CELEBRATING OUR DIVERSITY

Our Ambition, Our Desire, Our Resolve

THE YOUTH AGENDA 2011
CELEBRATING OUR DIVERSITY

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“There does not exist an enemy as such, only people whose story you do not know, let people seek to know each other’s stories.”...Anon
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Acknowledgement

In acknowledging the efforts put and the people behind the production of this Publication, Youth Agenda in 2009 facilitated the “Celebrating Our Diversity” sessions aimed at interrogating the impact of diversity on socio-economic and political development, as well as the role of young people in fostering peace, reconciliation and cohesion. The overall objective of the process was to redefine the role of the youth in demystifying these existing diversities. From the fact finding mission, the themes picked out for closer scrutiny were ethnicity/tribalism, class, status and education, and religious beliefs. The discussions were held because young people will live with the effects of diversity for the longest period of time. It was also part of our efforts of ensuring that young people are at the forefront of Rebuilding our Nation, Reconciling our communities in Kenya as was recommended in the Special National Youth Convention held in September 2008.

We wish to thank the team drawn from different universities, churches, mosques, slums and Nairobi residents that met and discussed critical perspectives and made recommendations on how to celebrate diversities. The platform intended for personal development served also to provide views which formed the information from which this publication was prepared. Our sincere appreciation goes to Malik Mureu who facilitated the fora and provided rich input to the final report.

We wish to acknowledge the entire staff at Youth Agenda with special mention to Collins Otieno our Programme Officer for his decisive coordination of the fora and in-depth documentation of all the outcomes for use by key stakeholders including this final publication. We also appreciate the inputs of Mr. Bosire Nyamori who edited this publication.

Special gratitude goes to the Ford Foundation who provided the financial support that made the production and publication of this document possible.
Foreword

William Sloane Coffin, Jr. said that diversity may be the hardest thing for a society to live with, and perhaps the most dangerous thing for a society to be without. We live in a world of unique diversities both within and across the countries. As alluded to by William, diversity was never meant to break a society but the trend all over the world has not been very positive with many marginalized, discriminated and faced with inequalities political, economic, social or otherwise. This has not been exceptional in Kenya and particularly among young people.

The issue of diversity has been a political certificate negatively used to diode and hold strong positions for and against others. Ethnic diversity carried the day during the Post Election Violence, Religious diversity during the referendum and Power struggle during the just held University of Nairobi Student Elections that left the administration with no other option but to disband the Student Organization of University of Nairobi (SONU); these are just but recent examples.

Kenya is a nation that is categorized as being a half free country in spite of the celebrated 2002 elections which were lauded around the globe as marking Kenya’s democracy coming of age. And in spite of over 80% of the country professing faith, the country is ranked amongst the 10 most corrupt nations in the world and is riddled with serious governance problems; corruption, institutional decay/erosion of public trust, ethnicity and scramble for resources. The country has more recently been rocked by instrumentalised ethnicity which has revealed another significant contradiction - that the 43+ Kenyan ethnic communities are perfectly harmonious in their diversity at the social, sports and cultural realms but are at war at the slightest provocation within the political and economic domains.

Ethnic divisions go back to pre-colonial times and the country has yet to come to terms with the reality of our ethnic diversity to see this as a source of wealth rather than a basis for heightening divisions. Unfortunately, the 2007 election campaigns were characterized by a whipping up of emotions and ‘demonizing’ of particular ethnic groups leading to the current rift in the country (one group as violent and hungry for power and any candidate from the community being unelectable; another as arrogant, selfish, domineering, and unwilling to share economic gains with any other community; yet another as corrupt or beneficiaries of corruption).

As such Kenya is a nation in search of its identity. The identity crisis manifests
itself in many different ways. However the most evident sign of this identity crisis is demonstrated in the crisis of the two publics— the national and the ethnic – that is evident even among the country’s elite. Though young people are increasingly more cosmopolitan and more outward looking, there is evidence that the dilemma of the two publics and ethnic capture continue to present a serious challenge to many in crunch moments such as happened in post-election conflict. In order to discover their rightful role in the reconstruction, Kenyan youth must then contend with the following questions; why has the young person in Africa and of course, in Kenya failed to generate viable and acceptable national values and principles? Why do we have such blatant failures of imagination, grasp of historical opportunity and social political will to initiate transformational projects in our countries? Is Kenya in an identity crisis because of failure of leadership or the product of its citizens- me and you? Do we envisage a society that is uniform? Or should it be our collective responsibility to celebrate our diversity?

It is time that we, as a people of Kenya currently below the age of 35 years ask ourselves these hard questions about our current condition, how we got here and the way forward so that we can begin to effectively own and solve our problems as a nation and a continent.

It gives us great pleasure to share proceedings of the three meetings convened by Youth Agenda to solve an identity crisis creeping in Kenya today. Dubbed “Celebrating our Diversity fora”, the objective of the meetings was to promote debate and dialogue on diversity issues affecting young people and the society at large. The perspective and experiences of the young people engaged in these discussions serve as brief synopsis of young people’s quest to promote national cohesion and unity by celebrating their diversity and an excellent foundation for future studies.

