

EDITOR'S VIEW

I know so much – yet I feel I know nothing

PRESIDENT Cyril Ramaphosa used his weekly column to reflect on the sentence handed down recently to Luyanda Botha in the Western Cape High Court.

Botha, 42, raped and murdered Uyinene Mrwet-yana, 19, in the post office where he worked. He later dumped her body in an open field and set it alight. Ramaphosa said the three life sentences handed to Botha were “befitting of this heinous crime”. He expressed the hope, rather optimistically, that it would act as a deterrent to men who rape and kill women.

The reality is that the violence perpetrated by men against women is a national crisis. What we have done in the past has not worked and we need new solutions.

Would Botha have turned out differently had he been taught the following:

- ◆ I have the right to say “no” and the responsibility to respect a “no” to any unwanted touch or attention. (Grade 4)
- ◆ I choose to respect my own body and the bodies of others (Grade 5)
- ◆ I think boys and girls should be valued equally (Grade 6)
- ◆ You have the right to say no to sex in any situation (Grade 7)
- ◆ The safest choice is not to have sex (Grade 8)
- ◆ Stay faithful to one partner at a time to protect yourself, your partner and your community (Grade 9)
- ◆ I respect my own and others' well-being (Grade 10)
- ◆ I have the right to say “no” and the responsibility to respect “no” to sexual attention and sex at any time and in any situation (Grade 11)
- ◆ I want to be part of a community that stops gender harm and violence and creates safety and peace in its place (Grade 12)

In Botha's case it is too late to know how these messages could have shaped him. But there is hope for our children. From next year they will learn these messages in school as part of the department's upgraded curriculum on sexuality education.

There has been much criticism of teaching sexuality in school.

However, had society played its part, it wouldn't have created the many Bothas who stalk our women and children.

Furthermore, the world we grew up in has changed and we need to prepare our children for today's reality.

This poem, in the educator's guide, is a reminder to educators about the important role they play in the lives of learners. It also serves as a reminder to a child's primary teacher – their parent:

*You taught me the names of the cities in the world
BUT I don't know how to survive in the streets in my own city
You taught me about the minerals that are in the earth
BUT I don't know what to do to prevent my world's destruction.
You taught me to speak and write in three languages
BUT I don't know how to say what I feel in my heart.
You taught me all about reproduction in rats
BUT I don't know how to avoid pregnancy.
You taught me how to solve math's problems
BUT I don't know how to solve my own problems.
Yes, you taught me many facts, and I thank you, I am now quite clever
BUT Why is it that I feel I know nothing? Why do I feel I have to leave school to learn about coping with life?*



THE writer says SAA has continued to be propped up by cash injections from taxpayers. | African News Agency (ANA) Archives

Is Ramaphosa a man of iron?

Lessons can be learnt from Singapore's founding leader

JUGGERNAUT



KANTHAN PILLAY

THERE'S an old joke which goes: “How do you make a small fortune in the airline business? Start with a large fortune.”

In the 25 years since our country embraced democracy, SAA has burned its way through R57 billion in taxpayer funding. It still has close to R10bn in debt and will need a further bailout of R13bn to continue operating.

Finance Minister Tito Mboweni assessed the situation very accurately in his Medium-term Budget policy statement recently: “The airline is insolvent and, in its current configuration, unlikely to ever generate sufficient cash flow to sustain its operations.”

Now, if SAA were a privately held company, it would be cutting costs, freezing salaries, laying off staff, or simply shutting down.

Instead, it has continued to be propped up with cash injections from taxpayers while rewarding its staff with higher than inflation wage increases.

How did we get here? For the longest time, our government has persisted in two irrational beliefs. The first is that we need a “national carrier” airline as a strategic resource. The second is the idea that if Ethiopia can build a successful airline, so can we.

There's a very good reason Emirates, Qatar Airways, and Ethiopian, among others, have managed to thrive in the airline business. It comes down to geography.

Picture a map of the world and focus your mind on the locations of Addis Ababa, Doha, and Dubai, United Arab Emirates. These cities are located in a region that can roughly be considered

to be the centre of the world.

