

A moment of change for Zimbabwe

by Phillip Mudzidzi

“We thank God at least there’s peace in Zimbabwe,” said a woman I gave a lift to town some six months ago.

I struggled on how to respond and reasoned, “*Peace does not only mean the absence of war. We could say, ‘there’s no war in Zimbabwe, but it’s difficult to say that there’s peace.’ How can we say there’s peace when there’s 90 percent unemployment, if there are parents who are failing to send their children to school, if many are struggling to feed their families? How can we say there’s peace if many people are fleeing their own country to seek employment? How can we say there’s peace when the police system is a menace to motorists and the public because of corrupt tendencies?*”

The above scenario described the Zimbabwean situation during the administration of Robert Mugabe before the army’s intervention on the 14th of November 2017. And still today there’s hardly much change.

The Zimbabwe Defense Force General Commander at the military’s “temporary takeover” underscored that Zimbabwe’s social and economic conditions had regressed for the past five years. He said, “There has been no meaningful development in the country,” and cited the deterioration of economic conditions such as cash shortages as the reason for the army’s actions “to correct the situation.”

The army’s intervention saw the collapse of the Mugabe administration, paving the way for a new transitional administration. The army’s actions were least expected, yet became an ideal intervention in order to transform Zimbabwe with little blood shed.

Some cry out that the army’s intervention was a violation of Zimbabwe’s constitution. Others think the army’s actions were a Lacoste Faction takeover against the Zanu-PF Generation 40 group. Still others view this as a potential moment of change for Zimbabwe – a moment for it to redefine its political, social and economic future. This latter view has raised the people’s confidence and helped them believe change is possible despite the repressive elements of any ruling system.

People are awake and have regained voices that were silenced for almost four decades by Zimbabwe’s repressive government. People see there’s the possibility of contributing to desired options for the people of Zimbabwe.

This reminds me of the prophet Isaiah’s words in Isaiah 6:1: “*In the year of King Uzziah’s death, I saw the sovereign master seated on a high, elevated throne.*” Hope for change in Zimbabwe does not necessarily lie in the hands of politicians, though politicians can either be used by God for the well-being of humanity or by the devil as instruments to bring suffering. The president-elect of the African Baptist Churches in Zimbabwe (ABCZ), Rev. Sineke Hlomani, said:

“ABCZ as a Christian organization is preaching the message of hope for Zimbabweans by planting more churches around the country in both urban and rural areas. In 2017 at least five churches were added to ABCZ family. ABCZ is organized into mission groups that include men (Baptist Men on Mission), women (Deborah Baptist Women), and youth to minister to all groups of people.”

Rev. Hlomani indicated the organization's desire to secure resources to carry out evangelism throughout Zimbabwe and to produce discipleship material to mature Christians. The ABCZ also intends to empower churches and members to engage in self-help projects to ensure economic sustainability, and efforts are being made by Zimbabwe Theological Seminary to collaborate with ABCZ on evangelism and the training of pastors.

In Zimbabwe people have lived against hope because of high levels of unemployment, cash shortages and corruption. The military intervention rekindled a potential moment for transformative change in Zimbabwe.

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