

**Servant leadership:
A required leadership model for efficient and
effective service delivery in a democratic South Africa**

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Abstract

This article describes servant leadership and its value, especially in the quest to improve service delivery in our fledgling democracy. It argues that the country needs servant leaders who are guided by the following seven principles, which propose that a leader should (1) demonstrate agape love, (2) act with humility, (3) be altruistic, (4) be a visionary for their followers, (5) be trusting, (6) empower their followers and (7) serve. It further argues that Black Theology, with its demand for active participation in the liberation of the oppressed, and the ubuntu philosophy, with its central values of solidarity, interdependence and especially love, can inspire and facilitate the adoption and application of these principles by political leaders to provide efficient and effective service delivery. The article concludes by recommending collaboration between Black Theology and the ubuntu philosophy in order to inspire servant leadership to achieve efficient and effective service delivery that would ensure a better life for all. It also recommends collaboration between various stakeholders to ensure practical service delivery.

Introduction

I am greatly humbled by this opportunity to make this contribution in honour of the person of Professor Takatso Mofokeng's calibre. I believe the question that persistently occupied his mind and directed his theological research, namely, "How can faith in Jesus Christ empower black people who are involved in the struggle for their liberation?" (Mofokeng 1983:X), is still relevant in post-apartheid South Africa. South Africa's peaceful transition to a non-racist democracy has received world-wide accolades. Poor service delivery by the new leadership has, however, hindered much needed development in terms of the economic empowerment of ordinary people, leading to frequent incidents of protest action. This has also led to doubts that the

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country will fulfil her international responsibilities like the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), agreed upon in September 2000 (Khanal 2011; Krishnadas 2009; *Wikipedia Millennium Goals*).

This article argues that our country needs servant leaders who will not compromise on service delivery. It argues that servant leadership is the relevant leadership model for efficient and effective service delivery. Subsequently, the discussion will address discuss “corrupt and self-serving leadership”; “servant leadership and its value”; “Black Theology and servanthood” and “the ubuntu philosophy” as the catalysts that could inspire the adoption of the principles of servant leadership. Finally, some conclusions will be drawn.

Corrupt and self-serving leadership subvert service delivery

Without disputing the existence of other contributors to poor service delivery in South Africa, such as lack of resources, inadequate infrastructure, poorly trained personnel and political infighting, I wish to focus on the role of corruption and self-serving leadership in the causation of poor service delivery. The existence of corruption, its proliferation and the consequences cannot be denied. Naidoo (2012:565) asserts unequivocally:

Corruption is now recognised as one of the South African (SA) government’s greatest challenges in the public sector. The Public Sector Commission (PSC) has stated that the five most common manifestations of corruption, which is on the increase in the SA public sector, are fraud and bribery, mismanagement of government funds, abuse of government resources, identity document fraud and procurement irregularities.

Ordinary South Africans are greatly disadvantaged by corruption. According to Bauer (2005:53),

Corruption is an intentional act with the public official, knowing what his/her duties are, but preferring to neglect or misperform them in order to obtain some personal gain. The common denominator of corruptible behaviour is whenever the public official makes use of his/her office for personal gain to the detriment of another person or society.

These corrupt actions hinder the delivery of much needed services as they divert helpful resources away from the poor towards corrupt leaders. Corruption involves “the improper and unlawful behaviour of public service officials, both politicians and civil servants, whose positions create opportu-

nities for the diversion of money and assets from government to themselves and their accomplices” (Naidoo 2012:659). Acts of corruption in the public sector turn the possibility of “a better life for all” South Africans into the preserve of the wealthy and privileged few, frustrating the poor to the extent that it drives them to indignant behaviour, expressed in acts of violence. Chimhanda (2010:437) rightly notes that “there is an emergent black elite, making up black leadership, that is sometimes accused of corruption, nepotism, poor service delivery and lack of expertise. Consequently, among poor blacks themselves, there are often mass protests against poor service delivery”. Some of these protests result in deaths of protesters at the hands of the police and the destruction of public property.

