

Making good from bad

We've recently completed our 2016 local elections, and the voting results surely show that people are eager for change. We all want better governance and must now wait to see how things turn out. Will it be much of the same or will we see meaningful progress?

Most of the different parties campaigned by promising to improve service delivery. They pledged to improve management of tax payers' funds, fight corruption, create jobs and uplift the poor. In many ways they all seemed to be saying the same thing but their minds were set on defaming one another and arguing about *whose plan is best for the rest*. It is a pity that the act of serving society has become more of a competition rather than a collective effort to get the much needed work done. Surely no single group has all the solutions for our problems; and surely if these experienced politicians set their egos aside and shared their capacity to serve society by working together they would get a lot more done, and we would all be better off – but this principle applies to all of us, and in most situations. If we worked together we would all have more to show for our efforts, and no single group would need to brag or propagate their good stories. Instead we would celebrate our progress together and immediately follow with the search for ways to do better the next time around. I am an optimist by nature but I find myself struggling to find a positive answer to the question, *"How will these different political parties who spend so much time slandering and opposing each other ever work together to serve the people, and act as a united government?"*

We desperately need leaders to unite this nation and not divide it. We need people who are committed to break down prejudice, corruption, inefficiency and mismanagement; not those who encourage it. We need people who will set the right moral examples and who appreciate the opportunity to serve humanity rather than those who seek to serve themselves, their own interest groups and feed their egos. But alas, such people do not just materialise; they must be developed. Starting from a very young age our children must be trained to do the right thing for humanity and not just *"what's right for number 1"*. They will then have a chance to grow up and become the morally upright leaders that society so desperately need.

We should all play some part in building a united South Africa - not just during the voting periods but every day. We should spend less time demanding that others act to improve our lives and rather think about how we can contribute to make life better for one another. Sure, we must hold the politicians accountable to deliver on what they promise, just as we must hold everyone else accountable for whatever they are responsible for. And this is the point: we should all hold ourselves accountable to make good from every bad situation and we will then undoubtedly find the ways to build a more united and productive society. Confucius spoke about this about 2500 years ago. I'd guess there were people all around him complaining about the mess their world was in when he said, *"To put the world in order, we must first put the nation in order; to put the nation in order, we must put the family in order; to put the family in order, we must cultivate our personal life; and to cultivate our personal life, we must first set our hearts right."*

This world consists of people, all of whom have some good and some bad in them. Our challenge is to reduce the bad essence and increase the good in our society; and to do this we must each become a living example of doing more good than bad. So let's cut out the complaining and finger-pointing and find ways to get ahead. As a nation we must succeed together or we will fail together. Our country is in a mess, just as our

world is on a mess and do not need more people to remind us of it, but do need a lot more people to help us fix it. I acknowledge that it is in the nature of man to complain. Fortunately, it is also within our nature to solve problems and to make good from bad; but we need more people to do so. We must allow the good in us to arise to displace the bad or, we risk becoming part of the problem instead of being a part of the solution. Take up this challenge: *Every complaint that comes from my mouth also offers me the opportunity to do something constructive about it.*

Those who take ownership of the problems around us will eventually own the solutions.

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