



Akwaaba

Welcome to the first issue of The Navig8or newsletter for this year. I hope you did not spend too much money on Christmas. One year of Chrismania abstinence could finance most of the initiatives so many of us say we need to implement as a people. However, as we know; saying and doing are two different things, particularly for a people mired in fatalism, dreams of integration and an obsession with messianic leadership. So here is another dose of Ifayomi's bimonthly literary laxative, designed to flush out delusionary beliefs. It might leave you feeling a little empty but as my mother used to say before giving me some Cerassie, "de 'wash out' will do yu good."

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MY VISIT TO THE 'NEW SOUTH AFRICA'

As you may well be aware – particularly if you get the 'Ifayomi Watch' emails - I recently made my first trip to South Africa. Before sharing some of my reflections on the things I experienced I would like to preface my comments with a cautionary note.

I am in no way presenting myself as an expert on South Africa. I traveled there for a specific purpose, however I particularly went there to learn and expand my knowledge by as much as I could within the short timespan available to me. These reflections are therefore my first, if considered reflections which will no doubt be subject to alteration with further exposure to that country and its people (I may be able to return later in the year).

Reading a lot of serious books, which I have done, does not automatically make one an expert in anything, although it is certainly better than not reading serious books. Book knowledge has to be supplemented and tested by experience of the real world and just as Afrikans in the UK would no doubt be a little disconcerted if Afrikans from South Africa came over here, and on the basis of a short visit, made absolute pronouncements on the conditions of Afrikans in the UK, so it works the other way. We Afrikans in 'the West' need to drink from the cup marked 'humility'. We are entitled to our opinions, just like everyone else, however those opinions need to reflect and acknowledge the limitations of our experience.

Right, the first thing to do before relating my experiences is to thank the two people responsible for my trip. These brothers are Mabjeshe Raburabu (hence forth referred to as Rabu; as he is known by all) from South Africa and Tony Gordon from the UK. Rabu organized and financed the whole trip, whilst Tony put together the UK delegation and organized things from the UK side. These two brothers epitomize what might be referred to as practical pan-Africanism, which one can come to feel is like the Unicorn. Everyone knows what it looks like but very few have seen it! However, don't fret there are brothers and sisters on the case, quietly doing the work every day without praise or acknowledgement. So when we can we need to big them up.

Rabu is Managing Director of SAADA (South African ABET Development Agency). ABET stands for Adult Basic Education and Training and Rabu's company publishes Basic Skills educational material that are distributed all over Southern Afrika. They all provide basic skills training courses. As I will relate a little later, there is a huge issue around basic skills for Afrikan people in South Africa.

Seven of us traveled from the UK to join Rabu and his colleagues in Johannesburg at the inaugural conference of ADAPLA (African Diaspora Adult Practitioners and

Learners Association). ADAPLA will become an umbrella organisation for providers, practitioners and learners involved in adult education across the whole of Southern Africa. The conference was designed to formulate plans for the creation of this body including the finalization of its constitution.

As part of the UK delegation's contribution we each made presentations on topics related to the theme of Adult Education. I gave a presentation on 'The Economic Benefits of Adult Education'. Some of the things I highlighted during the first half of my presentation included:

Between Oct 1995 and 2000 average income in African headed households **fell** by just under 19% whilst during this same period it **rose** by 15% in Caucasian headed households (Reuters News media Jan 14th 2003, Ed Stoddard).

In 2001 50% of Africans were unemployed compared to 6% of Whites (Census 2001), whilst in 2002 8% of top management positions in South Africa were held by Africans compared to 75% by Whites (SA Dept of Labor 2002).

In 1991 24% of Africans had 'No Schooling' and this figure had fallen to 22.3% in 2001. By contrast in 1991 1% of Whites had no schooling and by 2001 this figure had risen to 1.4% (SA Census 1991 and 2001).

In 2001 19% of the people earning over \$860 per year were African whilst 67% were White (Census 2001).

South Africa's Gini coefficient (which measures income inequality) placed it as one of the most unequal societies in the world (2003 World Development Report). It should be noted that the most unequal society in the world by this measure was Brazil, another '*rainbow nation*' and '*non-racial democracy*'. I will leave you to guess which group is at the bottom of the Brazilian socio-economic pile!

N.B. Around 75% of the South African population is classified as African/Black. This does not include the so-called 'Mixed-Race'/'Coloured' population. About 10% of the population is classified as Caucasian/White.

I also went on to give an overview of the Black Empowerment Programme (BEE) introduced by the ANC and its pros and cons, before moving on to the second half of my presentation.

