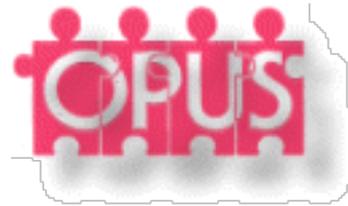


AN ORGANISATION FOR PROMOTING UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIETY (OPUS)

South Africa and the World at the Dawn of 2014 Report of a New Year's Listening Post



Encouraging The Reflective Citizen

Part 1. THE SHARING OF PREOCCUPATIONS AND EXPERIENCES.

In this part of the Listening Post participants were invited to identify, contribute, and explore their experience in their various social roles, be those in work, unemployed, or retired; as members of religious, political, neighbourhood or voluntary or leisure organisations, or as members of families and communities. This part was largely concerned with what might be called, 'the stuff of people's everyday lives', that relating to the 'socio' or 'external' world of participants.

Part 2. IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES

In Part Two, the aim was collectively to identify the major themes emerging from Part One. From several presented these have been drawn together under the following interrelated themes:

- 1 MOURNING NELSON MANDELA
- 2 DISCONNECTIONS
- 3 ELECTION ANXIETY AND HOPE

Theme 1

We are mourning Nelson Mandela. Twenty years after the inauguration of Mandela as the first democratically elected president (in 1994) we buried him. We mourn what he represents – freedom from oppression, forgiveness of the other, protection of human rights for all, and hope. While he was alive we lived in the shadow of the iconic father figure, guiding and watching over us. The funeral unified us with the world and we realised how many people and countries claim part of his rainbow nation ideology. Citizens are proud to be part of the legacy of Madiba. But, as often happens in our troubled society, the funeral also shamed us when President Zuma was booed in front of the world. We seem to be destined to live in splits of pride and shame, freedom and imprisonment, doing the right thing versus acting out, having a voice and being silenced and intimidated, rebellion versus compliance. While we praise and idealise Mandela we also denigrate Zuma. Citizens are prepared to see themselves in Mandela the hero, but not prepared to take responsibility for what is projected onto Zuma as the anti-hero. He sacrificially contains our shame and incompetence so

that the nation can live in the fantasy of Madiba's freedom.

Theme 2

Living without the father of the nation created confusion. For some citizens this implies liberation and new beginnings where they can become more independent in taking their own walk to freedom, create new possibilities and connections. Others seem to be stuck in an immobilising emptiness, they experience the peace to be fragile and the future to be hazy and misty – they ask “what do we do next?” There seems to be a need for progress as well as a fear for moving forward. The young generation experiences poor education and lack of job opportunities. The middle class is trying to maintain their (relatively new) social status and some struggling with guilt about being part of the “haves” while millions are poor. The rich is getting richer. The concept of good citizen is becoming increasingly uncertain as the boundaries blur between right (ethics, doing the right thing) and wrong (corruption, civil disobedience, intolerance, arrogance).

Theme 3

Citizens are disillusioned by and angry at political leadership's non-delivery on election promises, the poor service delivery in health, education, job creation and safety, and the corruption, arrogance, and bullying in politics. The upcoming 2014 national elections represent a chance to change the political landscape. There is hope that some of the new and incoming figures will make a difference. At the same time it seems that leadership in businesses is energised and taking up different roles to ensure containment for employees and even for those beyond their organisational boundaries.

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