

# At the source of the cycle of conflict

**T**HIS past Heritage Day, I had the distinct privilege of visiting one of the surviving icons of African independence, the first president of Zambia HE Kenneth Kaunda, at his home – a deeply spiritual man – again.

What stands out most is not his immaculate singing voice. Nor his vivid memory of the African independence struggle and triumph.

Nor is it his sprightly step for an 89-year-old who has travelled the length and breadth of the world. Indeed, his critics will point to his mixed record leading Zambia.

But they can't take away his legacy of peace symbolised by his ever present white handkerchief that he has carried since the day he was released from prison by colonial generals.

What stands out is what he shared with me as the foundation of his presidency – love and tolerance – in a nation with over 73 cultures and multiple religions. I

It is a Matthew 22:39 scripture lesson he says he learned from his beloved parents, an ordained Church of Scotland missionary and teacher, to *love thy neighbour as you love thyself*.

It was a timely and poignant reminder in the midst of the Islamist extremist group al-Shabaab's attacks in Kenya that killed over 70 innocent multinational civilians, injured more than 200 and brought a stunned nation of 40 million still healing from the 2007 election violence to a standstill.

The reasons for the massacre seem to point to Kenya's 2011 invasion of its northern neighbour Somalia to get rid of the militant al-Shabaab.

The killers themselves made it clear that no one was supposed to be spared, except Muslims. Christians, Jews, other believers and non-believers, foreigners were fair targets of their merciless rampage.

The Kenya Westgate Mall attacks are just another in a series of organised and orchestrated violence and conflict in the past 24 months, that has seen fellow African and world citizens decimate each other and destabilise nations:

- Boko Haram, an Islamist jihadist militant terrorist organisation based in the north-east of Nigeria, north Cameroon and Niger, which strongly opposes non-sharia legal systems and what they deem "Westernisation", has threatened to destabilise Nigeria, sub-Saharan Africa's 150 to 200 million strong nation.
- The coups in Mali and Central African Republic, and disputed elections in Ivory Coast that have threatened the democratic progress in Africa.
- The Arab Spring that has rendered the once relatively peaceful benevolent dictatorships of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria ungovernable, and brought many others to the brink of civil war.

Elsewhere in the world, the US, once the magnet of opportunity and relative peace, has, since September 11, 2001 been turned into a suspicious nervous wreck, in a fear that has pitted the "Christian" America against the "Islamist" rest.

Israel and Palestine have been bludgeoning each other since the formation of the state of Israel in 1948, with no end in sight.

China's opposition to Nobel Peace Prize laureate the Dalai Lama has meant he has not been welcome in his beloved Tibet – nor territories

Intolerance based on religion, politics, tribe and race can only lead to animosity and violence without end, writes Thebe Ikalafeng



**IN REMEMBRANCE:** Relatives and friends perform final prayers during the burial of Kenyan journalist Ruhila Adatia Sood, who was killed in the Westgate shopping mall attack on September 26. The writer says that the Kenya mall attack is another in a series of organised and orchestrated violence and conflict in the past 24 months, proving that terrorism is on the rise on the continent.

PICTURE: REUTERS

“  
**KAUNDA'S ADVICE WAS TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER OR PERISH TOGETHER AS FOOLS**

which favour a relationship with Africa's biggest investor and friends, including South Africa, where diplomatic gatekeepers would not allow him to attend fellow Nobel laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu's 80th birthday.

These days, a person's mere name – a shorthand to their identity and history – can spark rejection or acceptance depending on the bal-

ance and holder of power.

While the Roman Catholic's Pope Francis is something of a welcome revelation, given two prior opportunities to elect the revered Nigerian Cardinal Francis Arinze, much of the discussions around his candidacy had nothing to do with his spiritual competence or compass, but rather, whether the Catholic church was ready for a black pope.

Even in what should be a routine civil democratic right to elect a leader, the decision is filtered by division.

The recent elections in Kenya, like many in Africa, were decided not merely on ideology or service to fellow citizens, but on tribal affiliation. In a nation with 40 percent or so Kikuyu, as the now ruling coalition reminded their opponents during the elections, they had the numbers on their side.