The interventions of National Cohesion and Integration Commission, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Justice, National Cohesion and Constitutional Affairs will heavily rely on these voices of young people. It is also our hope that the religious groups, civil society, young people and other key stakeholders will find these insights helpful towards implementation of the Constitution as articulated in the preamble and subsequent articles reiterating national values and principles and facilitate realization of Kenya’s Vision 2030.

Susan Kariuki
Chief Executive Officer
Introduction

Kenya is a beautiful country endowed with immense resources and hard working citizenry. For decades, the over 43 ethnic groups have existed side by side in common accord. Even when animosities and atrocities between some communities broke out, the speed at which harmony was re-established is impressive. The pioneers of Kenya laid its foundation on the principles of peace, love and unity and these have been the proverbial fibre that holds the citizens together.

However, since gaining independence in 1963, and becoming a republic in 1964, the foundation of the nation has never been solidly laid. The economic growth has not been impressive and so has afforded opportunities to most Kenyans, the social landscape is still unsteady and the political process has been polarized. The acrimonious succession battles have widened rifts between perceived enemies with biting effects. The National Rainbow Coalition government took over leadership of a country reeling from the effects of bad governance and though meaningful steps towards reforms have been made; there still exist practices and tendencies reminiscent of past regimes. The introduction of multiparty politics has not yielded the much heralded developments such as transparency and accountability in running of public affairs. Leadership policies have been characterised by self interest, plunder of national resources, corruption and cronyism, as a result casting doubt on efforts to transform the country.

The violence that followed the announcement of 2007 general elections jolted Kenyans to realise the fragility of its social fabric. The ethnic dimension of the violence was frightening and occasioned deaths, displacement of people and massive destruction of property. To address the challenges occasioned by the violence, there have been efforts to promote peace and social justice. Reconciliation is obviously one of the ways of enhancing peace harmony and social justice in Kenya.

Reconciliation involves building mutually respectful relationships between various groups that allow them to work together to solve problems and generate success which is mutually beneficial. Achieving reconciliation involves raising awareness and knowledge of history and culture, changing attitudes which are often based on myths and misunderstandings, and encouraging action so that all play their part in building better relationships.

Scholars and experts have argued that true reconciliation stems from inding the root causes of the crises that manifest in society. In other words, the only sure way of achieving and maintaining true reconciliation
is by exploring the underlying causes that have been or are the contributing factors of these conflicts. These factors tend to divide the society on tribal or other similar lines. Some of the factors that fuel conflicts include age or generational tensions, religious affiliations, class stratification and race or tribe or ethnic background. It is these factors that tend to put one group of the society at a “disadvantaged position” over another, probably the absence of a common character. This “positioning” is in most cases either carefully orchestrated or by sheer luck or in some cases totally perceived as a result of misconception.

The question then is how do we best embark on reconciliation efforts? Views differ on the approach to achieve this. On the one hand, it is argued that interaction and cooperation are the logical preconditions for reconciliation. On the other hand, and according to Professor Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, the process for stable peace or reconciliation begins by changing attitudes and beliefs and once this achieved, cooperation follows. The rationale for the argument is that extensive interaction and cooperation as well as establishment of joint institutions and organizations are expressions of warm and normal peace, and these may be possible only after reconciliation.

1: From Conflict Resolution to Reconciliation, Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, Oxford University Press, January, 2004
Background

The violence that followed the announcement of 2007 general elections jolted and shocked Kenyans. Subsequently, Kenyans embarked on soul searching with a view to understand why this happened as well as find direction and a sense of belonging.

The report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Post Election Violence, set up to investigate the cause of the post 2007/2008 election violence, indicated that the ensuing violence was unprecedented. Partly, the violence was spontaneous, but, in most of the cases it was systematic and carefully planned. Where the attacks were systematic, the victims were Kenyans targeted on account of their ethnicity and political leanings. The illusion that tribal issues are not a hindrance to the country’s development had been shattered.

The youth, who were major players in the election process and were directly and indirectly affected by the violence, were disillusioned and angry at what happened. Going forward, just as other Kenyans, the youth sought to understand why this happened and ways this could be avoided in future. Certainly, reconciliation and healing was a priority for the youth. The Youth Agenda sought to strengthen the capacity of young people to promote peace and social justice as well as track and support the work and process of the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission. This objective is in line with Youth Agenda’s work on enhancing young people’s effective participation in the governance and development processes of this country, specifically, through reconciliation and peace building processes.

The Youth Agenda sought to achieve this goal through two initiatives, namely, “Celebrating Our Diversity” and “Generational Dialogues”.

