

# Let us embrace situational leadership

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About three weeks ago, I was walking along Loita Street at around 4.30pm. I noticed a crowd that was surrounding a vehicle which had an occupant who was seemingly resting peacefully on the passenger seat. Enquiries indicated that the lady had been there for a long while. Sadly, when 'good Samaritans' opened the car door and attempted to wake her up, she did not seem to respond.

Ironically, the crowd had - as is usually the case in Nairobi - continued building up just to see what was happening. A debate was ongoing as I arrived. Understandably, someone had already suggested that an ambulance be summoned to pick the lady up for medical check up. Another one was volunteering to drive her to hospital. In any case, the car keys were visibly hooked onto the ignition slot. The lady's passport was also visible therefore making it easy to identify her.

But, the crowd seemed to have taken over and could not sanction any of the causes of action. In fact, many were wondering how the volunteer driver (who identified himself as a pastor) could be entrusted with a seemingly sick stranger, together with what seemed to be her vehicle. All this time the lady was comatose and therefore oblivious of what was happening around her. Alongside, some two policemen had mingled with the crowd and were seemingly onlookers as well – it was crowd power at work. The situation was desperate, but then it needed well thought out interventions.

The episode reminded me of what is known as situational leadership. This leadership is never premeditated or rehearsed. It happens instantaneously and is controlled by the prevailing situation, therefore the befitting description. More often than not, situational leaders emerge from nowhere to provide leadership where it is desperately needed. Remember how Cardinal Jaime Sin (God rest his soul in peace) emerged from his humble role, to lead the un-armed Philippine population into ejecting the then Dictator Ferdinand Marcos, out of Malacana palace and into exile in America.

Remember how a junior GSU officer calmed angry crowds somewhere in Huruma estate when the country was experiencing unprecedented Post Election Violence in 2008. Remember our own Professor Wangari Maathai who persevered persecutions as she continued to single handedly bring sense into conserving our environment, especially from greedy national leadership.

Remember David Munyakei (again God rest his soul in peace), who in 1993 brought the matter of the infamous Goldenberg Scam into light while pursuing his duties at Central Bank of Kenya, and lost his job for that. In fact, if there had been national goodwill, the destruction that befell the entire economy would never have occurred. Notably, the same has serious ramifications even to this day.

Actually, our country needs more and more situational leaders to help in arresting the various challenges that have continually hindered our progress. The environment for doing this could never have been better than is the case today. As the new constitutional order continues getting entrenched, we need to make note of a key

constitutional development that may not have taken shape as yet.

The matter came to our attention at the last Tom Mboya Lecture, an event of the Kenya Institute of Management, which is celebrated every November. In this last one, we were honoured to have MP Abdikadir Mohamed as the guest speaker. This is the man who chaired the parliamentary committee that oversaw the drafting of the new Constitution. He currently chairs the Constitutional Implementation Oversight Committee and may therefore seem to have succeeded himself. That is from drafting to implementation role.

Though the youthful politician enumerated many milestones arising out of the new constitutional order, he seemed to heap praise on one unique development. The Judiciary was previously infamous for barring Kenyans from going to court especially on matters affecting public interest.

The then rule was known as Locus standi or the right to bring a matter before a court of law. This law was notoriously used to bar litigants from pursuing matters affecting them as members of the general public. It was almost impossible to sue local governments on matters of public interest.

Suing the government on matters such as inaction on land grabbing, was not imaginable. Kenyans were left to rely on the few daring activists who could withstand the mighty arms of the government.

Luckily, the new Constitution does not have such hang-ups. Kenyans can sue any public office or individual on matters of public interest. You can even take your neighbour to court not just for nuisance but also for neglecting their family. Indeed, unprecedented opportunities of practicing situational leadership have been unleashed to Kenyans. Coupled with a re-branded judicial system, this country will seemingly never be the same again.

Meanwhile, the lady who laid comatose inside her car on Loita Street could have benefited from some semblance of situational leadership. I personally requested the police officers at the scene, to enter into the Lady's vehicle and have it driven to Nairobi Hospital as was being contemplated.

Finally, it's my hope and prayer that Kenyans will now be more willing than ever before to provide situational leadership without fear of any repression, as we continue building a renewed nation.

Indeed, everybody can be a leader.

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