

MUD SCHOOLS REMAIN A “NORM AND STANDARD” FOR BLACK CHILDREN

24 years into democracy the ruling party still needs a court of law to force it to prioritise the education of Black children. Today the Bisho High Court ruled in favour of the NGO Equal Education (EE) that some aspects of the Department of Basic Education’s Norms and Standards legislation are unconstitutional.



Four months ago EE approached the court to force government to meet its “school infrastructure targets set to fulfil the rights to dignity, equality, education and the best interests of the child”. That whole line is a code for the plight of the Black child. White learners and their communities do not have the basic educational infrastructure challenges faced by their counterparts in the townships and villages.

If the President, the Ministers, the Premiers and the MECs are virtually all black, why does it take NGOs to force the government to do the right thing for the Black child?

Only after unrelenting pressure did the government undertake and release its National Education Infrastructure Management System (NEIMS) Report in 2011. The ANC was already 11 years in state power. Of about 25 000 ordinary public schools at that time, the Report confirmed that:

- 3 544 schools do not have electricity, while a further 804 schools have an unreliable electricity source;
- 2 402 schools have no water supply, while a further 2 611 schools have an unreliable water supply;
- 913 do not have any ablution facilities while 11 450 schools are still using pit latrine toilets;
- 22 938 schools do not have stocked libraries, while 19 541 do not even have a space for a library;
- 21 021 schools do not have any laboratory facilities, while 1 231 schools have stocked laboratories;
- 2 703 schools have no fencing at all; and
- 19 037 schools do not have a computer centre, whilst a further 3 267 have a room designed as a computer centre but are not stocked with computers.

The Report also confirmed that there were, at that time, over 400 schools in the Eastern Cape that were classified as “mud-schools”, many of them consisting of mud and shacks. Again, we have to remind you that this whole mess exclusively affects the education of the Black child.

At the time of the publishing of the Norms and Standards legislation in 2013, the Department of Basic Education issued a commitment that, “In terms of the Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure, the provincial departments have three years to eradicate schools made from inappropriate materials such as mud, wood, metal and asbestos”. Of course, it was less than a year to the 2014 General Elections. Anyway, what that commitment meant was that mud schools and lack of basic infrastructure would be history in black schools by 2016.



To show that they knew what they were talking about, the government told the public that:

“Minimum Norms and Standards are regulations that define the infrastructural conditions that make a school a school. They stipulate the basic level of infrastructure that every school must meet in order to function properly”.

It is now 5 years since the publishing of the Norms and Standards legislation and all the promises by the ANC-led government. Mud and asbestos remain a “norm and standard” in the black schools. Infrastructure is still a far cry. Since 2014 a third Black child has died in a pit toilet despite all the electioneering promises.

Today acting Judge Nomawabo Msizi found a funny clause that indefinitely postpones implementation of the “Norms and Standards”. The clause that states that implementation of the set norms and standards is subject to resources and co-operation from other government agencies responsible for infrastructure has been ruled unconstitutional and in violation of

the SA Schools Act 84 of 1996.

Further, Judge Msizi ordered that “all schools and classes built from mud, asbestos, metal and wood be prioritised and built with proper materials within three years from the date of publication of the regulations”.

THE GREATER EVIL OF NEO-COLONIALISM

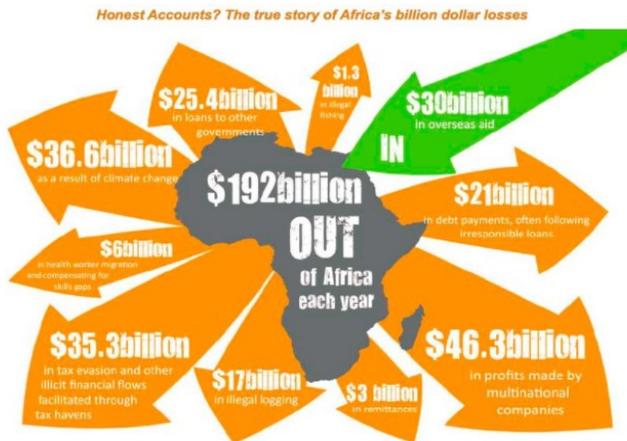
Unlike colonialism, neo-colonialism is almost impossible to fight. This is because under neo-colonialism, colonialism is replaced with coloniality. So, the European coloniser is gone and has been replaced by indigenous rulers but who, unfortunately, still follow the same script that was developed by the colonisers of yesteryear.



It can be argued that neo-colonialism is the perfection of colonialism. Under colonialism, the enemy is easy to identify. Often, the enemy of the people would be Caucasian and of European origin. He would rule without the consent and mandate of the majority of the people, the colonised people. The colonialist regime would be both illegitimate and undemocratic. It is easy to rise against such a regime that undermines the will of the people.

This is not the case under neo-colonialism. The government is led by local people. It is often elected by the majority into office and therefore cannot be dismissed as not representing the will of the majority. But sadly, it still advances the interests of the colonial powers against those of the local population.

As Steve Biko once asserted, “the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed”. Through colonial education and other tools of indoctrination, colonialism becomes the norm. It becomes the right way of life. So, when our people say they want to repossess their land without compensation, neo-colonial politicians would be extremely firm to argue that if you do that, you will destroy the economy because you would have undermined property rights - a sacred clause in the Constitution. They are quick to point that a radical Land Reform program would undermine food security and that your own people would rise against you as it happened in many countries that tried to change the script of colonialism.