Generational Dialogues

Like all African societies and other civilization in the world, dialogues are at the centre of dispute resolution. On the basis of this premise, the Youth Agenda embarked on some youth initiatives aimed at encouraging dialogues among the Kenyan youth to avert any cases of conflict. The highlight of this initiative was the “Intergenerational Dialogues”. The goal of Intergenerational dialogues was to open up space for understanding and interaction between young people and the older generation. The youth and the old generation have sat together and talked about some of the issues that they face while also exposing the things that pit them against each other. Indeed, it is said that the older generation
are the “owners of the country”, while the youth are the visionaries, with the energy to take the country to the next level.

The dialogues have offered important insight into the perception that the old generation have of young people and some of the fears that this groups exhibit towards the youth. The youth, on their part, have realized why the “old guards” are reluctant to offer them space to actively take part in the development of the society and, more importantly, in leadership roles other than in the periphery. It is by fostering youth-adult partnerships that true development and progress occurs.

“Celebrating Our Diversity”,

In partnership with the Ford Foundation, the Youth Agenda organized a series of discussions, under the theme “Celebrating Our Diversity”, whose goal was to create a platform for interrogating the impact of diversity on socio-economic and political development, as well as the role of young people in fostering peace, reconciliation and cohesion. This initiative was inspired by the resolutions of the Fourth National Youth Convention, organized by the Youth Agenda and held in 2008 in Nairobi at the Bomas of Kenya. The youth delegates at the 2008 convention expressed the need for the youth to deliberate on the truth, justice and reconciliation process and agenda. Some of the resolutions of the Convention were:

“10. NYC-IV declares its support and that of all Kenyan youth in assisting the reconciliation, resettlement and conflict prevention efforts……”

“11. As the youth of Kenya we shall henceforth begin the work of reconciling our communities and constituencies. We shall play the role of dialogue and peace ambassadors; we shall work to mobilize our communities to achieve conflict transformation and peace building”

It was hoped that the “Celebrating Our Diversity” initiative would enhance the youth’s understanding of diversity in Kenya. To better appreciate and understand diversity in the country, the following themes were identified for further discourse and interrogation: ethnicity or tribalism, religious beliefs and class, status and education. The choice of the themes was informed by the fact that they were the most highlighted in many of the interactions with youth and also from materials and other publications that discuss the issues of diversities in Kenya.

i. Diversities in Ethnicity and Tribalism: focusing on youth leadership, the discussions aimed at finding out the effects of ethnicity and ethical

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2: 2008 NYC-IV Bomas Declarations
3: see “The Kenya Divides” Perception Study Vol. 1A, June 2009 by Institute of Economic Affairs
influence on the leadership and electoral processes. The goal being to foster and promote accountability and servant leadership.

ii. **Diversities of Religious Beliefs**: these discourses were with faith based groups. The aim was to expose divisions and differences based on religious inclination and their impact on national cohesion. It also explored the roles that faith based groups and bodies in championing good governance through fostering healing, peace and reconciliation.

iii. **Diversities of Class, Status and Education**: The sessions aimed at bringing out divisions brought about by class, status and education among sectors of the society. The existing or perceived diversity in accessing opportunities due to class differences as well as the occurrences of “class within a class” was discussed.
What Divides Us?

The process of fostering peace and engendering reconciliation and cohesion in the aftermath of the 2007/2008 violence required the involvement and participation of the youth. Appreciating and understanding diversity was an important step for the youth in this process. In this regard, The Youth Agenda sought to explore the thinking and perception of youth on issues of diversity. Youth participants were asked to list some of the issues they thought divided them specifically as young people and the country in general. In their feedback, the youth listed the following:

a) Leadership and power especially the personalization of power around the presidency;
b) Inequality and economic marginalization;
c) Ethnicity;
d) Religion, especially its role in light of the current reform agenda; and
e) Class in the context of education, money and power.

When asked to give reasons for their choice, many of the youth were not really able to. It is likely that the issues that were identified were not necessarily based on facts. They are, instead; based on perceptions and in some cases myths whose origins are not well known. To focus our action, the issues were distilled into three, namely, ethnicity, religion and class.

Ethnicity

Kwamchetsi Makokha once stated that “Kenya’s national flag is a patch work
of ethnic identities struggling for recognition. Tribe is a basis for allocation of jobs in the public and private sector. It is basis for organizing policies and is recognized by law as a reference point in resolving issues revolving around the person”.

Tribe is defined as a group of individuals who possess a common ancestry, language, culture and sometimes geographical area. Ethnicity is a civilization of a group of people with similar customs and way of life and is a manifestation of tribalism. Belonging to a tribe is not necessarily a bad thing. Rather, it is when this engenders chauvinism, insularity, discrimination and exclusion that it becomes a problem. Tribalism is manifested through, among other ways, nepotism and favouritism especially from people with power; polarized electoral processes/exercises, inequitable allocation of resources and bad governance. Tribalism has been blamed for the stagnation currently facing Kenya in matters of development and nation building.

Colonialism has been cited as the origin of the escalation of tribal animosity in Kenya. Politics has also been blamed for distortion of the difference among Kenyans mainly for selfish gain. However, while blame is thrown back and forth by the political elite, the vice continues to tear our national fabric.