Corruption interferes with and distorts good human character and blunts humane values. Okullu (1994:14) suggests that corruption causes “the impairment of integrity or moral principle and inducement to wrong by bribery or other unethical and unlawful means”. Corruption thus perpetuates criminal and other forms of illegal activities on the part of some civil servants in exchange for money or other favours. This results in a vicious cycle that keeps the poor in perpetual poverty and them experiencing a sense of dehumanisation. Gathi (2009:125) states that corruption hampers the state from fulfilling its obligations to respect and protect the human rights of its citizens. Poor service delivery denies the poor their right to basic needs. Mofokeng (1983:62) asserts: “They perceive poverty broadly as an economic, cultural collective and a militant evil that dehumanises, stripping people of their basic humanity.” The significant part of the country’s citizens are, as a result of widespread poverty, subjected to suffering, demoralisation and economic oppression. Kanungo and Mendonca (1998:134) assert that it is clear that unethical leadership leads to its distrust by followers, to the extent that even the government’s best plans no longer excite the people.

Despite government’s initiative to combat corruption through measures such as the Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act 12 of 2004 (2005:52), corrupt activities by government leaders and officials have not decreased. According to the *Daily Sun* (2012:2), “Transparency International’s corruption survey of 183 countries conducted in 2011, found South Africa’s image worse than in 2010.” The Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index reveals that South Africa’s ranking, in relation to levels of corruption, is regressing, having been listed number 64 in 2011, 69 in 2012 and 72 in 2013. According to Bauer (2005:51): “Corruption has been and is still prevalent in the public sector of South Africa ... Corruption appears to be the name of the game in South Africa.” Intervention is thus seriously required. Motlhabi (2008:13) notes that the lapse of Black Theology activity “is regrettable in the light of the new social issues that require theological, especially theological-ethical reflection and response”.

Political corruption in South Africa has undoubtedly played a role in the genesis and perpetuation of poor service delivery.

The lot of the poor in South Africa remains unchanged. The situation is aptly described in the words of Dr Martin Luther King (1984:415), who said the following with regard to the situation in America at that time: "What little progress has been made – ... has applied primarily to the middle-class Negro. Among the masses ... the situation remains the same, and for some it is worse." In relation to South Africa, Möller (1998:57) states that "blacks in the higher income groups have benefited from greater choice in some areas of life such as jobs and housing". The social conditions of the poor have remained the same and have, in certain instances, become even worse. Lenka Bula (2005:104) attests to these unchanged conditions of the poor. Leaders do not deliver. Hodgkinson (1997:199) is right in concluding that "there is no prima facie ground for assuming that leaders are honourable men and women, claiming (based on Lord Acton's dictum) that 'it may be safer to treat all leaders as suspect until proven otherwise'". A radical change is required, if the South African situation is to improve.

After highlighting the failure by various African post-colonial governments to improve the lives of women, to resolve conflicts and to deal with corruption, Ncube (2010:77) declares: "In all this, lack of good leadership is apparent." This author agrees that the lack of good leadership is responsible for poor service delivery in South Africa. Good leadership is undoubtedly the required catalyst for good governance and efficient and effective service delivery. Maxwell (1993: VIII) is right in saying: "Everything rises and falls on leadership." Bauer (2005:53), citing a 1997 South African provincial audit report, lists among others, "poor political leadership" as a factor that directly advances corruption that, in turn, exacerbates the problem with regard to the provision of much needed services. This increases discontent among citizens and causes a widening gulf between the rich and the poor. Buffel (2010:478) rightly observes: "The end of apartheid did not suddenly bring down those structures that ensure that 'the poor remain poorer, while the rich become richer'." For this reason, people feel that their trust has been betrayed and there is prevailing sense that their human dignity is being violated. Their response is to fight for their rights. As Alexander (2010:25) notes:

Since 2004, South Africa has experienced a movement of local protests amounting to a rebellion of the poor. This has been widespread and intense, reaching insurrectionary proportions in some cases. On the surface, the protests have been about service delivery and against uncaring, self-serving and corrupt leaders of municipalities.