The second half of my presentation looked at Neo-Colonialism, Power and Education. In this section the key points covered were:

Defining Power, Neo-Colonialism and the basis of Community.

Demonstrating the similarity of the experience of Afrikan people across the globe.

Defining the attitudes, behaviours and values necessary for creating an industrial culture.

Setting out the key purposes of Education.

Setting out the social and economic benefits of Adult Education.

Speaking about the widespread belief in Afrikan inferiority held by many Afrikans (the Elephant in the room), including the subordination of Afrikan languages.

Unfortunately there is not room to go through the other presentations, however we had a stimulating time at the conference.

Besides the work related discussions, we did have some time to reason with our brothers and sisters and it was an enlightening experience. I must say that the most moving act of the whole event was when the South African delegates sang their national anthem at the end of the conference. It was so moving and truly beautiful. It brought tears to some eyes and I will admit that I had to bite my bottom lip, however none of the UK delegates felt that we wanted to reciprocate and sing 'God Save The Queen'! Given my singing voice that was a double blessing for everyone assembled!!

Some of the things that stood out for me during our stay were:

The warmth and hospitality of the brothers and sisters we met.

The beauty of the country (as much as we saw).

The incredible trauma that the people have experienced. Two examples. Firstly,

one of the sisters related how during the apartheid years she witnessed a close relative being beaten to death with a shovel by his Caucasian employer. His crime? He fell and trip whilst carrying out a work task. The outcome! No charges pressed against the murderer. Secondly, another sister related how during the apartheid years, when an Afrikan joined the police force, the first task they had to perform was to arrest their close family members and bring them into the police station to produce their 'pass cards'. They would then be held overnight in the cells. This was a loyalty test.

There were many other stories of routine injustice shared with us and whilst many of us reared in 'the West' like to say how we would never stand for such treatment, talk is cheap and if faced with being born and socialized in such a system of oppression, would we really have reacted very differently. One has only to look back to the Jim Crow years in the USA to understand the power of oppressive social conditioning.

Our visit to the memorial to the Soweto massacre (16 June 1976) was another moving highlight. You may recall that it was the culmination of a school boycott brought on by the imposition of the Afrikaners language in Afrikan schools. How many of us would have had the courage to face guns with stones as children?

We were able to visit the house in Soweto where Nelson Mandela and his family lived for 11 years. The house has been turned into a museum. It was also good to hear that Winnie Mandela is held in high esteem by our hosts despite the propaganda campaign by White media to vilify her.

I was heartened to hear that the ANC was renaming various cities. For example, Polokwane where Rabu lives used to be called Petersburg and both Johannesburg and Pretoria have been given Afrikan names.

We were able to visit the capital and see the Union building where Parliament sits. There is still a statue to former Prime Minister Herzog in the beautiful grounds; which irritated me a lot. When you travel through Pretoria you see a lot of Afrikans driving BMWs, Mercedes etc. which is no doubt partly a result of the BEE

programme as well as their own ingenuity and hard work, however most of the shops were owned by Indians! Apparently now Pakistanis are moving into the formerly all Black townships and literally setting up shop.

We dined at a beautiful Afrikan owned restaurant that was better than any Black owned restaurant I have ever been to. It was cris'. The only downside was viewing the enormous Americanesque portion sizes which leads me to believe that the more affluent brothers and sisters are on the brink of some serious health problems such as are seen in 'the West'. Without knowing the statistics I can guess that there is a growing crisis of diabetes, heart disease and cancer.

There has been real change in South Africa, but not fundamental change, which involves, amongst other things, the transfer of economic power.

The great bond formed amongst the UK delegates made it a really special time and I would like to thank Tony, Ruth, Jacqueline, Shakina, Tunde and Kantigi for making it such a life enhancing experience for me. It's a long time since I have seen a brother rolling on the floor with laughter and even though the joke was on me, it was all good!

My overwhelming sentiment upon returning to the UK – apart from sadness – is that our brothers and sisters are keen to get to know us. They may not know our history, but neither do most of us! However they are open and welcoming (just as in Gambia) and have a lot to teach us and equally are willing to learn from us. Contrary to popular opinion (amongst some) I got no sense of resentment let alone hatred towards us. The problems between continental and Diasporan Afrikans in places like the UK are often situational and contextual and the result of large doses of mutual ignorance and self-hatred.

If you ever get the chance to go, then go and you will have a great experience. Don't go with rose tinted glasses, but do go with an open mind.

Barackmania

I am not sure whether to be amused, saddened or bemused by the Barack Obama phenomenon and mania and since most of it seems to be emotionally based I will direct this section at those people who are not dyed in the wool fans of Mr Obama. When Marcus Garvey said 'Race First' he did not mean that we should support anyone irrespective of their views/policies just because of their 'race'. Rather he meant that our primary loyalty should be towards our 'racial' group.

