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“CATCH ME IF YOU CAN” - A COMMON THEME IN SOUTH AFRICA

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With the dust of the recent Local Government Elections (LGE) now settled and still no consequences against the July rioters in KwaZulu Natal and Gauteng; one has to question if South Africans deserve the real benefits of proper governing as a foundational basis that underpins our constitution, especially when citizens “*turn a blind eye*” or are part of the problem themselves?

It may be easy to simply lay blame at the government’s doorstep for their lackluster results. But the issue of poor governance appears to be much wider, and deeper, and in many respects it’s a collective problem that needs to be addressed across society.

Whether it be another government department being torn apart by poor governance, or a blue-chip company siphoning profits before paying tax, or a reckless person exceeding the speed limit on a national road; the underlying premise of defying the principles of good governance and ethical behaviour are the same. In each of these examples, it’s noteworthy to understand that these individuals generally not only have little regard for the rule of law -- which is reinforced by structure and process -- they are also ‘wired’ with an arrogance believing that the same set of laws required for orderly behaviour does not apply to them. Indeed, these individuals operate above the law, with a “*catch-me-if-you-can*” *mindset* and this may be the main reason for the failed governance in South Africa.

There is no doubt that good governance is missing at multiple leadership levels, and this is repeatedly mirrored within South Africa’s persistently high levels of crime, including unprecedented levels of unemployment, massive disinvestment and general despondency found across the nation at large. But at the same time, there are millions of private citizens who blatantly disregard the rules to safeguard themselves and the community in respect of Covid19. It’s a two-way street!

“We but mirror the world. All the tendencies present in the outer world are to be found in the world of our body. If we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change. As a man changes his own nature, so does the attitude of the world change towards him.

This is the divine mystery supreme. A wonderful thing it is and the source of our happiness. We need not wait to see what others do.” – Mahatma Gandhi
(1869 – 1948)

For good governance to begin showing its true benefits, citizens, business operations and government departments will all have to play their part. Governance in itself does not necessarily fail in a single event, or for that matter through a major oversight; most often it's an accumulating set of (in)actions brought about by a number of people and over a period of time.

Undoubtedly South Africa is deep in the doldrums, and no matter which indices one reviews, be it debt to GDP ratios, sovereign credit ratings or happiness indicators; our country's leadership is simply unable to remedy our dire socio-economic problems on their own. Each one of us has a critical role to play where we all join hands as partners to the solution, acting as willing collaborators to cause positive change.

As a nation where winning and overcoming massive hurdles is built into our DNA, we must critically challenge those individuals who are intent on destroying our beautiful country. Look out for their brazen "*catch-me-if-you-can*" attitude - if left unchecked, these have a multiplier effect which generally leads to epic proportions of misery and instability for all.

In order to enjoy the benefits of proper governance -- as enshrined our constitution -- be reminded of the famous axiom of Mahatma Gandhi, which paraphrased says *we must be the change we wish to see in the world!*

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