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Self-interest among officials surpasses service provision (Russel & Stone 2002:149). Driver (1986:52) rightly asserts: "Structures of social justice are breaking down, because of the greed and fear of empires that are both nationalistic and corporate. But this is happening also, I fear, because many religious leaders, many pastors and many laity view themselves as having some other servanthood than that of justice." Such conduct invoked God's anger, according to Ezekiel 34:2-6.

Barna (in Parolini 2004:2) posits that "a leader's character is the force that allows the leader to move beyond the temptation to grab for power, prestige, publicity, or other perks that can overpower the commitment to moral virtues and eventually lead to leader downfall." The hunger for power and publicity is indeed inimical to Jesus' character, the great Shepherd (John 10) and committed Servant (Mark 10:45; Matthew 20:26-28), who came to serve and ultimately sacrifice His life for the sake of others. Russel and Stone (2002:149), citing Neuschel, indicate that the leader must be concerned about his or her need to serve rather than to be served. Former President, Nelson Mandela (1990:161), also stated: "I hoped then, that life might offer me the opportunity to serve my people and make my own humble contribution to their freedom struggle." This is servant leadership at its best, with its characteristic altruism. I believe the need to serve the public efficiently, was the basis for the Batho Pele, (People First), initiative introduced by government in 1997. I therefore contend that South Africa needs servant leaders who will efficiently and effectively deliver needed services.

Servant leadership and its value

The concept "servant leadership" was introduced by Greenleaf in the leadership discourse in the 1970s. After his death in 1990, a resource centre was established in his name, to honour him with its mission, which is

to fundamentally improve the caring and quality of all institutions through a new approach to leadership, structure, and decision making. The servant-leader concept emphasizes increased service to others; a holistic approach to work; promoting a sense of community; and sharing of power in decision making (Blanchard 1991:117).

Its focuses on serving "the other", which resonates of an African leadership experience in which leaders "personify the order of the world and the harmony that enables its life to continue for the benefit of humanity" (Smith 2004:23).

Smith et al (2004:80), citing Laub, aver: "Servant leadership is an understanding and practice of leadership that places the good of those led

over the self-interest of the leader.” Servant leadership values and develops people, builds community, promotes the practice of authenticity, providing leadership for the good of followers and the sharing of power and status for the common good of each individual, the total organisation and those served by the organisation. The serving, caring, sharing and developing conduct of the leader are central in the servant leadership model.

A servant leader has to display special skills like listening receptively, persuading and articulating and communicating ideas effectively (Smith et al 2004:82). They are selfless and want to give of themselves. They are actually slaves of the common good. Mofokeng (1983:VII), citing Fanon, says: “We are nothing on earth if we are not in the first place slaves to a cause, the cause of the peoples, the cause of justice and liberty.” Next, the seven underlying principles of servant leadership are briefly outlined.

Demonstrate agape love

Paul’s description of love in 1 Cr 13:4-7 is quite fascinating: “Love is patient and kind; it is not jealous or conceited or proud; love is not ill-mannered or selfish or irritable; love does not keep a record of wrongs; love is not happy with evil, but is happy with the truth. Love never gives up; and its faith, hope, and patience never fail.” Accordingly, love should be the value that controls all life. According to Harris (2002:175), an overwhelming majority of managers concluded that “love is an integral part of leadership”. Love is, rightly, viewed as the foundation of leadership, a precursor for change, at the heart of servant leadership and one of the important attributes of leaders according to Harris, citing Waitley, Greenleaf and DePree, respectively. Servant leaders can thus, rightly, be called philanthropists, whilst self-serving leaders are real misanthropists, who are unfit to lead.

Acting with humility

The Bible tells us how the devil sowed the seed of pride into the human heart, which led to humanity’s loss of focus on God and God’s will. Pride, complacency and arrogance constitute the root cause of evil, including humanity’s inclination for self-serving behaviour and corruption aimed at self-enrichment. Humility helps humankind to refocus on God and God’s will. Humility helps, to my mind, a person to know and accept him or herself as he or she truly is, someone with strengths and weaknesses, despite adornment with glittering leadership perks. It is thought of as the “crest of human excellence between arrogance and lowliness” (Morris et al 2005:1331). Humility is neither aimed at self-denigration nor high self-regard. It is a balancing factor. Morris et al (2005:1325) say:

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Humility in leadership serves several potential functions. First, humility may influence leaders to behave in a manner that is primarily other-enhancing, rather than self-enhancing. Second, possession of humility may shield the CEO from needing to receive public adulation, and may cause him or her to shun such attention. Similarly, as argued by Vera and Rodriguez-Lopez (2004), humility as a leadership trait may contribute to organizational performance through its impact on organizational learning and organizational resilience.