Ordinarily, many people never agree or know that they are tribalist. We go through life doing things as “normal” without knowing we portray tribalist or ethnic tendencies. However, what we need to know is that when one believes and propagates negative stereotypes, use derogatory language and despise others on basis of their tribe and elect national leaders based on the ethnic background, they are tribal.

**Religion**

Religion is a powerful socializing agent perhaps second only to the family. It has deep influence on human behaviour. In many a world religion, submissiveness to the will of God and leaders is paramount. The nature of the followers of these religions is characterized by total obedience and in many instances unquestionable loyalty. Religion has played a huge role in uniting people of different background and encouraging peaceful co-existence. According to the online encyclopaedia—Wikipedia, about 80% of Kenyans profess Christianity, 15% Islam and 5% Hindu, African traditionalist and atheism. Christianity, being the major religion avails the widest membership, with countless denominations spread across the country.

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4: Daily Nation: Opinion, 29-08-09, “Hiding behind the Nation Flag”
Religious History in Kenya

According to Dr. Kuria Francis, the Executive Director of the Inter-religious Council of Kenya, religious influence has been a characteristic of our society long before the onset of colonialism. Dr. Kuria notes that Christianity was introduced in colonial East Africa by missionaries and the regulations on the establishment of Christian missions required a 50-100 km radius between the various missions; this resulted in a geographical spread pattern that exists till today. This geographical spread pattern of church missions has translated into ethnic modelled Christian missions.

The following is the sample distribution of the Christian missions.

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<th>Mission/denomination</th>
<th>Geographical area/Ethnicity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Catholic-Holy Ghost</td>
<td>Coast-Mijikenda</td>
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<td>Catholic-White Fathers</td>
<td>Mangu/Nakuru-Uganda-Kikuyu</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scotland-Africa Inland Church</td>
<td>Eastern-Machakos-Kamba</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scotland- Africa Inland Church</td>
<td>Rift Valley-Kalenjin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presbyterian Church of East Africa</td>
<td>Limuru-Kikuyu</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seventh Day Adventist Church</td>
<td>Nyanza-Kisii/Luo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>Meru</td>
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In tracing Kenya’s religious history, Dr. Kuria also refers to the ceding of the coastal strip to colonial Kenya (then the British Protectorate) by the Sultanate of Zanzibar and, in return, the British agreeing to maintain the Kahis’ Courts as well as protect the former Sultan’s subjects.

After independence, though, religious leaders including Muslims leaders began warming up to the state and the political leadership for purposes of getting land, protection and other resources from the state. Over the years, this relationship between the state and religion became that of fear and struggle with the state continuously playing ‘divide and rule’ tactics to an extent of going on to define its relations with religious leaders along ethnic lines. The religious group also rose up to challenge the country’s leadership struggle A case in point is the clamour for political pluralism in mid 90’s, whereby religious groups, such as the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK) were at the forefront in calling for multi-party democracy.

Role of Religion in Reforms

In 1997, the Muslim fraternity inspired the coming together of the various faith led groups at Ufungamano House to seek a common position on the political scenario prevailing then. This gave rise to what later came to be known as the Ufungamano Initiative. The different religious groups collectively called for reforms and were cited as a major force in the push for removal of the KANU regime from power. Unfortunately, this unity of purpose did not last for long. Later on, differences began emerging. For example, the Catholic Church began seeking rapprochement with the state, wanting to be recognised as President Mwai Kibaki “Church”. The Muslim fraternity, on the other hand, feared that with the defeat of KANU, their “protection” and support had ended.

Kenya’s quests for constitutional review also brought out differences between the various religious groups. In the 2009 review processes, religion took centre stage in the discussion platforms on the content of the constitution; many a Christian opposed the inclusion of Kadhis’ courts in the draft constitution (although the same was provided for in the old Constitution). In campaigns against inclusion of Kadhis’ court in the constitution, false and malicious rumours were spread and negative stereotypes propagated about Islam, instilling fear and panic. On both sides of the discussion about the role and separation of religion and state the position of many groups including Christians was influenced by half truths propagated by political and religious class.

Whereas religion is also an informal social arm of government, some of its
leaders continue to interact and socialise with the bureaucracy and with time, have been known to consent to and participate in inappropriate and unethical dealings. Occasionally, some politicians have managed to misuse religion to propagate hate and division amongst Kenyans especially during election periods. There have been cases of religious leaders being influenced to an extent of misleading the congregation, and sadly but successfully sowing seeds of discord.

Class

This is the articulation of economic interests and sentiments of a group. It is also the ascription of a certain economic status and role in relation to the overall socio-economic structure. Although economic disparity continues to mainly define the classes, other factors like education, leadership, politics and culture also contribute.

Societies and nations worldwide are highly stratified by social classes;
this stratification occurred way back in history. In the traditional African societies, class conscience was low because of the spirit of communalism. Colonialism precipitated the emergence of class stratification in Africa through the introduction of western education, religion and lifestyle; introduction of the patron-client political organization and leadership; and through money and capitalist economy that stressed on individual acquisition of wealth.

