



THE YVONNE NELSON REVOLUTION

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF
MANNASEH AZURE AWUNI'S FOLDER ON
#DUMSOR MUST STOP VIGIL

Background

Manasseh Azure Awuni, a senior broadcast journalist with the Multi-Media Group wrote an interesting piece about the just ended Dumsor Must Stop vigil, a street protest organized by Ghanaian actress Yvonne Nelson in collaboration with her celebrity associates and friends. Without gainsaying, the vigil, a first of its kind in Ghana's history of political protest under the fourth republic constitution, was a major success, in terms of attendance, issue articulation and general peaceful nature of it. In his post-protest narration, our well-respected journalists, chronicles events in a remarkably poetic fashion that has all the ingredients of literary excellence. He (Mr. Azure) however ventures to make some value judgment about the role and relevance of the largest political opposition, The New Patriotic Party (NPP), which in my humble opinion, lacked sufficient facts to give it credible intellectual weight. I proceed to discuss few of these value judgments and conclusions with an intent to open up the debate about civic engagement, political strategy and cultural transformation.

Discussions & Analysis

I can only wonder if Mr. Awuni has considered the possibility that the opposition NPP being supposedly "missing in action" may be part of a certain broad strategy. A carefully reasoned one I might add.

Part of the problem in Ghana's political experience is that NPP and NDC are locked up in a negative dynamic of mutual accusation and suspicion. There is history to this, right down from PP and Nkrumah. The country has been split right down at the middle and have created a realm where no "neutrals" are welcomed. Political labeling/stereotyping is the tool for silencing those who dare to side with policy issues that affect them personally. Many have stayed out due to fear of this labelling. Still many more have concluded, wrongfully so, that the political space should be left to "politicians", as echoed by the power minister (Kwabena Donkor). You will agree that our best chance, collectively, in engaging the political establishment, is to galvanize everyday regular people without burdening them with the liabilities of the existing narrative; political labels. That is exactly what this strategy has accomplished. I disagree with Manasseh Azure Awuni on his proposition that ***"The NPP today is about the most dormant, if not useless, alternative opposition party in the Fourth Republic."*** These are sentiments, in my view, a conclusion not borne out by cold facts. Such sentiments however, I suspect are not owned by Mr. Awuni alone but by a

considerable number of the civic population, who, in years gone by, have looked up to opposing political groups to champion their grievance against the political elite. These same sentiments have been behind pressure to deploy tools such as street protests in challenging powerful establishments. Consequently, political activity and “credibility” have gained notorious association with street protestations and media vociferousness. I venture to argue, that proof of political credibility is far more than “demonstrating” in the streets most of the time.

Strategy Evolution

Interesting Mr. Awuni mentioned Buwumia's lectures and Afenyo-Markings' commendable advocacy work. Is policy engagement not sometimes useful than street protest? Was Dr. Bawumia's “prophetic lectures on the economy not instrumental in revealing the policy credibility gaps of the current administration? What is to be said of a political party that offers the platform for its intellectuals to challenge the status quo with facts and data, whilst recommending alternative policy actions? Is this a party that is not a credible alternative? I path ways here

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with Mr. Azure Awuni and conclude differently. Dumsor-Must-Stop vigil was absolutely necessary, and I am proud to see my Ghanaian compatriots voicing out but to use its apparent success to disparage an opposition political organization, as though they are guilty of dereliction of duty is a sentimental conclusion without basis, in my view. The duty is ours, collectively, not some political groupings, whom the so-called “non-aligned” citizens disregard anyway. It is important to appreciate that, the current spate of corruption and mismanagement under the Mahama administration cannot be met solely by strategic responses of yesterday. A new synergy is called for. A synergy between like-minded compatriots that combines civil protest, policy critique and other forms of political engagement. This calls for the NEW GHANAIAN; a regular citizen who cares enough about generations unborn to demand accountability from the establishment without fearing

political labelling or reprisals. This is the new day that what we hope Ms. Nelson's vigil has ushered us into. That means that even if NPP comes into political office in 2016, this new Ghanaian will be the most potent control mechanism against impunity and decadence.

Analysis (such as what Mr. Awuni has made in his article) that make value judgments without factual basis, destroy the chance for citizens and pragmatic politicians to collaborate against the tyranny of corruption and mismanagement such as has characterized this NDC government.

From Whence Cometh Thee?

Mr. Azure's piece makes for good leisure time reading but barely provides any insight into why we have come this far in terms of civic engagement. Let me exemplify. Here is a quote: He (Mr. Awuni) writes:

“For the first time in the nation's history the clergy, the middle class, academia, civil society, media and all identifiable groups seem to be singing with one voice.”

That is a fact. United by one enemy; dumsor. But why? Why is it now, when the main opposition party supposedly "missing in action", that the masses find courage to defy political labelling and to speak up? More research questions are warranted to guide further inquiry. Would we have reached this crescendo if we were locked up in business-as-usual, meaning NPP on the streets every day about issues that bother Ghanaians? Collecting primary data and analyzing to reveal patterns of thought would have served a greater purpose than just masquerading sentiments as authoritative conclusions in a manner that limits intellectual inquiry.

My Conclusion

There is so much more that needs to happen in this country; citizen engagement, cultural transformation, responsible political party governance and a whole lot. Here is my conclusion, the apparent success of #DumsorMustStop (I say "apparent" because its too soon to evaluate the impact on the typical Ghanaian attitude of political disengagement)

was due to a confluence of factors; one of which is the subconscious realization that the politician alone (NPP) cannot achieve much without popular involvement. Secondly, it is an error of judgment to imply that pressure from street protest is the only "credible" pressure that legitimizes an opposition political party in the eyes of the citizenry. God bless our homeland Ghana and may His Christ redeem our nation from the clutches of the corrupt and indifference of the masses.

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