that you must conduct a challenge among all the men in the village to find the one with true wisdom fit to rule after you."

So chief Musayigwa summoned all the men in the village and asked them to go into the jungle and bring forth something that proves their wisdom.

The men left the village. Some men carried axes, spears, knobkerries, assegais or drums. The men cut through thickets of and swam across the crocodile infested Gwemvuu River in their quest to bring home wisdom.

After many sunsets, the men returned carrying dangerous animals they had killed. The animals included lions, leopards, elephants and cheetahs among others.

The great chief gathered all the people and asked each man to justify why what he brought was proof of his wisdom. Every man's response centred on the idea of bravery being a sign of wisdom.

The chief was unsatisfied with the men's reasoning. He was hopeless. So with a pained expression the chief asked if he had interviewed everyone. A small voice called from behind the crowd. "O great Chief, I'm the only one who has not yet been interviewed." The chief searched for the voice until he saw where it came from. He summoned the timid young man and asked him for proof of his wisdom. Then the young man spoke, "O great chief, when you asked men to go into the jungle, I didn't go into the belly of the harsh scary forests. I stayed behind..." There was a collective gasp of shock as everyone thought this young man would be put to death for not obeying the chief's order. To everyone's surprise, the chief asked him to continue.

“O great chief, I stayed behind because I entered into a greater jungle. The jungle that exists in the hearts of man. In the jungle inside the hearts of man I found many scary creatures that stop people from realizing their true power within them. O great chief, unless we tame the beasts roaming in the jungles of our hearts we will not know what we are capable of. The fiercest beast in the jungle of the heart is fear. We are too afraid to stand up for ourselves and that’s why we fail to realize our true power.”

The great chief with the help of his walking stick stood up, tears stinging his eyes. He hugged the man and said, “Son you have true wisdom and are fit to rule this village.” Then the chief said to his people, “You see, the use of force in killing lions and cheetahs is not wisdom but bravery and that is not enough material to make a chief because with only that, you will end up using that same force on your subjects. Rather, understanding that it is the power of the people that keeps you in power is greatest wisdom that a ruler needs to know, because if the people discover their true power they can depose you if you misrule them.”

With that, the chief gave power to the young man and everyone rejoiced as they had found a new wise chief.

Hopewell Gandiwa

The people do not know their true power

From the picture, I see roughly twenty men standing on a platform and some appear to be raising placards. At the end of the display area, there is a lone man standing behind a pulpit appearing to raise a pistol pointing into the air. The platform runs from the mountain cliff to above a precipitous abyss and there is a lone man and the pulpit at the end, he appears to be at a safe distance from the crowd but at most dangerous position of the platform. The Picture insert inspires me to share the following facts with the other Kubatana readers:

The people support the force that oppresses them unwittingly. In life people do not know where their power is located within the Socio-political and economic systems. The moment when people get into a grouping, what is left is for them to identify where their strength is pivoted. Most people know they become powerful if they group but may not be able to identify the axle on which their force is supported in case leaders disengage them. This support if dislodged will make things fall apart, that is; tormenting their opponent. When people choose a leader they should know that at inception leaders share the same resources with them but would soon or later prefer to differ in almost everything. Nevertheless, it is within or on that same platform where the axis is located and as such, any troubleshooting should be within the framework. Support is affixed at one end and there is no support at all at the other end and anyone having moved to the unsupported end should continue to have good relations with the rest otherwise he falls in an abyss once support is removed. However, as long as the group cannot locate where their strength is within the framework they are doomed to death while their oppressor lavishly feast on their ignorance.

Fear is the deadliest weapon against oneself and Courage is everything that you want; one man is scaring away about twenty demonstrators while he is standing on a precipitous platform hazardously hovering above a deep seemingly unending hole. If the group moves in unison away, off the platform instantaneously removing support for the lone leader, he automatically falls into the deep hole. **“All Dictators know they stand on soft ground but pretend otherwise”.** However, if the group is disorganized and disembarks one by one there is risk that some may accompany the opponent into the abyss or may suffer injuries. **“United you stand divided you fall”** Dictators do not want people who fidget because they would keep their point of axis uneasy and that they discover about the secret on the pivot. Fear is the deadliest weapon against oneself; had one or two members of the group tried three or four steps towards their opponent they would find out how dangerous that side of the platform is especially to their opponent and they would continue to make it unstable.

Shuro Benson

The people do not know their true power

Elsewhere, the people are displaced from their homes and cut off from sources of livelihoods without putting up a fight. Rendered homeless, totemless and without a livelihood at the whim of a benefactor politician. In another place, the people are made to pay highly inflated estimates of utility bills for water and electricity. The people will not organize themselves to demand accountability and adherence to the social contract by government. No. It is each man and woman for himself/herself; the so-called payment arrangements with service providers to settle impossible bills. Somewhere else, the people are dying of severe diarrhea. Cholera and typhoid in 21st century Zimbabwe simply because municipal authorities are clueless and do not care to provide potable water and sanitation. The people would rather dig sewage-contaminated shallow wells in their yards than categorically demand that water authorities ensure a constant supply of clean and drinkable water at their places of residence as a matter of right! In some other places, the fruits of the long struggle have finally arrived, albeit belatedly. The people have the land. Tragically, the land fallows and the people remain hungry and the children malnourished. What happened to agriculture support schemes? Corruption by those the people entrusted with stewardship of the national purse.