The main characteristic of class is reflected in its manifestation and differentiation. Class issues are manifested in a range of ways throughout sectors of development like elite ruling group, income based segregated neighbourhoods, segregated educational institutions and public outfits. Modern differentiation of class is based on income, occupation, education qualification, leadership and authority, and family background.

Some of the emerging conflicts that have arisen in Kenya as a result of class differences include:

i. Land ownership;

ii. Resource utilization such as diverting drinking water for use in watering flower farms; and

iii. Access to public service such as health, education and infrastructure.

In Kenya, just like any other developing country, the gap between the rich and the poor continues to grow; with the quality of life between the two groups widening. There is lack of a clear public effort by the government to create conducive environment for community empowerment. Education remains expensive and where affordable of poor quality. Residents whose geographical areas are not naturally endowed with resources have remained marginalized, leading to feelings of neglect and disenchantment.

A big percentage of the population in urban areas, especially Nairobi, live in low income areas or slums. This population group is the source of a critical work force for the urban area and country. Furthermore, this group constitutes the largest voting bloc and consumers of government services. In spite this important role they play, the state is by and large unresponsive to their plight.
Case Studies

To fully explore and interrogate the themes of tribalism, religion and class, the Youth Agenda organised a series of fora with youth from different backgrounds and sectors of society. The objective of the sessions was to openly discuss the issues around the three themes identified and develop formidable insight and resolve on the individual and cumulative role of youth in changing this scenario.

Approach

Each session had an average of 30 participants. The audience was aged between 20-30 years and was drawn from both genders. The proceedings were informal and interactive to ensure full participation. Factors such as age, education levels, social backgrounds and religion were used as criteria for selecting participants to the fora. To better understand ethnicity, religion and class, the participants explored their history, philosophies, modern day manifestation and perpetrators.

Media clips and audio-visual material were incorporated into the discourses. Each session began with a brief video clip or interviews with the aim being to set the tone and provide a framework for engagement. After the videos, the participants were asked to offer their reactions to content of the video clips or interviews.

The participants were then divided into discussion groups with each group given a question to discuss and report to the plenary within a half an hour. The questions were designed to provoke a response from the plenary. Overall, the presentations were characterised by candour and were interspersed with humour to encourage full attention of the participants. Aside from group discussions, open plenary sessions were held to build on group discussions.

The story of the 2007/2008 violence was retold in all of the discussions with a view to reminding the participants about the initiatives young people had taken to foster reconciliation and healing. One such initiative was the Inter-Ethnic Forum, which was started by a group of young people led by Youth Agenda and supported by Friedrich Ebert Foundation. Its objective was to continue discussions among the youth on the need to take charge of their country and transform it into a modern and developed democracy. Participants for its initial two meetings, held in October and November 2008, were drawn from the Kikuyu, Luo and Kalenjin communities, torn by differences in political ideology emanating from the 2007 polls debacle.
1. Ethnicity

The session on ethnicity opened with a self enquiry question: “VCT, Have you taken the test?” The acronym VCT is borrowed from the HIV/AIDS campaign, but in this instance, it stood for “Voluntary Check on Tribalism.” The Student Organization of Nairobi University (SONU) elections were used as a case study.

SONU is the biggest university student body union in Kenya. It has a vibrant and chequered history. Some of its alumni were key drivers in calling for reforms and change in Kenya’s political scene. Presently, some hold ministerial positions and other senior leadership positions in the government. Thus the University of Nairobi and its student body offered insights and lessons of what really happens in student leadership in many of Kenya’s public universities.

In May 2009, the Youth Agenda, in partnership with the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, organized a debate dubbed “Aspirants Debate” between the student fraternity and those aspiring for various leadership positions in the SONU. The session sought to offer an opportunity for the students to gather, share and scrutinize ideologies of the aspiring leaders ahead of the elections. The urgency in organizing the debate was informed by the fact student leadership lacked ideological underpinnings and was being hobbled by individualistic and tribalist tendencies especially during the election period.

When SONU held elections, the Youth Agenda keenly followed the campaigns through the media. Reports indicated that the SONU elections were marred by violence and intimidation. In addition, the campaigns took an ethnic angle. Also, aspirants and students were divided into two distinct groups, “ODM” and “PNU,” acronyms for the main political parties that participated in the 2007 general elections. This goings on in relation to the SONU leadership were of interest to the Youth Agenda; Against this background, the Youth Agenda brought together the SONU leadership and student fraternity to debate the issues of tribalism, violence and intimidation manifesting in student leadership. This session also sought to assess how tribalism affects the student election process and the leadership; furthermore, it was critical in finding out how tribalism is manifested and its bearing on student representation.

Participants for the session comprised elected SONU officials, some of the unsuccessful aspirants and randomly selected students from the various Nairobi campuses of the University of Nairobi. The forum explored the following:
i. The role and presence of tribalism in student life, representation and student elections;
ii. The conduct and nature of student elections and how diversity issues are mitigated and explored in this process;
iii. The influence of national politics on SONU elections and leadership; and
iv. The role of the University Administration in the student leadership.

