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Back To Basics

Introduction

- While my paper in The Thinker, is titled A History of Violence, and touches on South Africa's violent culture in relation to the #FeesMustFall movement, I have titled this presentation, Back 2 Basics.
- For this presentation I will be offering some summary of my paper, while relating it back to my general belief that South Africa, and South Africans need to return Back To Basics, if we wish to create a lasting, and peaceful democratic nation.

Jumping the Reconciliation Gun

- While it may sound harsh, over a number of years, I have come to the somewhat cynical conclusion that South Africa has jumped the reconciliation gun.
- Rather, we have covered ourselves in the façade of "The Rainbow Nation".
- The Rainbow Nation does not seem to actually exist.
- If we wish to build The Rainbow Nation we must go Back To Basics.

Definitions of Violence (We Must Expand Our Definitions)

- Broad definitions of violence have existed for at least 40 years, so in my paper, I turned to Johan Galtung's definitions of violence.
- I believe disseminating these broader definitions of violence into South Africa's collective psyche will assist us to build The Rainbow Nation.
- One of the things that struck me during #FeesMustFalls' height of popularity, was the students complex understanding of holistic definitions of violence, which did not seem to be shared by many facets of society who dismissed them as disruptive hooligans.
- It is terrifying to note that much of the intellectual discourse from #FeesMustFall went right over heads, smothered by people's ignorance to definitions of violence, and people's obsession over spectacle, such as riots, or disrupted exams.
- Now by no means would I say the students were perfect in all their actions, but the comfort people took in placing all the blame on students, young people simply finding themselves in a complex and cruel world, is rather disturbing.
- The existence of violence, as defined by Galtung, is present when human beings are influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations.
- With this holistic definition we can separate physical and psychological violence.
- Physical Violence works to undermine your potential physically, such as the loss of a limb, or for a more complex example, a dompas, limiting your right to freedom of movement.
- Psychological Violence works on the mind.
    - Common examples including brainwashing (observe cults and cult leaders).
    - Victim blaming, gaslighting. Often used to undermine rape victims.

- These subtypes of Physical and Psychological violence, combine to form what Galtung describes as personal, or direct violence.
- Galtung juxtaposes personal violence with structural violence, however they are not mutually exclusive. Structural Violence tends to be built into a system, almost normalised, and thus far more insidious. Structural Violence tends to lack in spectacle, as it works behind the scenes to undermine actors potential realizations.
- With a focus on Structural Violence, let us go Back To Basics.

What Forms of Structural Violence Exist in South Africa?

- 24 Years into democracy, Apartheid remains the evil genius gift that just keeps on giving. I like to believe this is the crux of the situation, and what #FeesMustFall activists were troubled by.
- Throughout their daily lives, South Africans find themselves confronted by rampant racism, sexism, classism, and inequality. The levels of structural violence we have become acclimatised to is extreme to say the least.
- Inequality, of which South Africa has some of the highest, if not the highest levels, in the world is actually directly mentioned by Galtung as a key indicator of the existence of structural violence.
- Other indicators Galtung describes are a linear ranking system as illustrative of a structurally violent society. South Africa's linear ranking is race based. White people at the top, and non-whites below, the order of which is debatable. I've come to understand that the preferred term for is now persons of colour. However, within the South African context I find non-whites to be a perfect description of our linear ranking, the reason being Apartheid ranking people according to their proximity to whiteness.
- Galtung also describes a cyclical interaction patterns and concordance between the ranks.
  - Acyclical interaction patterns would refer to the top down interaction between races in South Africa, based mostly in white supremacy, and classism. Interactions tends to be entrenched. Ie: Being call baas. Using the outside toilet.
  - Concordance between ranks refers to top actors ranking high across the board. In South Africa we see this concordance in areas of wealth, land ownership, access to healthcare, and of course referring back to our case study, access to higher education.
- Now, in line with arguments made by Martin Luther King Jr. during the Civil Rights Movement, Galtung has argued that in order to achieve holistic peace, the absence of one type of violence is not enough to achieve lasting peace.
  - The end of Apartheid might have diminished state sponsored direct violence, but the wounds of Structural Violence are still raw, and this is why we struggle with peace.
- I argued in my paper that direct violence is intrinsically linked to structural violence in South Africa. We must deal with structural violence if we wish to reduce the violence in our society.
- My paper also touches on that troubling fact that we might have already deteriorated into a state of Cultural Violence.
- According to Galtung, when structural and direct violence have become legitimised or normalised in the citizens minds, their perpetuation is Cultural Violence.

- o Put more bluntly, a violence society that has become comfortable with its own violent nature.
- I used #FeesMustFall to illustrate this. I will run through a short timeline:
  - o Apartheid structures are yet to be completely dismantled.
  - o Therefore students of colour become disillusioned.
  - o They begin protesting structural issues. As structural issues are often difficult to see, their grievances fall somewhat on deaf ears.
  - o They use the word 'decolonization' a word that seems to terrify many, as it's implication is a dismantling of the current status quo, and existing power structures.
  - o In a culturally violent society, this is frowned upon, and the structure resists.
  - o Police and private security are deployed to return campuses to "law and order".
  - o Direct violence erupts nationwide.
  - o Students are beaten and shot into submission.
  - o The nation applauds as "peace" is returned to campuses and the country.
- But what type of peace is returned? According to Galtung it would be a negative peace. Simply the absence of direct violence, while the structural violence remains. What this means is, more direct violence may be right around the corner.
- And at what cost?
  - o Many student activists are struggling with prison charges, and/or suffering from PTSD.

Back To Basics

- In conclusion, I believe South Africans need to go back to the basics if we wish to build the rainbow nation.
- We must expand our understanding and analysis of violence in South Africa.
- We must go back to the basics.
- We must resurrect the reconciliation project.
- We must educate ourselves at all levels of society on basic principles, and we must not stop, and say, it's done now, we're reconciled, so easily, and dismissively.
- We must ask ourselves basic questions such as:
  - o What is racism?
  - o What is institutional racism?
  - o What are the ramifications of inequality?
  - o How do we combat it?
  - o Why is inequality unsustainable despite us being a democracy?
  - o In fact, what is a democracy?
  - o Can we even call ourselves a democracy with such rampant social injustice?
  - o What are the ramifications of Apartheid?
  - o Why is forgetting the past not a tenable position to hold?
  - o How has Apartheid shaped our institutions, race interactions, daily lives and psyches?
  - o How do we combat its insidious nature?
  - o How do we holistically deal with crime, rape, worker exploitation, domestic violence, protest violence, gang culture, and all the other violence we have become acclimatised to?

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- We must go back to basics.