Humility in leadership will surely deal a deadly blow to the arrogance and complacency of some of our political leaders and government officials. With humble servant leaders, South Africa would, most likely, no longer experience service delivery protests, which continues to threaten the stability of the country.

Being altruistic

Being altruistic is to act solely in the interest of others, instead of acting in self-interest. Manala (2010:20) states: "With Jesus, altruism is the core of involvement in human salvation and development. Jesus gave his disciples the instruction to serve and to not expect to be served." Altruism is, thus, the total negation of egoism. Jesus clarifies this in John 10:11, stating: "I am the good shepherd who is willing to die for the sheep." This, He is willing to do, so that His sheep may have abundant life. Sesardic (1999:463) adds: "Pure altruists are their mirror image: in a complete abnegation they are driven exclusively by an effort to help others." Such motivation is what is hopelessly lacking, but urgently needed in our South African political leadership and officialdom.

The following elements (Piliavin 1990:30) of altruism are noteworthy: "altruistic behaviour: (a) must benefit another person, (b) must be performed voluntarily, (c) must be performed intentionally, (d) the benefit must be the goal by itself, and (e) must be performed without expecting any external reward." Sobukwe is spot on, when he says: "True leadership demands complete subjugation of self, absolute honesty, integrity and uprightness of character, courage and fearlessness and, above all, a consuming love for one's people" (*YouTube* 2012). In South Africa, we are faced with poor service delivery, because these leadership imperatives are neglected. This is evidenced by the endemic corruption involving political leaders and government officials, some of whom show commitment to serious service delivery only when election time is approaching.

Being a visionary for their followers

A vision is an image of the desired future. A vision is described as a guiding light, inspiration, encouragement and a symbol of hope. In the Bible, it is called revelation, dream and trance. Many of God's chosen leaders and prophets received important messages from God through visions (Gen. 15:1; Ex. 3:2, 3; Ezek. 1:1). This is what Martin Luther King Jr saw when, in his speech on 28 August 1963 at the Lincoln Memorial, Washington DC, he declared: "I have a dream!" (1963). King was seeing and sharing an image of the future, where there is of non-racism and freedom in America. This image inspired hope and encouraged the American people to intensify their struggle for freedom. By articulating his dream so clearly, King empowered African-Americans, who were weighed down heavily by the many social injustices prevalent at that time. As Van Rensburg (2007:11) notes: "Vision gives people hope, it inspires and excites them. A common vision unites people and becomes the driving force behind actions that awaken the latent potential in people to create a better future." Marais (1995:52-73) discusses *vision* at length in chapter 3 of Smit's edited work.

In servant leadership, the vision is to see followers encouraged and empowered to take up responsibilities that, in other leadership models, are the reserve of the leader. They are enabled by learning from the servant leader, who also learns from them. Storey (1995:69) summarises this as follows: "The vision is for servant leadership to empower and be empowered by the whole people of God and to help discern and build up their gifts in a persevering and enduring love." This takes place through honest, enthusiastic and clear communication of the leader's vision for the community.

The servant leader, feels that once the direction is clear, his or her role is to help people achieve their goals. The servant leader seeks to help people win through teaching and coaching individuals so that they can do their best. You need to listen to your people, praise them, support them and redirect them when they deviate from their goals (Blanchard (1991:1).

This is why the servant leader is said to be a visionary for his or her followers. He or she is involved in helping to perfect people's performance in order for them to achieve their goals.