Today, the people remain burdened by a dysfunctional government of national unity; and still wonder why their communal needs remain unfulfilled? Little do they realize the GNU is their own creation, made in their own image? True people power is about overcoming a culture of fear; inculcating a culture of citizenship in its place. Demanding accountable and participatory governments; refusing to surrender to the dictatorship of the leaders you voted for. True people power is refusing to sustain rapacious leaders through payment of taxes in return for no services, occasional torture, abuse and outright contempt. Each one of us should begin to regard ourselves as the main actor, the protagonist; the camera is on us if good governance, improved health delivery, quality education for our children and a share of the national cake is to come in the drama of our lifetime. Voter apathy comes at a high price to the people and cripples democracy and the social contract. Consequences include arrested development, dysfunctional government, moribund political parties and illegitimate and ignoramus leaders. Who can ever forget the sex toys (not food) for prisoners' policy? Or Zimbabwe's perverted Sharia law: beloved woman - look ugly, don't bathe, and suck that wetness for HIV's sake!

True people power is 700 Mukaro High School girls marching for 20 kms to the district education office to protest against chronic water shortages and a poor diet at the Catholic-run school. Gallant girls, some as young as 13 years, overcoming their fear, committing to their struggle, demonstrating their aspirations for better learning conditions, deifying the winter of discontent.

The day shall come when the people will stop fearing their leaders and suspecting each other; only then will true people power be reclaimed.

Zivai Ndlovu

A Fish Water Relationship

The photo depicts a fish water relationship of a people and those leading the people in any given scenario whether an organization a nation or even a family. The livelihood of fish is sustained by water and the balance of the water system is also maintained by marine life. Such is depicted in the photo by the people and the individual in front all on a log but being equal to each other.

The picture depicts how power is balanced between leaders and the people. Satisfaction of the people arising from adequate governance. Leadership should be fair and ensure that the people are well catered for.

The picture shows that the leader here is backed by the people should the people decide to walk away without support the leaders lead darkness and they fall into insignificance.

The placards held by the people show concerns of the people. Any leader who wishes to maintain an even relationship with the people has to ensure that the needs of the people are met and is satisfied to the best of the leader's ability.

The photo also illustrates a good picture to explain the relationship between a government and the people of any nation; it brings out the fact that a government without the people at heart will ultimately fall into insignificance.

Furthermore the fact that the illustration is done on a cliff it shows that there is no room for bad governance or misleading the people or vice versa the people making irrational decisions as such would leave the balance in turmoil. The need to make informed decisions is also emphasized, as a cliff edge relationship has no room for experiments.

It is evident that the relationship above has its success strongly anchored by a consultative processes entails the maintenance of a balance between leadership and the people. The role of leaders' depicted here is that of leading from below (from the people to the people) as leading from the top (from the leaders to the people).

In any group of people no matter what type of leadership is instituted there will always be people who will tend to think otherwise, such always results in revolts, new movements, industrial action etc. the person shown leaving the group to me represents such people however such is not always in the negative such people can also be viewed as agents of change in any set-up who look at existing leadership structures which might not be pleasant or favorable then they bring inn a new line of thinking then try to convince other people of the need a turnaround process.

Name withheld

The people don't know their true power

The picture shows one person standing in front of several people. My assumption is that the lone man is the leader and the rest are the followers. They are both standing on what could be a sturdy plank, which links the leader to the followers. The leader is standing at one end of the plank while the followers are standing on the other end. The bit of plank that the followers are standing is on solid ground whilst at the other end, under the plank where the leader is standing, is a frightening deep chasm. The leader's arm is pointing upwards, meaning he is stressing a point. The followers are communicating with the leader through the placards they are carrying. By their body language, which is sombre, the followers are also communicating in a non-verbal way. One of the followers is seen leaving the plank, going not towards the leader, but the other way, where there is an expanse of solid ground.

My question is what has compelled the leader to stand alone and so far from 'his' followers? The deep chasm under the leader and the wide gap between leader and followers shows the wide difference in feelings, thinking, interests and many other things. By communicating with their leader through placards, it appears there has been a breakdown in communication between leader and followers. Followers the world over are usually very patient with their leaders. It takes a long period of time for followers to reach a state where they feel they are hitting their heads on a brick wall. While the leader is shouting from his end, like the mad man he appears to have become, the followers are fed up.

Since it appears there is no more room for further communication, the followers and the leader have decisions to make. If the followers go any further towards the leader, they, together with the leader, will topple over and end up in the deep gorge, dead. The sane thing would be for the leader to join his followers as the plank will hold while he makes the journey from his end to the follower's end. If he does this, he will live. If however, he continues shouting from his end, then it's time for the followers to leave their end of the plank en-masse. The leader will just topple over into the deep gorge together with the plank that held them together like an umbilical cord, and that will be the end of the dear leader. It's time the followers realize that because they are so many, they have real power to change the way they want to live and the world around them. One man has already left the plank. By being the first to leave, this man is a potential leader. It's time the rest of the followers turned their backs on the dear leader, get off the plank and hey presto, they are free to start again!

Florence Hlatwayo