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Jul 03

2010

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I woke up this morning overwhelmed by sadness. Ghana had so deserved to win last night. It was so close yet not to be - that sense of victory for the African continent that so many of us long for. A part of me feels that there is almost an injustice here. Then I pull myself together and admit to myself that it is just a game and that on the balance of things, we have taken a step forward. South Africa and Africa has successfully hosted one of the largest sporting events in the World. Having an African team excel would have been a nice to have but should be required for us to feel that we have succeeded in achieving most of our objectives. Some times I think that so much of life is about what we feel and how we feel. South Africans are no different to who they were before the World Cup Soccer Tournament - a passionate, generous people who have sacrificed enormously to secure basic rights. The only difference now is in the way we feel about ourselves. This month's experience has made us appreciate ourselves. Our strengths are on display for all the world to see and suddenly we too see it. The world and we choose to see the bleakest side of ourselves and for a short while now this has been turned upside down.

The challenge is how are we going to be strong enough to hang onto this feeling. It is a feeling that certainly will do much to help us through all the tough difficulties that we face as a country. No doubt we have something beautiful going here and again and again it will show itself to us in different ways. How do we want to lead our lives ? Focused on the bleakness? This is no way to live. A life without hope is too painful to contemplate.

The Ghanaian team persevered in the face of great odds and this is an admirable condition. We have to take what has been given to us and build on this all the time. The work to improve each of our countries on this continent will have to be done with care. Let us not send our best people to work at a broad continental level. Let us keep them focused on the ground where we live so that we can see an improvement in the daily lives around us. This will give us the strength to reach out and cooperate across countries and build a truly strong continent. I have no doubt that Africa's time has come. It is clear in so many ways.

May 04

2009

What was the recipe of the election's success?

Posted by

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What was the recipe of the election's success? By Zubeida Jaffer* Life is a series of special moments. Last week's election was one of those prolonged special moments strengthening our belief in the possibility of creating a country and citizenry at peace with itself. It is through these moments that we garner the determination to persevere and reach our goal of a non-racial, non-sexist society where people work and live with dignity.

We have a long way to go to achieve this but nothing is impossible.

What was the recipe of last week's success? What were the basic ingredients that propelled us to new heights?

Over 15 years, the IEC has developed into a formidable institution. It has drawn lessons from its mistakes in the past and has concentrated on perfecting the processes that ensured improved delivery. As South Africans, it appears that as far as elections go, we have fully understood the importance of building an institution that can withstand the pressure of time and political vagaries. While we have drawn on best practice from around the world, we have crafted an institution that suits our own needs. cursory research indicates that the IEC has largely been able to retain its staff and successfully bring in people with previous election experience during the busiest times.

Secondly, all major political parties have participated in crafting the electoral rules. The space has been created for parties to raise their objections or complaints and these by and large have been dealt with civilly. IEC officials do however complain that some leaders had a tendency to speak to them very rudely and with a great deal of arrogance. But in the main, the decisions of chief electoral officers in every province were respected because they conducted themselves according to agreed upon rules.

Thirdly, the two women at the helm of the organisation exuded a calm confidence. At no stage was the chairperson, Brigalia Bam or the Chief Electoral Officer, Pansy Tlakula seen to be fanning animosities or raising the temperatures amongst parties. Instead they were involved in endless behind the scenes discussions with party leaders to quietly convince them to compromise. Often these efforts went beyond the call of duty. Ms Bam was involved in discussions with leaders in KwaZulu-Natal when she could have said this was not her concern but the responsibility that belonged in entirety to the police. She would have been correct in law but she did what she had to do to help restore calm needed for the work to be done. The only blip on her record was her astonishing reluctance to say that the ANC had won the elections when she made the final result announcements.

By doing so, she left out one ingredient of a success recipe – graciousness in defeat.