Being trusting

The people should be trusted as reliable partners in leadership. Russel and Stone (2002:142) assert the following about the relationship between trust and leadership: "Trust is the root of all great leadership." Without trust,

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achievement of goals is less possible. The leaders must, therefore, establish trust among their co-leaders and their followers. To realise this, the leader needs to have direct regular interaction with the led.

Through the trusting attitude of the servant leader towards the followers, the leader-member relationship, leader effectiveness and productivity are positively influenced (Russel & Stone 2002:148). Trustworthiness, on the part of the servant leader, is the basis for followers' trustworthiness. It is through leader trustworthiness that followers are inspired to become. Another important ingredient in developing trust is the leader's concern for followers and his or her integrity, which fosters trustworthiness in followers. Russel and Stone (2002:149) conclude that "in the absence of trust, fear dominates organizations and inhibits productivity" (Ryan & Oestreich 1998).

Empowering followers

Servant leaders focus on the development and growth of others. This is accepted within servant leadership as the first priority, ahead of results or the need to attain other goals (Carter & Baghurst 2013:1). Here, people are not merely used like production machines, but are valued as important human beings, who need to be equipped for service. Carter and Baghurst (2013:1), citing Keith, aver: "Servant leadership empowers employees through development and trust. It places a value on people by serving their needs and building their confidence." Such an environment is both inspirational and developmental and, thus, lead to increased efficiency in service delivery. This resonates with Sims' statement about the essence of servant leadership, which is "to honor the personal dignity of and worth of all who are led and to evoke as much as possible their own innate creative power for leadership" (Carter & Baghurst 2013:2).

Empowering followers involves, according to Russell and Stone (2002:152), the "process of entrusting others – it is to invest with power or to authorize". Delegating is indeed helpful in building confidence, as it gives the follower a sense of worth, thus, boosting their self-confidence. This makes the leading task a shared enterprise. Nothing is as empowering as delegation of responsibility by a leader. Delegation should, however, not constitute abdication – practical engagement provides an important ingredient of role modelling.

Empowering of followers occurs mainly in servant leadership environments where values of love and equality are at the centre. "Under servant leader model, the leader's motivation to lead arises from an underlying attitude of egalitarianism", according to Smith et al (2004:86). Embracement of the other and meaningful partnerships are more probable in areas of love in which equality is highly regarded. It is, indeed, also highly regarded in servant leadership, where teamwork is not only articulated, but effectively

practised as well. Individual growth will undoubtedly emerge as a result of mutual energisation, between leader and followers, for the common good of all.

The development of good leaders is the purpose of empowerment within the ambience of servant leadership. A servant leadership develops efficient leaders through healthy modelling and interaction with followers (cf. Carter & Baghurst 2013:10). South African political leaders can, to my mind, contribute in this regard by developing the local government structures and empowering grassroots people to bring about meaningful participation in governance.

Serve

The leader's main concern should be to serving others. A servant leadership model resonates with the style presented by Jesus, who presented Himself as the true Servant who came not to be served, but to serve (Mark 10:45; Matthew 20:20-28; Luke 22:24-27). His service to others entailed the greatest sacrifice of all – becoming a liberator for many. Atere (2012:121) declares: “The servant-leadership style ... is obtainable in the service oriented leadership style lived and prescribed by Jesus.” Greenleaf's vision was that “the leader is first seen as a servant to others” (Smith et al 2004:81). The leadership model that focuses on service provision, places the other first.

It is perhaps for this reason that South Africa adopted the Batho Pele (People First) principles; in order for government servants to provide service as outlined in the slogan: “We belong, we care, we serve.” It aims to ensure that all public servants put people first and adhere to the following overarching framework:

- We belong: we are part of the public service and should work together and respect fellow colleagues.
- We care: caring for the public we serve – our customers.
- We serve: all citizens will get good service from public servants.
(etu.org.za/toolbox-/docs/-govern/bathopele.html).

With this framework, South Africans should be receiving the most satisfying services. Parolini (2004:2) rightly states: “Servant leaders value serving first, then leading, as they see to it that people's highest priority needs are being served in that followers are becoming ‘healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to become servant’.” Servant leadership embraces selflessness and self-giving. Sipe and Frick (2009) state the importance of service in leadership quite eloquently: “The first and most important choice a leader makes is the choice to serve, without which one's capacity to

lead is limited,” Black Theology can help inspire political leaders to adopt and apply these servant leadership principles and values.

