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## 27 APRIL - A DAY OF PROTEST

"27 April" marked the 29<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the advent of democracy in South Africa. While it is a Day of Celebration for some people in this country, it remains a Day of Protest by the rest. This is so because very little has changed in the material lives of Black people in this 29 years of democracy apart from the universal suffrage, a new flag and a president from the ranks of Black people. It remains to be seen if that "President" is Black in the political sense of the term.

As though it was harvest time, the unfree and poor citizens were bussed into the various stadiums in the country to celebrate what is called "Freedom Day". Ironically, the "free citizens" were nowhere to be seen to join in the celebrations. Of course, the few "freed citizens" were there to conduct the ceremonies and deliver speeches to assure the Black folks that "we shall overcome some day".

Meanwhile, Black people remain landless. They are the ones who live in shacks and are condemned to bucket and pit toilets. They are the ones whose children learn under trees on an empty stomach. These children are systematically forced to drop out, while many of those who force their way to a tertiary qualification join the ranks of the jobless. Later, these "Young, Gifted and Black" young people find their way into prisons as the "lost generation". Tragically, about 70% of young people are jobless in this democracy. And these are the supposed "leaders of tomorrow".

The face of poverty remains Black, while a white face is a passport to resources and opportunities. The evidence to that anti-development reality for Black people is the fact that it is exclusively Blacks that feel a need to engage in protests to demand service delivery. All that Black people are seen to be good for by the ruling elites is to be the voting cattle. They are viewed in the same light (is it darkness?) as animals.

There are no jobs for them because the ones that are there demand skills that the system never afforded them. They are instead condemned to a monthly grant of R350 to contain their anger and make them forever dependent and grateful to the ruling elites. They have to desperately wait for Elections to be fed through the limited food parcels for which they have to engage in a dehumanising stampede to lay their

hands on one. It is during these Elections that they get some political party T-shirts that are dumped at them to be able to cover their bodies.

The freedom of choice and political choice that the Constitution shouts about is meaningless to the Black folks. Indeed, beggars can't be choosers. You just have to wear any T-shirt dumped on your lap even if it represents racism and colonialism. You wear it like the prison overalls. And you just have to eat all the food parcels forced down your throat because you don't even have the education to know anything about expiry dates and nutritional information.

The situation becomes so desperate that you become indebted to any political party even if it organises a media event to officially open a "clinic" of the size of a classroom without any medicine or nurses and doctors. Of course, food and drinks is made available in abundance on the media launch day. That is also the day for desperate citizens or voters to be favoured with rare photo opportunities with the political celebrities. What you are made to forget is that all the money that is spent there is the taxpayers' money. Not the political party's. Your conditions of living are way too desperate for you to know that the rare food and drinks for which you were grateful were bought with your money.

AZAPO will never glorify white settler-colonialism and claim our lives were better off under apartheid than they are under democracy. There can be nothing good for Black people under colonialism and racism. Even that which has an appearance of goodness must surely be intended to achieve bad intentions against Black people. However, it is unpardonable and reactionary for the ruling elites to fail to raise the standard of living of Black people beyond what it was during the apartheid era. It is for this reason that the celebration activities during the 27 April should be redirected as protest activities against a ruling party that is too scared to rule in favour of Black people.

But protests can never be enough. Black people cannot be protesters under apartheid and still be protesters under democracy when they enjoy the power of the vote. This vote should be used to remove political parties that agree to be the allies of the racists in the continued dehumanisation of Black people. As the landless voters we can eat their meat but vote to own the cattle, which is the source of the meat. Once that happens, we need not wait for Elections for us to eat meat. That voter ownership will give us the decision-making power to eat meat as and when we feel like. 400 years of landlessness and slavery are too long and dehumanising for us to sweep the dirt out of our home during the liberation struggle, and sweep it back into our home during democracy.

The voters should not hope to find their political party of choice on television and radio. Parties like AZAPO do not have the resources to appear on television. But they do have the Political Programme and the commitment to liberate the land and the people. It is a fact of history that this country would probably not have democracy without the June 16 Uprising. And there is historical evidence that we would not have had that Uprising if the BCM did not reignite the fires of the Azanian Revolution. It is during the fanning of the blazes of liberation that Mthuli ka Shezi, Onkgopotse Tiro, Mapetla Mohapi were murdered by the apartheid regime. The best way for the masses and the voters to make their sacrifices count is to ensure that we mainstream Black Consciousness as the philosophy of governance. AZAPO is the institutional representation and implementation of the cause for which Biko and his Comrades laid their lives.

In the BCM we proudly chant that "We Fought for Liberation!" Of interest is that the chant above is to be found in our AZANLAMVA Logo as the tagline. This tagline is a bold and defiant statement against the reactionary efforts by the forces of sectarianism to attempt to erase the gallant contributions of the BCM in the liberation struggle. There is no denying that organisations like AZAPO are the ones that brought about this democracy. They are the ones that led the masses to freedom. They are therefore the ones that are the best custodians of the freedom for which we fought. Some of the Johnny-come-late political parties do not show any indication that they know what we were struggling for as a people. These are political parties that were formed after the act. They may have the financial resources given to them by white business, but they lack the knowledge of the liberation cause.

It is about time that we remake the world. But the remaking of the world starts with us and where we are.