Brigalia Bam could not get herself to say that the ANC won by a substantial margin, way ahead of the DA and COPE. It was heartening to see COPE's Lekota congratulate Zuma at the results centre but so far we have not heard Helen Zille congratulating him or the ANC for a performance that defied expectation. Considering all the negative dramas in the lead-up to the elections, it is indeed an extraordinary achievement. It is not only a matter of emotion and history. The ANC left nothing to chance. It persuaded many of its critics on a one to one basis and ran a campaign with first-world sophistication.

By the same token, we have not heard the ANC congratulate the DA in the Western Cape for its outstanding performance. Like it or not, the ANC will have a hard time to recover its support in this province at least over the next two terms.

It will also have to study closely the patterns in the various wards. Take for example, the voting stations in Lower Wynberg where I live. At the last election in 2004, the ANC led at all three stations: John Wycliff(ANC - 36, 18 percent, DA – 24.68, Methodist Church(ANC - 41,8 percent, DA – 28.3 and St Augustine where I voted (ANC - 37.2 percent and DA – 28.19).

Last week, the electorate shifted as follows at the same voting stations: John Wycliff(DA -69.43 percent and ANC – 6.07 percent), Methodist Church (DA – 68.17 percent and ANC – 10.57 percent) and St Augustine(DA 69.89 percent and ANC 6.3 percent). All indications before the elections were that this neighbourhood disapproved of the in-fighting in the Western Cape and the ANC's presidential candidate.

Nobody would have predicted that the DA's sweep in this area would have been so substantial. Instead of concentrating only on its present support base, the ANC will seriously have to understand what shifted voters so dramatically if it hopes ever to lead in the Western Cape again.

The DA will also have to acknowledge that COPE has pipped it to the post as official opposition in five of our nine provinces. This is no small achievement and secures the party a place in the ongoing political landscape.

In a funny sort of way, the election has made most South Africans feel they have won. This is the fourth ingredient in the recipe for our success. The electorate has expressed its will. Everybody was free to express themselves in terms of their own conscience giving us a result that provides a solid foundation that could reinvigorate parliament.

Will our politicians squander this moment or will they find in themselves the humility to acknowledge that once again we have been given a unique opportunity to appeal to the best in our nature. It is a time for curbing the impulse to be greedy and arrogant, to behave as if one community or set of individuals have a monopoly over best performance. Bam and Tlakula have shown that talent and ability comes from every corner of South African society and must be identified and allowed to blossom.

South Africa is made up of diverse communities and political interests. Nationally, Black Africans represent 38 million people, White Africans, 4.3 million, Coloured Africans 4.2 million and Asian Africans 1.2 million. Voting patterns in this election largely reinforce these racial divides with the ANC predominantly appealing to Black Africans and the

DA to White Africans. COPE appears to have drawn a cross-section of support but is way too small at this point to confirm that we are moving firmly beyond our racial enclaves. The challenge remains to find ways to reinforce our South Africanness. We can no longer say that we do not know the ingredients for success. It was in our face last week.

Perhaps the political parties can place a moratorium on squabbling for the next year before they get geared up again for public spats in anticipation of the local government elections. They could negotiate a truce through parliament for one year and call on everyone to work together in their areas to improve local conditions irrespective of which party they belong to. Parliament could assess after one year whether this has made any difference to the motivation of both citizens and public servants. We may just be pleasantly surprised.

Apart from his unfortunate recent history, Jacob Zuma is well-placed to create an enabling environment. Through the decades, this has been his abiding strength. He is known as someone who listens and brings people together. His performance during the election campaign attests to this strength. Most of all he has the capacity to bring to the centre the voice of the rural poor.

If we are to survive the present global financial crisis and tackle the huge challenges, we cannot afford to be pitted against one another. We must create a foundation for dialogue through which we can find the best ways to solve our huge inequalities. No one leader can achieve this but what he or she can do is to set the right tone so that our efforts will generate special moments that will tip our country towards greater fairness for all its citizens.

Ends

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Apr 22

2009

[Election Day – first impressions](#)

Posted by [admin](#) in [April](#)

Wednesday, April 22, 2009 Election Day – first impressions

This was a special day for me. It was the first time that my young daughter, Ruschka, cast her vote. I was pleased that she did not discuss her choices with me this morning, nor did she seek my opinion. Not that we did not have numerous interactions over the past weeks as we discussed the news and the events leading up to our 4th Democratic Elections.

