

Column Corruption – A social disease • Part 140

How does Nam compare with the most inspirational, credible leaders?

Based on best practices of some of the most influential leaders, leadership is one of the most critical drivers - if not the most critical driver in enabling change in society.

The most inspiring leaders have characteristics that are critical for creating hope (also to reduce corruption). Leaders that will be the focus of a series of articles in this bi-weekly column include Mahatma Ghandi, Jose Mujica, Martin Luther King, Abraham Lincoln, Nelson Mandela, the Dalai Lama, Oprah Winfrey, Princess Diana, Margaret Thatcher, Mother Teresa, Florence Nightingale, Angela Merkel, Richard Branson, Bill Gates, Desmond Tutu, Beyers Naudé, Jonathan Jansen, Kwame Nkrumah and Barack Obama.

EXEMPLARY LEADERSHIP

These leaders have characteristics in common that were critical in changing a dysfunctional society, for example a society crippled with corruption. These leaders are vision-



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ary (guiding people towards a better future), transformational (inspiring people to change) and moral (representing the values of a society). Such leaders are credible.

What such leaders do is more critical than what they say. The saying "talk is cheap" is an old cliché with timeless value.

Jose Mujica donated most of his salary towards houses for the poor.

He refused to stay in the presidential palace, he stayed in his own house and drove his old battered Volkswagen Beetle.

Mujica "walked the talk", meaning he was credible. Leaders that are credible leave a legacy during and after their death. They are selfless and known for caring about people. They do not suffer from greed, they are brave and benevolent.

PEOPLE BEFORE GAIN

Material things are not one of their top priorities. They focus on relationships and building bridges between polarised groups, they unite societies to create a better society, like Nelson Mandela. Such leaders treat all people as equals. Mandela is known for his words: "It is my honour to meet you."

Credible leaders cannot be bribed, their reputation is not for sale. They do not compromise their leadership by conducting business with criminals in questionable business trans-

actions.

People respect credible leaders. Respect and credibility cannot be bought; it can only be earned. Such leaders are powerful. Their power to a considerable extent are due to their credibility and personal power. Leaders that are credible and moral can inspire people.

CONSISTENCY

Credible and reputable leaders are consistent in their decisions affecting people. Consistency in applying institutional values means that they are "strong on values and soft on people".

The latter phrase also applies to the most successful 500 companies listed on the New York Stock Exchange based on long-term research by Collins. It is no coincidence that these 500 companies have in common some of the same characteristics which distinguish them from mediocre companies and leaders. Inspirational and credible leaders

create hope for people that are in dire need of a better life. Such leaders are trustworthy and just.

How do our Namibian leaders compare with these leaders? Do they have what is needed to change the Namibian society for the better? What legacy will they leave? A legacy of greed and comfort and maintaining corrupt systems or a legacy of service, bravery and selflessness?

References

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