Black Theology and servanthood

Martey (2004:2) writes: “Black Theology was the first liberation-oriented theology to appear on the African scene in the early 1970s ... Black Theology took seriously the experience of black people which was grounded in a history of racial oppression and economic exploitation.” The liberation motif is important for Black Theology involvement in conditions of political, social and economic oppression or neglect. In this section, I briefly reflect on Black Theology in relation to servanthood as an answer to poor service delivery.

Black Theology is presented as a theology that is actively involved in attempts to liberate the black people wherever they are oppressed (Cone 1969:117). Pang (2007:116), thus, calls South African Black Theology, “a doing theology of ‘a critical reflection on the praxis of Christian faith, one which participate in the ongoing process of liberation with the black Christian community’”. Black Theology is thus concerned with transformative and emancipatory action that is based on serious social analysis. This resonates with Cone’s (1985:771) call: “Let us hope that the revolution in the liberation theology will change not only how we think about God, but more importantly what we do in this world so that the victims might make a future that is defined by freedom and justice and not slavery and oppression.” The corrective action is what is required to liberate the oppressed.

Black Theology is, therefore, linked with the servant metaphor. Driver (1986:52) rightly states: “This servanthood has its foundation in an ability to identify with the victims of injustice.” The church, as “the body of Christ”, must of necessity take seriously into account its relation to “broken human bodies in society” (Cone 1986:62). The church should, according to Cone, (1986:63), be genuinely and actively concerned with the poor, which includes analysing and fighting against the socio-economic structures that are responsible for their poverty. This is the core of servanthood in Black Theology.

Following on the example set by the crucified and resurrected Jesus, the church cannot do otherwise, but fully commit to His cause. According to Cone (1986:76)

Servanthood is a call to action that commits one in struggle for the poor. Servanthood is the opposite of the world’s definition of lordship. That is why Jesus said to his disciples: ‘... No; anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you must be slave to all (Mark 10:42-44, JB)’.

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South Africans need to be liberated from poverty and disease. To Buffel (2010:473) the purpose of Black Theology is “the liberation of the oppressed”. Black Theology is thus a servant theology aimed at empowering the poor to liberate themselves. This is an undisputed measure of Black Theology (Moore 2011:5).

Our theologising cannot ignore the people’s struggle; otherwise what would be the measure of our theology? Simms (2000:165) describes the positive contribution of Black Theology, as the voice of the voiceless masses, in the South African struggle against apartheid. Black Theology intervention is still needed in the context of poor service delivery. For its success, Black Theology needs creativity and proactivity in identifying new needs and mapping out possible solutions.

Black Theology has more reason to intervene, *inter alia*, to teach about the value of black people’s lives; to conscientise and call black political, business, religious and Christian leaders to genuine commitment to the total liberation of the poor; to instil faith in God, who is on the side of the poor; and to impress on the masses, the truth that freedom or empowerment is not a gift but must be taken; “those in power will not voluntarily empower the poor and powerless” (Cone 1984:416). Mofokeng (1983:18) asserts: “Black Theology served as a project of conscientization ... It is an act of courage, a daring to be and to articulate not only your existence, but your right to exist.” The implication is that the people should be inspired to stand up and actively engage the government, meaningfully, to persuade it to carry out its responsibilities towards the electorate as a matter of justice. Driver’s (1986:46) meaningful thesis is: “The pastoral ministry has no other object or obligation except to be in the service of justice.” The pastoral ministry, from the perspective of Black Theology, is called to mobilise and conscientise the black leaders, of all persuasions, to commit to serving God’s Kingdom practically, that is, providing efficient and effective services, which is the inalienable right of the poor. Identification with the poor and being their voice remain crucial in Black Theology intervention (Driver 1986:52).

