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Last month, University of the Free State’s sociology lecturer Dr Pedro Mzileni was going about doing his work in terms of teaching in his classroom. The content of his lecture did not go down well with some white students who reported him to a white supremacy-apologist organisation called AfriForum. This organisation activated its ill-begotten resources and engaged lawyers to lodge a complaint calling for the “immediate investigation” of Dr Mzileni with the aim of taking some “disciplinary actions” against him. The university immediately unleashed its human resources in the direction of investigating the complaint.

To ensure no racist stone misses Dr Mzileni’s intelligent head in its spray and pray effort, AfriForum also lodged a parallel complaint with the Free State offices of the South African Human Rights Commission, which wasted no time in unleashing its dogs to sniff any smell of “hate speech” in Dr Mzileni’s academic lecture.

Meanwhile, the university’s academic staff has initiated a call for signatures in support of Dr Mzileni from all academic staff members of the universities and research institutions in South Africa. The deadline for the signatures collection is tomorrow, 30 September. They are mobilising the academic community “to push back against the victimisation of a fellow academic as part of a dangerous and damaging global right-wing move to silence teaching and critical discourse on continuing racism in our society and institutions”.

AZAPO has launched a signature campaign targeting all citizens to weigh in against white supremacy in this country. The campaign is hosted by the change.org platform. As seen below, AZAPO has also written to UFS Vice Chancellor Prof Francis Peterson on the matter.

DATE: 28 September 2023
SUBJECT: AFRIFORUM COMPLAINT AGAINST DR MZILENI

Dear Prof Peterson,

On behalf of AZAPO, I write to you to share our extreme disquiet about what seems to be the harassment of the University of Free State’s (UFS) sociology lecturer Dr Pedro Mzileni by AfriForum. As a result of this harassment, we now understand that Dr Mzileni is under investigation by the university and the Free State

offices of the South African Human Rights Commission. Be that as it may, we trust that the university will see through political manoeuvres that seek to pour fuel on an already volatile race relations in South Africa – our Azania.

In the same breath, AZAPO herewith throws its weight behind the university's academic staff in their support of their besieged colleague, Dr Mzileni.

Our reading of the AfriForum's letter of complaint has left us with no option but to conclude that it represents the spreading of the tentacles of white racism into the realm of democracy where Black people were supposed to breathe a sigh of relief against white supremacy and neo-colonialism. We say this knowing full well that, at the advent of democracy, white racism coagulated into institutionalised racism, while settler-colonialism took refuge in decoloniality. White people could perpetuate their racism against Black people because they (white people) retained economic power, the ownership of the means of production and the wealth itself. On the contrary, the Black people remained hopelessly condemned to landlessness, structural poverty and chronic indignity.

It is against this background that there are recorded cases of Black people being shot dead on the white farms whose owners escaped justice on the racist defence that they thought their victims were animals. Not so long ago, white racists:

- tortured a Black worker Nelson Chisale and murdered him by throwing him to a pride of lions (2005).
- forced a Black worker Victor Mlotshwa into a coffin and threatened to set it alight (2014).
- described Black beachgoers as "monkeys" (2016).
- forcefully fed a Black worker Joseph Mona faeces (2017).
- claimed that Black men "rape, steal and kill"; and that Black women must be rounded up "and cut out their uteruses and ovaries [so] that they cannot procreate" (2022).

Sir, you know the myriad of racist incidents the university had to investigate and deal with. For that, we commend you. However, the anti-Black attacks include the 2008 disgusting incident where white students forced Black parents to eat food that was urinated on. One has to wonder where was the AfriForum when these anti-Black attacks took place? They hardly raised a finger probably because they had an interest in those racist incidents. They are betrayed by the massive ill-begotten resources they spend in court cases to slave-masterly force Black people never to sing their struggle songs because they remind white supremacists of their guilt.

AZAPO doesn't know what Dr Mzileni taught in his class last month. However, it amounts to dangerous historical amnesia for AfriForum to accuse Dr Mzileni's lecture as being "a divisive rhetoric, which made repeated references to apartheid and racial disparities, [and] seemed intent on stoking the flames of racial division and animosity". Instead of being annoyed by Dr Mzileni's references to historical and obtaining facts like the perpetuation of "apartheid and racial disparities", AfriForum should be contributing towards just land reform and wealth redistribution, and ensure, as Bantu Biko said, that "we bestow on South Africa the greatest possible gift – a more human face".

If Dr Mzileni made any reference to "land thieves", AZAPO submits that such an assertion would be too mild because something worse than the stealing of the indigenous people's land took place. Our land was

robbed at gun point. It took genocide against the Black people and enslavement to enforce their land dispossession. We submit further that AfriForum is interfering with the right to academic freedom, of which the university should under no circumstances find itself being party to the violation of that sacrosanct right. As Biko warned, "Not only have they [whites] kicked the Black but they also told him how to react to the kick".

Regards,

Nelvis Qekema
AZAPO President