

## **Things change, but democratic freedoms must be defended.**

**By: Alain Walljee**

In the poem, "The Road Not Taken," Robert Frost writes about how he chose one path in favour of another and expressed his intention to return to that crossing to take the other path. But he showed his maturity when he said, "Yet knowing how way leads on to way, I doubt if I should ever come back."

How way leads on to way is the reality of time and consequence and is often difficult if not impossible to reverse. It was TS Eliot who wrote, "We shall not cease from exploration. And the end of our search will be to arrive at the starting point. And the place we will know for the first time." Even when you go full circle, you never quite end up in the same place.

After almost two years in lockdown, it is hard to imagine our lives going completely back to where we were before the pandemic.

The new normal has packed a big enough punch to make a return to normal different than the normal we once knew.

But as an active citizen – and a conscientious one – I must demand that there are some things that we cannot allow to change.

Democracy is one of them.

The Constitution is another.

Take for example the article by senior government official, Lindiwe Sisulu, on 7 January where she attacked our constitution and called for an overhaul of the judiciary. Her article begs a question or two.

Is this symptomatic of a mindset in our government?

Or should such an idea would be laughed off as mere conspiracy!

This may not be too farfetched when you realise that the ANC is full of Communists and in alliance with the Communist Party.

And look who the ANC, as the ruling party, has aligned the nation with over the years: mostly countries with poor human rights records, such as Russia, China, and other Communist or dictatorial regimes.

Or perhaps the suspension of our constitution in favour of the National State of Disaster has emboldened the minister and her ilk to make such public pronouncements. Perhaps they see the time as favourable to influence a new normal in terms of governance in our nation.

There are similar developments internationally. What worries me about the way the Covid pandemic is being handled globally is alarming utterances by government leaders.

In Novak Djokovic's recent court hearing in Australia, he was described as a potential "icon of free choice" as a reason why his visa needs to be denied.

Since when is free choice detestable in a world of human rights, constitutional freedoms and bodily integrity? And what feared calamity has persuaded us to betray our better judgment in favour of a socialist or communistic outlook?

Or take the words of president Biden's press secretary on 10 January 2022 in response to a reporter's question on a statement from a senator's office regarding the Senate rules on the filibuster that "she would not be in favour of bending the rules and deal with these two pieces of legislation," to which Jen Psaki replied, "Look, I think that everyone is going to have to take a hard look at where they want to be at this moment in history, as we're looking at efforts across the country to prevent people from being able to exercise their fundamental rights."

That it was said on behalf of one of the most powerful offices in the world scares me in no small measure. And that it does not raise more eyebrows is even scarier!

That we even accept as okay these kind of utterances against our democratic freedoms by those who are supposed to protect them is not okay with me at all and I cannot accept it.

In fact, we must not accept it. We cannot accept a cabinet minister to make such utterances – not because she is not allowed to make them, but because of what her utterances mean for the future of our nation, especially during a time where the executive branch has carte blanche without the usual parliamentary accountability.

Deal with the health crisis, but do not take our hard-won rights and freedoms lightly, because we may soon find ourselves in a place where we do not recognize real freedom after we sacrificed it on the altar of a crisis that found us here and will eventually leave us here or at least, be endemically present with us, but not pandemically dangerous.

It is my view that we need to get our constitutional organs of state running again.

South Africa cannot be indefinitely run by the Minister of COGTA who is responsible for managing a declared State of Disaster.

She is not the democratically elected president of the nation. Nor can we continue to be managed by an unconstitutional Coronavirus Command Council.

We need the president and his executive back who is accountable to parliament and who will actually account to parliament.

Our challenge is that while we are focusing only on the health situation, and we are fast reprogramming the social mind as to what democracy looks like!

In fact, right now, our government is getting quite comfortable with the unfettered power our global crisis has given them. That power must be taken back, and constitutional order restored!

And before you write this article off as alarmist, remember that Noah was considered a conspiracy theorist until it began to rain.

And I hear the sound of abundance of rain...

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