

Déjà Vu

A Talk With Thabo Mzilikazi

The Déjà Vu article this month centres around the theme of Human Rights (see last month's issue).

Q: Could you tell us a little bit about yourself?

A: Yes. My name is Thabo Mzilikazi. I am from South Africa. I was born in a city called Johannesburg. I am a member of the African National Congress (ANC). The ANC is a political organization currently fighting for the struggles of the South Africans today, and is guaranteed to have 80% of the vote sometime next year in April.

I have been an activist all of my life, and I have been to prison for some time. Right now, I feel very strongly that the ANC has done a lot. And it is about time that the people in America should know about what is happening in South Africa.

Q: How do you feel about what is happening in South Africa today?

A: As much as I say a lot has been done, I also feel that we shouldn't just relax and say the apartheid system is going out the window or the apartheid system is dying, because it hasn't. It is still alive and kicking. And we need people to march with us in this last mile of our struggle. So it will be very important for people to come and listen to what I have to say.

Also I think they will be in a position to gain a lot in terms of other struggles happening in other countries like Somalia and Haiti. I feel that those who are so-called "minorities" in this country have a lot to gain from our struggle because they, too, have their own struggles; they're all making waves and they have always supported us in our struggle.

However, I'm not quite sure if I will be talking directly about amnesty...I shouldn't speak for the ANC itself, but my feeling is that we are not going to simply allow general amnesty because we are changing the system...There has been a lot of damage since this regime has been in power (from 1948). And I don't think it is fair for us to just let everything go and call for general amnesty.

Q: You have heard of Amnesty International, the organization?

A: Yes, I have.

Q: What have they done in South Africa, to your knowledge?

A: To my knowledge, they haven't done much -- yet. I think they also want to drive for general amnesty in South Africa, of which I say again, in many ways, it is not going to work...Some kind of pardoning has to be done, but on the other hand, it has to come

with a lot of work.

Q: So, not a blanket amnesty?

A: Yes.

Q: What do you see in the future of South Africa, both in the short term and the long term?

A: In the short term, I would say, things are going to get worse before they get better. And in the long term, of course, we are guaranteed to become the most powerful country. A lot of African countries look up to South Africa, and they have supported our struggles. So the liberation of the South African people is the liberation of the African people at large. It is also an example for other countries working for democracy.

Q: What do you think that the youth of today, both here in the US and in other countries, what can they do to help facilitate peace and democracy in South Africa?

A: We are not specifically calling for the youth to help facilitate democracy in South Africa. It is difficult for people to facilitate peace and democracy right here [in the US], but the little that they can do, we appreciate. For example, I would urge them to call upon their representatives to speed up the process in South Africa because, as it is right now, there has been a lot of violence in our country, and none of it ever comes up on the news. Only when there is one specific issue that they have a vested interest in, then you will see it on the news. Other than that, nothing ever comes up. Yet, I feel that this country especially has a lot to benefit from my country. So it is important then that the youth of this country -- they should be in a position to know about not only South Africa, okay, but other struggles in other countries. That will help because I feel that people have been shut out for too long and, yet, they have a role to play. ... So they should try and minimize ignorance and start sharing with each other.

My favourite quote, one which is usually used in the African National Congress, is: "Each one, teach one."

habo Mzilikazi, a representative of the Youth League of the African National Congress and also a student currently attending Weber State University, spoke on 16 November 1993 at 10:30 am in the Social Science building at Weber State University in room 235. His talk was sponsored by the WSU chapter of Amnesty International.

Renew your interest in preserving human rights: attend your local Amnesty International meetings!!

- Johnn Tan, Ogden (Utah), USA