So irrespective of an International Criminal Court (ICC) indictment hanging over his head for the ethnic violence that claimed some 1 300 in 2007, whether legitimately or justly so, the son of Kenya's founding father, Uhuru Kenyatta,

was destined to be the next president, unless Raila Odinga could rally the other fragmented tribes like he did – with Uhuru – in the disputed 2007.

Other than what was an indisputable intolerance of apartheid, since 2008, the new South Africa has been experiencing a series of xenophobic violence that has seen South Africans who are frustrated with a lack of jobs and opportunity, or merely being intolerant, rejecting and maiming or killing fellow Africans merely for being foreign – in the pretext that they're taking away their privileges.

It's the same intolerance that gave birth to the savage Marikana attacks on striking miners – who themselves were fighting territorial battles between rival unions.

Post Polokwane, there has been a rising fragmentation of the peace, harmony and hopefulness that Africa's oldest liberation party used to represent, birthing rival splinter parties and a growing opposition – and intolerance to opposite views, at the risk of sacrificing the hard-fought democratic gains – for all – by

a coalition of voices that sacrificed for all of South Africa, not the ANC, UDF, Cosatu, Nusas, Black Sash or Black Consciousness and many others not necessarily similar views – but a common vision for a united and fair South Africa.

In all these, the common denominator has been and remains, a territorial conflict over religion, politics, tribe and race.

The strong opposing views held by the fervent champions of either go against any common sense – or the common thread of humanity.

In the aftermath of much of this intolerance are displaced people and energies, conflict, animosity and no peace.

Religious and political intolerance is not a new phenomenon.

It is as old as history – the oldest reason for wars, secessions and broken relationships.

But religion and politics ought to be the glue that binds relationships between people and nations.

On the contrary, it is the reason – or vehicle – for the destruction in society today. They are used to influ-

ence and misguide rather than to inspire and serve.

Despite the professed tolerance for differences in what can only be argued to the imperfect organising thought under the guise of democracy, in practice, there is still no place for multi-partisan, multi-opinion, multi-fraternity and multi-religion in the world today – whether in a rising Africa or a declining West.

Opportunity for success and peace is judged not by the innocence or value of ideas, but by the source and affiliation thereof.

Intolerance led the late Zambian president who defeated Kaunda in the first multi-party elections in 1991, "that horrible man" as Kaunda described Frederick Chiluba, to briefly strip him of Zambian citizenship in 1999, although that decision – much like his incarceration, was overturned due to international pressure on Chiluba.

While the massacres in Syria seems to have no end in sight like the Palestine-Israel conflict, there is no doubt that Jomo Kenyatta's Kenya will survive and thrive again as east Africa's leading

nation.

Indeed, Tunisia and Egypt will find peace again. And even Palestine, Israel and Syria.

But as long as there are opposing views of the right supreme being to follow or paths to salvation, race and ideology, there will always be another conflict to rival these, and begin the cycle again.

There will always be an unending cycle of conflict and animosity. And a lack of peace.

Indeed, sadly, as has been post conflicts and around the clock news coverage that have placed nations' brands at risk of losing investment, tourism and citizenship, after the calm comes amnesia.

As Africans, and fellow human beings, with a lifetime history of conflict it is perhaps worth noting Kaunda's advice, to love one another or perish together as fools.

Otherwise, Africa will indeed rise, but in smoke.

■ *Ikalafeng is a global African adviser and author on branding and reputation leadership and founder of Brand Africa and Brand Leadership Group. @ThebeIkalafeng.*

## Forum

### Media feeding frenzy on Mdluli is mostly just hype

LIKE sharks following the annual sardine run, the South African media are in a wild frenzy over Richard Mdluli. He could be compared to the late J Edgar Hoover, director of the FBI for more than 40 years. It is alleged that Hoover held sway over six US presidents because he knew all their personal secrets.

Most South Africans monitor the media to get their information.

Little do they realise that the information they get is skewed, and often of little value, or truth. The fourth estate rarely tells people what is really going on.