Dubai to Sydney, Australia, is roughly the same flying time as Dubai to New York, US, or Dubai to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

This allows Emirates to position Dubai as a transport hub providing connections to the far ends of the planet.

These airlines also provide multiple flights per day to multiple final destinations within countries. This means that if one flies from Durban to almost any major city in India, there are multiple daily direct flights from Dubai to that city.

This is a competitive advantage that South Africa can never match. There is no reason whatsoever for someone travelling from Lagos to Sydney to do so via Johannesburg.

The Middle Eastern airlines also have a financial advantage over SAA because the EU imposes a carbon tax on all incoming flights.

The tax is charged according to the distance travelled.

This means that if I fly directly from Johannesburg to London, I pay a higher tax than if I fly Emirates because the tax is

then calculated on the distance from Dubai to London, UK, and ignores the flight from Johannesburg to Dubai.

Now add to this mix an ageing fleet of aircraft, which are less fuel efficient than newer planes.

Also factor in rising costs in dollar terms thanks to a weak rand.

That flight is now about to come to an end. The airline has embarked on a programme to cut costs and retrench 944 staff out of more than 10 000 employees.

The unions were having none of that and last week voted to strike.

In response, SAA management cancelled flights for the next 48 hours.

Some international flights have now resumed, but unions are threatening further industrial action.

It may sound clichéd, but this is really the moment of truth for President Cyril Ramaphosa.

Public sector trade unions have held the country hostage since the end of the Mbeki era as Jacob Zuma relied on them to bolster his position. Now, with our economy on the brink of junk status, Ramaphosa has run out of options.

In 1980, Singapore's founding leader, Lee Kuan Yew, found himself in a similar position.

The Singapore Airlines Pilots' Association demanded a 30% increase in basic salaries. To force their position, they embarked on a go-slow action.

Here is what President Lee said in response: “I can tell you that when I met the SIA pilots, I didn't meet them on TV, I met them face-to-face. Five feet across the table so

they can see me, and see whether I'm still vigorous, able to campaign and take them on. Whether it's worth taking me on.

“And I offered them two choices. Either you stop this intimidation, which is what it was, bringing SIA right down. Disrupting services, ruining its reputation.

“Millions of dollars worth of advertisements and sales ruined within a matter of two weeks.

“I gave them a choice. Continue this and I will by every means at my disposal teach you and get the people of Singapore to help me teach you a lesson you won't forget.

“And I'm prepared to start all over again or stop it! Get back to work, restore discipline, then argue your case.

“Took them 65 minutes and they decided okay. Why? Because they know they'll lose.

“They know that I'm prepared to ground the airline. They know that I can get the airline going again without them.

“And let there be no mistakes about it. Whoever governs Singapore must have that iron in him. Or give it up. This is not a game of cards. This is your life and mine. I spent a whole lifetime building this. And as long as I'm in charge, nobody's going to knock it down.”

The time has come for our president to find that same iron within himself.

Srikanthan is one of the names of Vishnu. Another name for Vishnu is Jagannath, “the unstoppable force”, which gives us the modern word juggernaut. Pillay writes about understanding the unstoppable forces which shape our lives in technology, commerce, science and society.

I was that woman I said I'd never be... abused

NINE years ago, I met the love of my life, or so I thought.

It was one of those rare nights I was allowed to go out with friends when I met this tall, muscular and handsome man. I was instantly blown away.

When you think of the catchphrase “love at first sight”, well this was that moment for me. We spent the night talking and exchanged numbers.

The following day, he asked me out on a date. I was excited and instantly agreed.

This was the start of an out-of-this-world romance that moved fast. Within a week, I met his parents. For an Indian woman, that is a big deal. It meant he loved me and could see us together for ever, and it was not just a random fling.

I did not care that his parents did not approve of our relationship, as I was not the rich ex-girlfriend they wanted him to marry. I was in love and he reassured me he did not care what they said.

That should have been a warning sign but I was blinded by my love.