At the end of the session, participants sought ways to foster and promote accountability and servant leadership in the student leadership.

How tribalism was/is manifested at the University

**Student polarization:** There exist two distinct factions on campus, mirroring Kenya’s political landscape. Students from communities that supported PNU in the 2007 elections tend to gravitate to one political camp while those from communities that supported ODM tend to congregate together.

It is said that campus politics is localised, therefore in vying for any leadership position, there is a tendency to first identify with your tribe and seek support and acceptance from them. Such that if one is “rejected” by their tribe then the rest of the students will automatically pull out their support based on the fact that “…if you have been rejected by your people what business do you have asking for their support?” Candidates have been known to step down because of this. Tribal support also comes in handy when bargaining or negotiating for positions as a particular group can and does endorse a candidate of their choice.

**Heightened tension and animosity:** Students tend to see each other through tribal lenses in total disregard of the intellectual endeavour that has essentially brought them together. A quarrel over mundane matters easily degenerates into a tribal duel with the ‘combatants’ calling on their tribe mates for support. This is especially common during elections or electoral processes.

**Regional student associations:** These are often formed on the basis of where students hail from, for example, Nyandarua Students Association. In the main, their objective was empowerment. But they have not always focused on this goal. When Moi was in power, these regional associations were used to achieve political ends. Leaders of these associations who were perceived as future leaders of their community were inducted into KANU affairs and acted as informants of dissidents on campus. These associations have been known to support student leaders on the basis of ethnicity and therefore remain strongholds of negative ethnicity.
Lack of finances: Political campaigns are normally very expensive and involving. The demands include fundraising, paying for security and campaign teams. To mitigate these challenges, aspirants often appeal for community help.

Lack of meritocracy: Instances have been highlighted involving tribal origin superseding qualification for the award of academic degrees and jobs. A number of Masters and Postgraduates students have given up mid way citing frustration by their lecturers and supervisors who of course happen to belong to different tribes from theirs. This has eroded academic integrity and, if not checked, may turn the universities to centres of tribalism.

How politicians influence the university

Political ‘God-fathers’ - Quite often, some students seek political association with present day politicians with a view to gaining an edge over other candidates during campaign periods. From a mentorship angle, such association may be fine for aspirants. But in most cases, the rapprochement is for seeking monetary support especially for the campaigns. This is especially “necessary “considering that student campaigns are an expensive affair.

Campaign Contributions - despite the fact that university student campaigns are meant to reflect intellect and ingenuity in the way they are carried out, they have sadly degenerated into the run-of-the-mill campaigns full of indecency and ugly scenes that are the state of Kenya's general elections. In addition, students traverse the city looking for contributions from wealthy politicians to finance their campaigns, which are expensive. For example, some require as much as Kshs. 700,000 not to mention human and technical resources.

In consideration, such students may be asked to aid the politicians’ agenda which may include building ethnic voting blocs. The corollary is that student leadership may lack principled and high minded leaders possessing required political development and reasoning. Sadly, there are no mechanisms for the students to hold them accountable and it is for this reason that the motivation for leadership is money and power. Student unions have large budget provisions for their activities and getting in office means having a say in the use of these funds. This is a great motivator to disregard democracy and ethics in the leadership process.

“Intellectual Transacting” - the University is supposed to be the citadel and repository of knowledge. Sadly, the commitment to academic integrity and ideology that has been acquired and nurtured over many
years has been eroded. Many respected university dons who had previously criticised the state for poor governance no longer do so, with some joining efforts that have the led to the undermining of good governance and meritocracy. This behaviour has cast doubts on the quality and ability of the universities to confer knowledge, and allow the academic processes and student affairs to run smoothly without interference.

University Interference: University administrators interfere in student leadership affairs with a view to have stooges elected into office. This interference is most evident when student elections are approaching. In the course of the electioneering period, when the favourites have been identified, the administration comes in and tries to “balance the equation” in terms of tribe representation. The resultant effect or counter is that the candidates are forced to seek support from their tribal groups. In retrospect, if a solution is to be found, then student fraternity and leadership must find a way to permanently deal with the administrations interference.

The State of Private Universities

What is observed with regard to student union election processes in public universities is very much different from that in private universities in the sense that ethnicity is less of a factor in the private universities. Perhaps the fact that students in public universities are made up of a mix of rich and poor, urban and rural, and working students explains this. Certainly, this is conjectural and a lot more research is needed to establish these differences in public and private institutions of high learning.

Effects of Tribalism at the University

The effects of tribalism are as diverse as they are numerous. Discrimination and disunity lead followed by animosity, violence and fear. The divisions along tribal lines have whittled down the potential for collective bargaining leaving the students disempowered and in disarray. Whereas learning at the university is meant to be experiential and a once in a lifetime occurrence, many leave the university with no tangible memories, partly occasioned by the fear drenched atmosphere on campus emanating from tribalism. As reported, “The violence seen during the Nairobi University student election campaigns is dreadful to say the least. That classmates and colleagues can easily set aside their brotherhood and sisterhood in academia and instead worship at the altar of tribalism is a true tragedy of our times.” This is the situation the university finds itself.