Now whilst one cannot expect any candidate – with a chance of winning - for the Presidency of the USA to adopt a Black Nationalist position, I am amazed at how little is spoken of Obama's policy positions as opposed to his charisma and epidural melanin. So here are a few of his stated positions:

He was always against the Iraq war however supports the expansion of the US army by 100,000 soldiers. This despite the fact that the US spends more on it's 'defence' than the next 10 highest spending countries added together.

He has voiced support for the option of 'surgical strikes' on Iran.

His proposals for reform of the broken US healthcare system keeps the bloodsucking and highly inefficient private insurance companies right at the heart of the system.

He is against reparations and when asked about it in debate quickly avoided the issue of 'race' and spouted some generalist stuff about rebuilding schools for everyone. He did not even acknowledge the historic and contemporary oppression of Afrikans in the US. By contrast, John Edwards who was also against reparations at least referred to specific examples of the ongoing and systematic discrimination against Afrikans in the US.

Obama supports the teaching of same sex relationships to Grade 2 (six year old) children in schools.

He supports the white feminist led abortion industry which currently aborts 1,000 Afrikan babies every day in the US. The abortion rate for Afrikans in the US is currently around 40% and over 50% in some cities such as Washington and Philadelphia.

He suggests that there is no such thing as 'Black America' and that African-Americans are "90% of the way there." However he does not provide any substantiation for this claim. It is certainly not true in terms of poverty, child mortality, abortion rates, miscarriage rates, average or median income, share of nation wealth, rates of imprisonment, single parent households, divorce rates, educational achievement, etc. etc. About the only area of major significance where this appealing statement may be close to the truth is in terms of life expectancy.

He has surrounded himself with some seriously hawkish advisers. Go to www.informationclearinghouse.com or the countercurrents website or www.libradio.com to read and hear more about his ghoulish advisers. Just do a search on one of his key foreign policy advisers, Zbigniew Brzezinski, and you may see what I mean.

His policy for dealing with the housing meltdown in the US shows where his loyalties lay (with the large corporations and corporatists). Whilst others speak of putting an immediate halt to foreclosures (repossessions), he speaks of giving \$500 per household to help people out. This won't even pay for the cost of the delivery truck when poor people are kicked out of their homes in a crash created by the greed of bankers.

Read below some excerpts from Bruce Marshall's insightful article '*Barak Obama Fronts Wall Street's Infrastructure Swindle – What Change Really Means*' examining what Obama stands for and who stands behind him.

"Since he passed his audition at the Democratic convention in 2004, Senator Obama has been taken over by George Soros and other hedge fund millionaires to launch a campaign out of nowhere, based on nothing but rhetoric and Wall Street millions.

As darling of the rich elitist Kennedy/Kerry/Dean wing of the Democratic Party, Obama's pseudo-Camelot will deliver Wall Street and the Anglo-American financiers the goods while disguised in a patina of racial teflon and faux populism from the upper crust.

For substance ask, where is the bill in the Senate by Kennedy/Kerry/Obama calling

for a freeze on all foreclosures? Where's their filibuster against the war? Where is a real minimum wage in the form of a living wage? Where is impeachment of Bush-Cheney? Why did Senator Obama move against raising heating oil assistance to the poor in the recent spending bill?

The answer to this last question, besides Rohatyn, is Obama's top economics controller, Austan Goolsbee, a sinister Skull & Bones, Friedmanite Chicago School free trade/free market economist who has delivered the real answer to the question of the difference between Senator Obama and Senator Clinton. Goolsbee stated on CNBC that Obama is more market friendly, more in the pocket of Wall Street." (Marshall 17/02/08, Information clearing house)

Don't believe the hype, believe serious research. If you support Obama's policies then cheer on, however if you know nothing of what he stands for; ask yourself, what am I are supporting? Another Condeleeza Rice, Colin Powell or Clarence Thomas? And if you believe that just having a Black President, irrespective of his policies, is going to inspire all of your youth to achieve wonderful things then you need to ease up on the happy pills. Life is just not that simple. Melanin is necessary, but nowhere near sufficient.

And Finally..

I hope you have enjoyed this edition of 'The Navig8or' and that it has given you food for thought and stimulus for action. By all means question my views, but please, please, please do so on the basis of research, study and practical activity rather than the messy emotionalism that is plaguing our people across the globe.

No one is beyond critique, no one. Be they presidential candidates, former prisoners of struggles against White power or messianic leaders with a hotline to God.

Be the change you want to see in the world.