During the course of the year, he met my family. My mother thought he was wonderful, but my dad did not approve. Only later would I learn why.

After a year passed, we decided to marry. I was 24. He was 23. We did not receive the blessings of some of our family members.

My dad told me I was making a mistake and did not attend the wedding.

I did not care. I believed I was entering a life that would be filled with love and happiness. Nothing and no one else mattered. I was living my best life, as they say.

Soon after getting married, we moved into a rented outbuilding and within a week my life changed.

I became that woman I said I would never be. The beaten and abused one you read about.

I don't know what triggered the instant change. It was as if he was a different person.

He picked on small things, especially if the food did not taste like his mother's. Yet, he did not complain about this when he visited my family home.

These complaints led to arguments. He did not like it when I answered back.

But I was raised to always defend and protect myself.

This angered him. He came from a family where the men spoke and the women remained silent or they were beaten. His mother and sisters lived that way.

But I was not going to allow someone to



The 16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children Campaign will be observed from November 25 to December 10. An abuse survivor writes about why she left

verbally abuse me, so I stood up for myself.

That was when I experienced my first form of physical abuse. They would come in stages.

It was a slap to shut me up. I turned to walk out the door, as I always said no man would put his hands on me. I preached that for years.

That is when he blocked my exit with that muscular body I once found so appealing. It repulsed me.

I tried to push him aside. This just angered him. I saw a beast in front of me. His persona changed. His chest was puffed out and he was breathing like a dragon.

He pushed me inside and went outside. He returned with an iron rod in his hand.

He told me the only way I would leave him was in a body bag and he then started the second form of physical abuse.

I was struck several times, from my head to my legs. I begged him to stop.

After what felt like forever, he finally

stopped. I lay beaten and bruised on the floor, left for dead. I was that woman who I said I would never be, an abused woman.

I could have left that day. He took me to my family doctor. The doctor asked if I was abused.

I lied that I had fallen. It was the first of many excuses for him.

This was the start of a relationship that would no longer be filled with love but resentment and questions.

Why did I get married? Why didn't I listen to my father – the man who never laid a finger on me?

I remained silent. I did not want my parents to know what was happening to me every day.

I stopped visiting my mother and soon left my job. He also left his job to work in his family's business and we had to move in with them.

I lived with the people who hated me but loved their son.

He returned to spending the night with his friends, drinking and smoking drugs. I didn't approve of this, and this made him angry.

Now the abuse would continue – with spectators. I was told I should let him do what he wanted. He was a man and I should not try to control him.

I spoke out again. This time, I was beaten for speaking back to his family.

Life became a nightmare, but I refused to burden my parents and return home.

I did not want people to think that I got married and then left him. I never wanted to be a divorced woman. I dreamt of a life with someone who would love me unconditionally and protect me.

After about eight months of marriage, I fell pregnant and thought life would get better. The abuse did stop until I was about 15 weeks pregnant and the excitement died off.

He had wanted to go out clubbing with friends one night. It would include an alcohol and drug binge, which had become common, and cheating.

I told him not to go and for that, I was kicked in the stomach.

That was it for me. I mustered the courage to call my dad to pick me up.

I left him...but only for a few days. He begged at my door. He cried. He said he would change. I went back.

This would be the cycle of my life. There would be fights. I would leave and return.

After my daughter was born in 2013, the physical abuse resumed.

I couldn't leave. At that time, I did not want my child to not have a dad. He was a good father, but a bad husband. I stayed.

In 2016, my life changed. I had enough. I was tired of watching my 3-year-old daughter cry and beg him to “stop hitting mummy”. He no longer had the right over my life.

I gathered enough courage to say I was done and he needed to leave. That didn't go down too well with him, and I expected it.

Luckily, I had called the police before, and when he struck me for the final time, they had arrived. I was done for good.

Many people resent me because I embarrassed their family and made their son a divorced man.

I realised that I would rather be a divorced woman than a dead woman.

It is three years later. I have my self-pity moments but I am no longer that woman whose story could have been trending under #AmInx on social media.

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