What would we want to see?

Whereas describing an ideal situation is not what the discourse sought
to do here, the university should reverberate with freedom, liberty and social equality. The institutions need to display friendlier atmosphere beginning from the staff to the students. Either could take the lead in rejuvenating this environment. The university fraternity should be seen to be united beyond trivial differences like tribe. One would wish to see a non biased administration and deeper and more meaningful interaction between the staff and students.

What can we do to effect this change?

To start with, a lot of awareness on ethnic tolerance is needed in and out of campus. To be effective, this should involve students and staff on campus and other publics e.g. the parents and guardians, employers, the religious groupings, ministry of education, political parties and their leaders who lure the prospective student leaders. In healing and learning from the past, a lot of guidance and mentoring is required. The inciters of violence on campus should be cautioned after owning up.

There should be a permanent unit mandated to establish an anti-tribalism charter and which shall also spearhead inter-ethnic dialogues and engagement involving both the university administration and staff and the students. The university fraternity should take the lead in promoting strength in diversity across the country.

What do “I “as an individual need to do?

Taking a self Check on Tribalism test is but a first of a series of steps that each and every one of us requires to take. Out of the realization that understanding breeds quality output, all of us require to internalize the wide subject of tribalism. Through debating and reading other people’s experiences, we shall begin to eliminate emotion from the matter thus making our output objective.

Expansion of our tolerance is a must if we are to act as change agents and examples for others to follow. We cannot preach against tribalism in isolation. To bring true reform and change the way we do business, we have to uphold all the other virtues that make up a just and strong united society. Many times we shall get weak and weary but persistence is required if the anti tribalism message is to result into long lasting change.

5: The Voluntary Check on Tribalism is a brief test on personal reflection that seeks to give one deep insight into their levels of ethnic/tribal discrimination and tolerance. It intends to bring one to apooint of self critique on how they deal with ethnic influence and their (re)actions to tribalism. The principles of the test were designed for the purpose of these interrogative sessions.
THE PLEDGE

It is in our differences that we find commonness. For so long we have allowed manipulation; and distortion of these differences for selfish gain; We agree to identify with, accept and understand others. We are propelled by the dream of one Kenya, free; Free of ethnic inhibitions peaceful and sustainable.

We are led by the spirit of possibilities; Possibilities, of brighter days and safer nights; of hard work & surplus, of unity & strength. The spirit of One Kenya!
2. Class

“A newborn in Kibera and one in Lavington begin life at different qualities and quantities”… Unknown

In Kenya, class is closely associated with wealth and lifestyles and access to opportunities—such as housing, health and education—that wealth affords. When violence broke out after the 2007 elections, most of it occurred in the low income areas. Other than inability to move about, access services and goods and prevailing tensions and uncertainty, the well off, by and large, were unaffected by the violence.

This session thus sought to examine the claim that class differences play a role in the access to opportunities. As a case study the session brought together young Kenyans from the well to do background and those from the poor areas and slums of Nairobi.

How does conflict arise from class?

The discourse explored the issues of class from four contexts:-

i. Is Kenya better off as a socialist state?
ii. Is class difference the main cause of conflict in Kenya?
iii. Would one rather be uneducated and rich or educated but poor?
iv. Whichever social class one is, who really is living good life and who defines good life?

Most definitions of class were based on income, wealth and power. This session identified most of the class conflict as occurring on the political, economic and cultural fronts. Kenya is mainly split into three classes: the rich, middle class and poor. Majority of the citizens are within the low income brackets with middle class following. The minority are rich, but manage and control most of the resources in the country.

Economic conflict caused by class mainly stems from access to opportunities. There is a perception that the rich “own Kenya” and have too much say and control over opportunities and the country’s development path. Furthermore, that the rich use their influence to deny others access to basic resources such as water, electricity and even food mainly through corruption and grabbing of public resources. Other dangers posed by the rich include subverting justice and influencing leadership to their favour.

Culturally, the class conflict is manifested through gender and religion. Historically in many societies, men have had a stranglehold on opportunities to power and authority. Not so for women, who have had
to contend with peripheral roles. Women are woefully underrepresented in various sectors of society such as political, business and career. With women seeking independence and their right to equal access to resources, there exists potential for conflict. The same scenario applies to the youth and the older generation with the latter owning and controlling most resources and are seen by the youth as not being ready to relinquish power, a critical source of access to resources.

Class differences engender feelings of despair and hopelessness in the poor. They may also cause animosity. When public servants unfairly serve some people over others solely on the basis of their class, the anger generated festers and could find a vent in animosity and violence. Discrimination from exclusive institutions breeds hatred and jealousy. Members of a higher class are likely to look down upon those from lower classes to a point of contempt. This contempt is paid by violence at any opportune moment, a backhand way of retaliating against the higher class.