Pang (2007:120) too views Black Theology as “a critical reflection on the black situation of suffering, but at the same time also on the black struggle for justice and humanity”. The active and meaningful practical involvement in the liberation of the poor today, as an act of justice, would undoubtedly contribute immensely to ubuntu’s caring, transforming and liberating humaneness agenda, in the context of poor service delivery and corruption in South Africa.

Ubuntu, its meaning and role

Propriety, solidarity, helpfulness, mutuality, caring, and sharing are the essence of Ubuntu. Ncube writes: “Ubuntu forms the core of most traditional

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African cultures. It embraces a spirit of caring and community, harmony and hospitality, respect and responsiveness" (Mangaliso 2001:24). It is further described as the capacity for compassion, reciprocity and dignity, humanity and mutuality in the interest of building and maintaining communities with justice and mutual caring (Bekker 2010:7). Nussbaum avers: "Ubuntu calls on us to believe and feel that: Your pain is My pain. My wealth is Your wealth. Your salvation is My salvation" (2003b:21). Hailey (2008:5) states: "It is a multidimensional concept that represents the core value of African ontology's (sic) – such as respect for human beings, for human dignity and human life, collective sharedness, obedience, humility, solidarity, caring, hospitality, interdependence, and communalism."

Ubuntu is not merely a concept and a reflection, but it essentially includes liberating and transforming action. Its core is dependence on God and interdependence between and among fellow humans as well as concern and compassion for those in need (cf. Manala 2002:1038). Lutz (2009:1) avers:

Community is the cornerstone in African thought and life. An African is not a rugged individual, but a person within a community. In the words of Mbiti, 'I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am.' Or, as Turaki puts it: 'People are not individuals, living in a state of independence, but part of a community, living in relationships and interdependence.'

Ubuntu, thus, promotes affinity and has the ability to move persons towards compassion for and service to others.

Ubuntu has the role of sensitising African leaders to commit to serving their followers. Ncube (2010:77) argues that "ubuntu ... holds promise for progressive and ethical change for Africa". Lenka Bula (2008:378) also points to "the potential ethical-practical value [that is] locked up in the concept *botho* for the care and nurture of humanity, creation and for justice in the economy, ecology and relations". From these insights, ubuntu has the potential energy, required to guide our African leadership towards a more positively engaged and ethically sound leadership. To Battle (2009:28), ubuntu is also, importantly, a Christian value that demands that people should nurture one another in love as children of God.

Ubuntu values, if taken seriously could encourage the needed connectedness between leaders and followers so that there will be no "us" and "them". South African leaders need to have these values working in their lives and operational systems, in order to be practically responsive to the needs of the citizens. Nussbaum (2003a:2) rightly states: "Ubuntu is consciousness of our natural desire to affirm our fellow human beings and to

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work and act towards each other with the communal good in the forefront of our minds.”

Our democratically elected leaders need to embrace ubuntu as a philosophy that promotes interconnectedness, inclusivity and participative interaction with citizens. Msila rightly asserts (citing Mbigi 2008:70): “Arguably, ubuntu is one philosophy that can help in developing practices of doing things together in organisations.” This cooperation is also a constitutional demand (RSA Constitution 1996 Chapter 7, 152(1)(e)). The ubuntu philosophy is the likely enabler and inspirer in this leader-citizens interaction.

Conclusion

This article has emphasised the need for government and other leaders to embrace servant leadership principles. Effectively instilled in our leadership, the servant leadership principles of love, humility and altruism, vision-sharing, trusting, empowerment and service rendering – as advocated by servant leadership, Black Theology and the Ubuntu philosophy – could bring about needed transformation and total emancipation.

The black church and civic organisations need to mobilise and sensitise the suffering masses around positive protest. The following actions are worth recommending:

- The revival and strengthening of civic organisations as independent entities, to drive programmes that will ensure participation by communities in local community matters and to advise local authorities regarding community needs.
- Advocating servant leadership, Black Theology and Ubuntu values to instil the importance of service delivery on basic services, housing and job creation.
- Engaging business, with the intention to encourage job creation and to source funding, in conjunction with relevant government departments, for important projects like road construction.

A servant leadership context is to my mind conducive to service delivery at home and in the fulfilment of South Africa's international responsibilities.

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