

Students Strikes No Longer Fashionable

By Mwangi Wanjumbi for Newtimes Articles and Info Library – May 2010

It is now less than 3 months before the annual August graduations of the university fraternity. Almost all the local universities will be conferring their graduands with the power to read what appertains to the various degrees. Sadly, the University of Nairobi, main campus may be exempted from this occasion which is highly treasured by all learning institutions. This, if it happens will be squarely attributed to the recent students' rampage.

After being denied their freedom of choice and association through their student's body, the students ran amok. In a span of 4 days, our cars were burnt whereas our businesses suffered irreparably, courtesy of the student disruptions. Need hardworking Wananchi suffer so much for disputes that do not involve them in any way?

Incidentally, the behavior of these "future leaders" brings to mind some experiences during our early school days. While conducting the regular Friday assembly, our then school principal would in rages of fury label all of us students, as overgrown babies. By this, I believe he meant that our body masses were oversize and therefore not proportionate to the brain capacity. Indeed, it is most likely that we were not behaving as expected by the school administration.

In another scenario, some students from USIU took their community service to Kasarani Police Station, a few years ago. They sought permission to finance and install an electronically backed 5,000 litre water reservoir tank, in the sanitary section of the police cells. At the handover ceremony of this unique gift, the police administration was tongue-tied. They could not believe that this was a project by university students, who they are more often than not wary of relating with. The only difference was that these ones were from a private university.

Meanwhile, the observations of our former principal could be applied to today's rampaging students. University education is today a highly competitive affair. With numerous private universities as well as parallel streams in the public university, it is now foolhardy for anybody to think that he or she is privileged in any way. However, there is nothing wrong in getting angry. But, there is everything wrong in behaving in the same old ways of expressing anger and frustration especially in a changing world.

May be, it is important to realize that students are not exempted from good behavior. It is this consistently good behavior added to leadership proficiency that should be transplanted from the university to factories in industrial area; numerous organizations housed in the city skyscrapers; government offices in capital hill and elsewhere; Jua Kali sheds in Gikomba, Kariobangi and other places.

In other words, all university graduates need to positively influence other Kenyans rather than continue eliciting animosity. As a measure of improvement, administration of public universities could probably introduce community service in

their curriculums. This may possibly enable strike oriented students to positively re-direct their energy. They may also have an opportunity to endear themselves with the community that they are likely to work with, in the future.

In the meantime, the current university closure may have removed students from the list of employment candidates as September 2010 approaches. Further, besides annoying prospective employers, the same students may have given their competitors, earlier unexpected competitive edge. In any case, they may by August not have graduated like the others after all.

Evidently, students' strikes are more expensive and unfashionable in the long run. Perhaps, the best strategy for the students would be to withhold outward expression of anger while at the same time persistently engaging in dialogue.

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