

What do all these #movements want?

By [Charles Siboto](#)

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"More than cleverness, we need kindness and gentleness." - Charlie Chaplin

If 2020 was an old-school video game, it would be the level where they make you fight all the boss characters you've defeated before all at once and you have to remember the right button sequences to defeat each of them. While you're doing that they throw in Covid-19, the new ultra-powerful boss. All of our chickens are coming home to roost this year, it seems, and we have to deal with them somehow.

One of the things that the outbreak of Covid-19 has made clear is that all of us are in the same boat, whether we like it or not. What happens in China affects all of us. What happens in the US affects all of us. What happens in South Africa affects all of us. The murder of George Floyd by police officers in the US started a wave of protests against police brutality towards black people and the huge issue that is racism in general. This has also made us look at our own cases of police brutality right here at home, especially with the murder of Colins Khosa by members of the SANDF.



Charles Siboto

Stop and listen

I've been reading the stories around the #BlackLivesMatter protests and looking at how people I know respond to them, whether in anger that we still have to protest against systemic racism, that we still #CantBreathe or with hey, #AllLivesMatter or what about #FarmMurders and #WhiteGenocide? I spent the week just monitoring my social media accounts and watching people I know grapple with the issue of racism in various ways. Some of the responses I agree with and some not but my goal was to watch, listen and try and understand where everyone is coming from.

My takeaway is that we all need to stop and honestly listen to the experiences of others, just listen and resist the temptation to say: “Yes, but . . .” As I said before, whether we like it or not we are in the same boat and even if something like racism doesn’t affect you directly it does indirectly.

“ This #YouthMonth I want to look back at where we came from, back to the Soweto uprising of 1976. I want to remember how far we have come and to look forward to how far we have to go yet. ”

The Soweto uprising of 1976

What did the thousands of students want on 16 June 1976 when they took to the streets of Soweto in protest? They were protesting the Bantu Education Act that mandated that all school subjects be taught in Afrikaans. What those students wanted was to be taught in a language they understand, equality and equal opportunity for all youth. The Apartheid government clearly didn’t like how those students were protesting and opened fire on them. When former President Nelson Mandela was fighting for the freedom of black people he was considered a terrorist and eventually imprisoned. Bantu Stephen Biko was murdered for his anti-Apartheid activism. In the US, Martin Luther King Jr was assassinated for his views even though he advocated for non-violent resistance against that racist system.

What I am getting at is that all these people and movements want the same things and have been killed trying to get those things whether they did it peacefully or violently. Whatever system is in charge always responds with violence and that is what should appal us! That the Apartheid government killed people, that the miners in #Marikana were killed under the rule of this government, that Colins Khosa was killed by members of the SANDF.



New documentary tackling racial inequality to launch on Youth Day

11 Jun 2020



Equality and equal opportunity

What black people and other people of colour want are equality and equal opportunity. What women want are equality and equal opportunity. What the LGBTQ+ community wants are equality and equal opportunity. That is all. None of these groups wants to take anything away from anyone and that can’t be so difficult to understand! #BlackLivesMatter has never been about black lives being superior, just that they, too, matter. Just matter, that is all. That isn’t difficult to understand.

#MeToo and #MenAreTrash has never been about trying to destroy men but women holding men who sexually assault women accountable. Again, not such a highbrow concept. Take a step back and just think about this, every single woman you know has experienced some form of sexual harassment, every single woman. Unless they live in some secret pocket of the country I know nothing about, every single PoC you have encountered has experienced some form of racism. Every member of the LGBTQ+ community has been harassed for simply being who they are in some way. That is absolutely wild!



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Ruth Cooper 8 Jun 2020



If you are a straight, white male does your life not matter? Do your views not matter? Are you not suffering? Do white people not experience racial prejudice? Do men not experience sexism? As a straight, white male your life and views matter but the social contract we all live under tends to honour its responsibilities to you. You can and, in fact, you definitely do still experience hardships like any human being, though. You can be a victim of crime, you can lose your job, you can be poor and just generally have a difficult life.

White people can suffer from prejudice, sure, but not from systemic racism. Men can suffer from prejudice and be sexually harassed by women but can also not suffer from the sort of systemic sexism that affects their careers or the sort of harassment that makes them fear to be around women in general. Straight, cisgender people suffer but not for their sexual orientation or not fitting into specific gender boxes.

Start with kindness

What can you do then? The best thing to do is simply to listen to PoC, to women and the LGBTQ+ community when they express their frustrations. Taking that time to say things like #AllLivesMatter or #NotAllMen does nothing to help anyone because we know these things. When your friend has been in an accident and is bleeding out on the street they know that it sucks that you got robbed last week but they definitely still would rather go to the hospital first.

Educate yourself on social issues as much as you can. Own whatever privilege you have and use it to fight for those who don't have the same. Talking about things like race and sexism is uncomfortable but we have to do it if we ever hope to find solutions. Just start where you are and start with kindness. Kindness goes a long way and we need it since we have a long way to go before we reach our goal of equality and equal opportunity.



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Yael Geffen 1 Jun 2020



One of the things many people are concerned about with the Covid-19 lockdown is the impact on the economy. As a society, we have a long history of squandering our human resources by not allowing people to fully participate in the economy based on race, gender and sexual orientation. Well, unless people were being forced to participate in the economy for the bare minimum wage.

“ What I am getting at is the fighting for equality and equal opportunity for everyone is good for everyone in the end because if the social contract works for everyone there is no reason to breach it. That means crime rates drop and no one is marching and looting in the streets, because there is no need to. Being actively anti-racist, anti-sexist and anti-homophobic makes the world better for white men, men and straight people too! ”

This #YouthMonth, let us look back at how far we have come and brace ourselves for how far we have to go until we are all free because this is #NotYetUhuru when every few months we have to remind people that #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo. Be actively anti-racist, anti-sexist and anti-homophobic in your everyday life. Small deeds go a long way as JRR Tolkien pointed out: “I have found that it is the small everyday deeds of ordinary folks that keep the darkness at bay. Small acts of kindness and love.”

ABOUT CHARLES SIBOTO

Charles Siboto is a delightful, youngish person. He firmly believes that kindness matters and cannot abide people who are asshats.

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