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Response of Bayes Nana to Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Human Rights Award

When Robert Kennedy came to South Africa in 1966 he delivered an address at the University of Cape Town which deeply moved his audience because it reflected so clearly his concern for the oppressed, his sharing of their suffering and his vision of hope for their liberation. The message which those words, spoken on that memorable occasion, conveyed has remained a source of inspiration and direction to many people in many parts of the world, including South Africa.

To-day, on the commemoration of the 60th birthday of this great American, 3 South Africans are being honored by the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Committee in being the joint recipients of the Human Rights Award named after him - a black South African, one of mixed parentage (black and white), and a white. The selection of these 3 people from 3 different racial backgrounds, I believe was not incidental; it was consciously done to convey a very important message to both the USA and S.A. - namely ~~that~~ the belief that a country's future is only secured when it is based on the acknowledgement of the unassailable dignity of every human being and of the inalienable rights of every inhabitant of that country. In the USA this dignity is recognized, ~~at least~~ ^{in every case} in any case constitutionally, and these rights are legally guaranteed and assured.

In South Africa this dignity of people of colour is violated and these rights are denied and it is because of these violations and denials that our country is in crisis. (2)

Thousands, yes, millions of people both inside and outside South Africa are all of a sudden asking questions, seeking answers and offering solutions whilst the crisis deepens and the conflict escalates. There is a strong belief inside South Africa and the U.S.A. as well as around the world that 2 Western countries hold the key to solving the racial conflict in South Africa - namely the USA and the United Kingdom because they, more than any other country or countries, have the power - especially the economic power - to force South Africa to abolish the system of apartheid. Many Americans don't believe that the USA has such power or, if it has it, that it is its duty to become involved in using such powers. In response to this view I wish to make 2 comments:

1. If the USA, economically the richest and militarily the most powerful nation on earth, claims not to have the power to terminate the policy of apartheid, then there is something drastically wrong either with the nature of that power or with the ability ^{or the willingness} of your country and its people to utilise such power in the service of justice.
2. The issues which underlie the conflict and the crisis in South Africa are not local or regional,

restricted only or mainly to South or Southern [3] Africa. They are global and universal issues which affect and will increasingly affect the whole continent of Africa, the USA and the continent of which your great country form a part - yes and every other continent of the globe. Why is this the case? Is it because a country like South Africa is in any way powerful or important? No it is not because of that but because the issues which the conflict in S.A. raises are those which vitally affect the concepts of human dignity and human rights, of peace with justice, of violence and non-violence, of the foundations upon which authentic forms of democracy are built, of the tensions which have to be resolved between East & West. From whichever angle these questions present themselves, somewhere in the present struggle for justice and liberation in South Africa one or more of these issues will be found to play a role and to influence the trend of events. The destiny of the USA is inextricably bound to the destiny of South Africa - not because S.A. is in any way influential or important (on the contrary) but because the issues which the struggle in South Africa confronts the world with, are the very same issues that the USA is confronted with not only in other countries around the world, but also in your own country and in your own society. If you ignore and evade or

refuse to face the issues of South Africa you do [4] this at your own risk - ~~even~~ ^{possibly at} your own peril. And God has a funny way of confronting human beings and human societies at the most awkward moment of their ~~history~~ existence or history, with their refusal to face up to themselves - which is exactly what God has been doing with South Africa during the last 12 months. Here is a classic example of a country which refused or delayed to face up to its situation and now the KAIROS, the moment of truth, has arrived. The answer must be given - and white South Africa is neither ready nor able to give that answer.

The question now arises: Is there an answer? Is there a solution? Can the conflict be resolved - or is violence, bloodshed, death, revolution unavoidable? I wish to ~~say~~ ^{answer} with all the deep and inner conviction at my disposal by saying: YES, there is an answer, YES, there is a solution, YES there is a vision for the future, YES there is a way out - but only if a few crucial truths and realities are being recog- nised by all those who sincerely wish to find the answer:

1. No solution is possible which is in conflict ⁵
with the will of the people - and by people I mean
the substantial majority of all the people of South
Africa - black and white (including all the people
who form part of the homelands and the so-called
independent states). Only if the wish and will of
the people is determined by a proper democratic
plebiscite can the first step be taken towards a
solution

2. No solution is possible as long as the white
minority desperately clings to their power ^{they}
hold and only make minor concessions when forced
to do so because of stones and gaschire bombs. The
fundamental restructuring of S.A. Society requires
the removal of apartheid as a system as soon as
possible - a system which violates the basic concept
of justice, of rule of law, of order and peace. Such
a system cannot be reformed - it can only be re-
moved; and if it refuses to be removed it has
to be destroyed.

3. No solution is possible as long as the crisis
of Black education remains unaddressed or un-
resolved. The manner in which the S.A. government
is currently trying to resolve it is creating

the one disaster after the other and is inevitably ⁶
preparing the way for a year (1980) when the
future of the education of 4½ million children
and students will be jeopardised ^{deeply disrupted} and possibly
destroyed.

4. No solution is possible as long as the govern-
ment continues to undermine and violate the
rule of law and of justice as reflected in the
legal system of our country. Over the past 35
years we have experienced a ~~steady~~ deliberate
erosion of the rule of law which has now reached
such crisis proportions that amongst the majority
of our people very little, if any, respect is left for
the laws, especially as they apply to the security
of the country. If there is one country which should
understand the danger of this development it is
the USA

5. No solution is possible, not now or in
the future, as long as the freedom of the press
is being denied, undermined or threatened.
The action against the visual media, the charge
against the courageous action of Tony Heard for
publishing an interview with Oliver Tambo clearly
prove my point.

6. No solution is possible when there is no [7]
vision of the future, ~~and~~ or if ~~that~~ such a
vision is conflicting & divisive. If our vision
of the future of S.A. does not reflect the
deepest hopes, expectations and dreams of the
people such a vision becomes blurred, confused
and divisive. Such a vision can only be ob-
tained if all of us in South Africa ^{live,} serve and
suffer in solidarity with the people. Any vision
obtained otherwise ~~is~~ eventually turns out to
a ~~delusional~~ illusion, a fata morgana
- Award: our dream

7. No solution is possible as long as the
government of S.A. continues to charge the
most gifted and committed leadership with
treason, ^{false} panning, detections or as long as
it prohibits the activities of the most signifi-
cant groups & organisations at the grass-
roots. No solution is possible as long as
the acknowledged leaders of the people
are behind bars or forced into exile
and debanded from returning as free persons
And in this context I, in conclusion, must

specifically to refer to Nelson Mandela, [8]
the leader of the African National Congress
who is acknowledged by millions of South
Africans, both black and white as the symbol
of courage and fortitude in his struggle for
liberation and his opposition to apartheid.
In honoring Winnie Mandela, the wife of
Nelson you are in fact honoring her
husband because she stands for everything
that he stands for. You are not only honoring
his person, his courage, his sacrifice but you
are also honoring his ideals, his goals, his
vision of the future. As long as Nelson
Mandela is forced to remain in prison, South
Africa will also remain imprisoned. Only then
when Nelson Mandela is freed will the
whole of South Africa, black and white,
be free.