What to believe, who to believe – it gets so foggy, it leaves you bewildered and confused.

Twisted words, lies, misinformation and ignorance are responsible for many things we believe to be the truth.

Now, we are at a critical juncture.

Are conspiratorial forces at work? Are they preparing their legions to sow division and discord before election 2014? Are they attempting to destabilise South Africa's political hierarchy?

The case of Mdluli is getting intensely intriguing. Sad that a legal issue has assumed mammoth political significance. It is now a battle between our elected and unelected institutions.

This saga illustrates typical South African emotionalism.

Instead, we are creating emotional arguments and will end up doing many intellectual and legal calisthenics before accepting finality.

Emotionalism reigns supreme.

The bitter truth is that the innocence or guilt of Mdluli's case is marginal to the current hype in our confused country.

**Farouk Araie**  
Johannesburg

### Loss of devout Christian hits home, but his legacy lives on

IT IS heart-wrenching that devout Christian businessman and Cape Town resident James Thomas, 57, was among those who lost their lives in the senseless terrorist killings in the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi, Kenya.

My first encounter and interaction with James nearly 20 years ago took place when we were inducted as parish wardens within St John the Evangelist Wynberg, James as warden at Christ Church Kenilworth, and myself at St Philip's Kenwyn.

James was larger than life physically and in stature, believing in bear hugs instead of traditional handshakes.

Inspid characters warmed and "cuddled" in response to the embrace of this gentle giant. James defended the underdog, living out the gospel of Jesus Christ, speaking out against injustice and exploitation. James left an indelible mark of generosity in his outreach to the less fortunate. He will be missed but his legacy will continue in the parish and at St Peter's Mowbray.

Our heartfelt condolences to his wife Colleen and the family. May his dear soul rest in peace.

**Mark Kleinschmidt**  
Kenwyn

Write to: PO Box 1014, Joburg, 2000  
Fax: 011 633 2216 email: scribe@inl.co.za  
Letters published at editor's discretion

### Selective investigations 'don't help the poor'

PUBLIC Protector Thuli Madonsela's investigation into the use of food parcels in the Tlokwe elections must be welcomed precisely because it's the ANC that criticised IFP leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi and Prince Gideon Zulu, former KZN MEC for social welfare, for using food parcels to win votes.

A revolutionary movement cannot have contradictory morals and resort to dirty tactics used by the IFP and Zanu-PF.

We know our people face poverty, unemployment and social exclusion but dishing out food parcels before an election is like buying votes.

At the same time, the public protector must not be used by any political party to advance any particular agenda.

Jacob Zuma's ANC was quick to accuse her of attending a DA meeting while she also attended ANC centenary celebrations.

Two months ago I wrote to the portfolio committee on justice to seek

reports on KwaDukuza and Ilembe from the public protector but did not get any reply.

I also wrote to the ministers and MECs responsible for local government, human settlement and land affairs about expropriation of land from Groutville landowners who do not have tenants on their properties.

I had planned to take this matter to the public protector together with the scandal surrounding the security tender in the Ilembe Council.

But her failure to release reports on corruption submitted and investigated by advocate Masilela has discouraged me.

This is a victory for corrupt elements in the Ilembe Council because corruption is no longer a punishable offence.

We celebrate the 10th anniversary of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) on accountability and good governance.

The failure of Chapter 9 Institutions to advance and deepen our constitu-

tion and protect the poor against vultures, many hiding in clothes of green, black and gold and some in red, is a great concern.

If Parliament cannot hold the public protector accountable, then the media must intervene, rather than just presenting the public protector as efficient and infallible.

The public protector must release the report on housing corruption in Wards 7 and 10, and explain why nobody was punished over the R1 million cheques lost in the Ilembe Council.

We cannot talk about ARPM if our own government is not accountable.

Selective investigation for the sake of publicity by the public protector is not assisting us in defending the poor.

Our land redistribution is behind schedule and expropriating land from the poor is reactionary when landowners do not have tenants.

**Siyanda Mhlongo**  
KwaDukuza