So strong is the colonial mentality amongst our people that we are quick to shower praises and accolades to people who go out and secure foreign investments. We pay little or no attention to the creation of domestic investors so that we can control our own economy and not rely on the foreigners to feed our people.

AZAPO has a huge task to dismantle the colonial architect of our economy, but more fundamentally, to free the mind of Black people so that they can begin to believe that they alone are their own true liberators.

ERASURE OF STRUGGLE HERITAGE

The right wing organisation of white people called FF+ has demanded that the revolutionary song “Thina Sizwe Esimnyama” (We, the Black Nation) must never be sung again in Azania. He added that it must be condemned. This song which was sung rebelliously

by the Black Consciousness Movement, can be loosely translated as follows:

We, the Black Nation
 We're crying for our Land
 That was taken by white people through force
 We demand that they leave our Land alone!

AZAPO has never stopped singing the Black Power song. It therefore surprises AZAPO as to why the right wing organisation spit their racist outburst only when the song was sung recently at an international choir competition. The right wingers protested that this implies that white people either stole or took the land by force from Black people. Nonsense. The Black Power song is not implying, but stating it categorically that Black people were forcefully dispossessed of their land by white people. Far from a Rainbow song, it is a Black Power song that reminds Black people that the principal demand of the Azanian Revolution has not been met. That which we bled and died for has yet to be returned to its rightful owners.

AZAPO is concerned that the white right wing in Azania has the arrogance to demand for the erasure of struggle heritage. It is a demand for the erasure of the Black people's identity, soul and spirituality. Because the repossession of our land and total liberation have not yet been achieved, the arrogant and racist chant by the white right wing amounts to a decree for the banning of the continuation of the struggle.

The ANC's timid non-racialism has never been adequate to offer a fierce fight and solid resistance against white racism. They are too keen to take a long jump into race reconciliation and rainbowism. After long legal offensives by the right wing AfriForum, Acting Judge Leon Halgryn of the South Gauteng High Court ruled in 2010 that the struggle song “Ayesaba Amagwala” was unconstitutional and amounted to “hate speech”. The court directed that the phrase “Shoot the Boer” could not be sung or chanted. That affected a whole number of revolutionary songs, most of which have, of necessity, to carry the command to “Shoot the Boer”. The obedient ANC towed the right wing line and abandoned and denounced the slogan “Kill the Farmer, Kill the Boer”. The ANC was forced

to compromise again and again. What used to be “Kill the Boer” was toned down to “Kiss the Boer”. Whose lips did the ANC expect to “kiss” the enemy? Was it the dry and starving lips of Black people?

AZAPO maintains that the racist cannot teach us how to fight racism. Nobody will impose limitations or stumbling blocks to how Black people should repossess their land and liberate themselves. If we allow the racist intimidation, we will soon be told that the Black Power fist is “unconstitutional”. The Founding Father of the BCM warned us long before he was murdered by the very same white right wing that seeks to teach us struggle that white racists do not only kick us; they also teach us how to respond to their racist kick.

LIBERALS HAVE NO MORAL AUTHORITY TO LECTURE US ON THE LEGACY OF APARTHEID

One of the important struggles that we, as Black people, must continue to wage is the struggle against forgetting. We need to know, not just our history but also the history of those who had oppressed us. Ignorance of history is a weapon that can be used against us. We may find ourselves castigating those we should be supporting and cheering those we should be condemning.

It is in this context that we must look closely at how the Democratic Alliance jumped onto the bandwagon of attacking the government following the death of a 3-year-old, who fell into a pit toilet in a village outside Polokwane.

For the record, AZAPO believes that the government should work tirelessly to improve the living conditions of the poor who have no access to all sorts of basic needs including sanitation and water. However, it is a bitter pill to swallow to hear the DA provincial leader say more than 73% of the population still used pit toilets, while another 3.5% of households had no toilet facilities at all. It is as if the ANC-led government created these conditions; and that they are not

the legacy of apartheid for which the DA must also take some responsibility.

Well, it is perhaps appropriate that we unmask this façade and posture of a caring organisation and get to understand the real DNA of the DA. Before calling itself the DA, this party was called the Democratic Party (DP) of Zach de Beer, who was also a chairman of Anglo-American mining company. Before that, it was the Progressive Federal Party of Helen Suzman. Until after the 1994 General Elections, this party was a liberal party for whites. While they were vocal about the excesses of the apartheid regime, they benefited handsomely from racism and capitalism that subjected Black people to economic misery and poverty.

This party may have hoodwinked some from the Black population, but it is least qualified to talk about lack of quality of service for the rural poor having been part of the system that gave rise to the Black Plight. In fact, this party always advances the interests of white people and the propertied class. On the debate of the Repossession of Land without compensation, they are on the side of the propertied class. On Affirmative Action and other remedial options to undo the legacy of apartheid, they obfuscate the issue and hide behind the merit argument as if Black people have no capacity of qualifications to assume higher office.

Little wonder that this party failed to take any real action against their senior leader who had complementary words about colonialism.

There is no doubt that the government should do more to improve the lives of Black people. Sadly, very little has been done. And this is a disgrace on the ruling party whose ridiculous failures are used by white racists to claim that Black people are not worthy to govern. But the white liberals and their pawns have no moral authority to lecture a democratically elected government about conditions that were created by apartheid and the system of white supremacy, which was the foundation that created two nations in the country - one white and rich and the other black and poor, to paraphrase former President Thabo Mbeki.