I was more excited than she was. She just took it in her stride, joked with the policemen whom she stopped from driving up the one-way street. “You will be breaking the law,” she said. They laughed conceding that they were caught out and dutifully drove all around the block to reach the voting station. Ruschka is completing a law degree at UCT. She was born at a time when the resistance in the country was intense. When she came into our world here at the Southern most

tip of Africa, she had already spent time in prison. Today I remember the how I spoke with her during the weeks of solitary confinement; how I hoped that the world for her would be a better place.

Standing in the line with our green identity books, I was so conscious of how far we had come both personally and as a country. My finger was marked with black and ink and then hers was. In the voting cubicle, I glanced to my side and saw her at the second cubicle from me. I reached the ballot box and was asked to drop the national vote in one box and the provincial vote in another. The election official did not understand why I was hesitating. "Do you mind if I wait for my daughter?" I said "This is the first time she is voting." He smiled broadly very happy to oblige.

After voting, we chatted to staff and neighbours and then set off home. She got ready to attend a friend's birthday lunch while I got ready to stop off at various voting stations to sense the mood. I am so pleased that she is able to live a life not overwhelmed by politics. I want her to be able to enjoy her young life, serve her community and find her own rhythm. I remember my young life being so different. When I was her age, I was reporter at the Cape Times and caught up in the intense resistance of the time. There was little time to fiddle with hairstyles and make-up.

It was amusing when the reports came through this morning that women at one of the stations were being asked to remove the nail polish. No doubt an over zealous official insisting that the black ink indicating that they had voted would not take on nail polish. The voting stain took on a new importance when we heard that anybody displaying the stain could get free coffee at all Wimpy bars or a free bun at Nando's.

This commercial dimension will gain momentum at the next election and who knows what treats await us. It is indeed a very different time in our country. As a young student more than 30 years ago, I was turned away from a Wimpy because I was not the right colour. My mom and I were looking for a sandwich in Grahamstown after driving many hours from Cape Town and popped in at the Wimpy only to be told that we were not white enough to buy a sandwich. Today Wimpy is offering free coffee to all citizens irrespective of race.

Despite the huge challenges confronting us, we have done ourselves proud today. At the voting stations I visited, the mood was relaxed. Party agents either sat together or stood around together chatting easily. I pray that once the election competition is over that everyone will find it in their hearts to reach out to one another and work together for the benefit of all the people. I am off to the results centre where a press conference will be held at 10.30 tonight. Posted by Zubeida Jaffer at 4/22/2009 09:09:00 PM

[Zille does ANC a favour](#)

Posted by [zubeida](#) in [March](#)

Monday, March 9, 2009

Zille does ANC a favour

DA party leader, Ms Helen Zille, made an extraordinary statement at UCT this week that has bruised hearts here in Cape Town.

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Mar 05

2009

[Who will win the Western Cape?](#)

Posted by [admin](#) in [March](#)

Thursday, March 5, 2009

Who will win the Western Cape?

The silly season is upon us. The Western Cape, the most hotly contested province in the country, is in for a roller coaster ride. All indications are that no one party will be the winner. Instead our political future is likely to fall into the hands of a coalition of parties post 22 April. How we vote will influence what that coalition will be. It could be any of a combination of parties. The Democratic Alliance(DA) and the African National Congress(ANC) could either align with the Independent Democrats(ID), the Congress of the People(COPE) or some of the smaller parties such as the African Christian Democratic Party(ACDP), the United Democratic Movement(UDM) or the African Muslim Party (AMP).

The two front runners in the 2004 election both believe that they will retain or improve their status amongst voters. While the ANC acknowledges that some of its voters were alienated, it has set out to win back that support and believes it is succeeding. It won 45 percent of the vote in the last election. The DA says evidence suggests that it will win at least 40 percent of the vote and will lead its nearest competitor by 10 percent.

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