A lot of reference is made to the middle class. This is one group that seems complacent about the issues that affect the society. Their participation in political and public affairs is usually minimal, giving a perception that as a group they are not much affected by the diversities as they are.

**Education**

Education is seen as a vital component of social class and is a cause of class differentiation. Education offers the opportunity to socialize and relate with all kinds of people. It provides economic advantage through accessing economic and other opportunities. Feedback from the discussions indicated that it is better to be educated and poor, than to be rich and uneducated. Education essentially helps one socialize and relate with all kinds of people regardless of class. It is common to find people engaging with each other on the basis of education, creating a class of its own. Education is a long term investment that provides the firm foundation to be able to offer solutions to day to day challenges while keeping abreast with emerging advancement in technology.

**Then how do we tackle class issues as a country?**

It is worth noting that there exist class divisions within social classes. In the world, intra-class divisions have torn societies apart, often bringing forth chaos and loss of lives. Embracing diversity then becomes the best option to mitigate this problem. Considering socialism as an option, the question is whether it can provide a solution to mitigate class differences?

*Is Kenya better off a socialist state?*

Kenya has a population of more than 30 million, a majority who are poor.
The minority, which includes leaders, controls most of the resources. The situation is such that the poor are becoming poorer and the rich getting richer. It has been observed that when the colonialists were sent packing, the leadership that took over went on to “colonize” Kenyans, that is, they never reengineered the state to meet the people’s aspirations. The situation as it obtains shows that the masses don’t have the capital or the power so they need to look for an alternative system to empower themselves.

Socialism presents an alternative model of development for seeking equality. Under this system, Kenyans accept that we are all equal, and that the country belongs to all of us. It also has potential to address historical injustices such as a few owning large tracts of land while many people are landless. Services such as health and education would be available to all. It was also viewed that socialism would lead Kenyans to forget the tribal/ethnic question and embrace the principle of ONE KENYA. This system as has been practiced in other parts of the world like Thailand, China and Tanzania, has presented challenges. Low levels of development (human and capital) and even emergence of a ruling class as was the case in Asia are some of the challenges. This is where capitalism which has been seen to drive development gets an upper hand.

Nonetheless in Kenya’s situation, according to the discussions, neither of the extremes, socialism and capitalism, would be a perfect fit. The suitable option would be to introduce a strong social welfare system that supports the poor but still ensures that the rights and u of the rich are safeguarded.

What do we need to do to bridge this gap?

The government needs to endeavour to restore order and ensure all Kenyans have dignity. It should also create a conducive environment that accelerates growth in all sectors of livelihoods; minimum wages should be raised to reflect the prevailing conditions. Provision of subsidised staple foods for the needy should be considered by the state including at a policy level. The government should furthermore formulate policies to allow for all businesses to give stock options to their employees. This will ensure workers retire well and break from the vicious cycle of poverty. Community leaders need to encourage inter-class dialogue and activities that allow for genuine interaction between the haves and the have not’s. Mentorship should be explored to help in fighting prejudice and negative stereotypes.

What is my role in all this?

The youth are encouraged to work “hard and smart”. Also, they need to seek good education as it lays a good foundation for upward mobility. However, upward mobility should lead the youth to ignore those who are unfortunate. Indeed, they should not mentor those who are behind and below you, as this is the key to lifting up the whole society.
3. Religion

Religion is integral to the Kenyan society. Before Europeans (who brought Christianity) and the Arabs (who brought Islam), came to Africa, existing faiths of the African people were strong and deeply influenced day to day lives of the people. For instance, when a child is born, religion comes second to the influences of the nucleus and extended families as the teacher and moulders of the young one.

The role of religion is pervasive. The knowledge of what is right and wrong, the acknowledgement of and belief in a deity, the insistence of on values of social justice, are but a few of the teachings that religion imparts in the young. Religion contributes to social order maintenance through promoting virtues and encouraging obedience to elders, parents and authority. Religion provides employment for its leaders, pastors, orderlies and through their sponsored educational institutions and other enterprises. The religious establishments have been known to channel donations to the poor and assist in time of disaster. They have also contributed to the increase in literacy levels through establishment of schools. Healthcare has also benefited immensely through mission hospitals. Religion continues to play these roles and many more.

Areas of Religious Conflict

The establishment of mission stations and churches in different geographical locations, resulted in the denominations taking an outlook of the dominant ethnic group dwelling in those areas. This has entrenched tribalism among the religious.

Moreover, previous Kenya governments have used the divisions that existed amongst the religions to seek and “win” the support of some. Partly this has been achieved through luring them with money and land to establish worship centres and schools. This not only compromised religious duty to correct government, but also bred discontent and mistrust from religions that have supported the government or received certain benefits. The disagreement between Muslims and Christians over the inclusion of Kadhis’ courts in the 2009 draft Constitution is illustrative of the fear, intolerance and perception of mistrust between these two major religious groups.

The proliferation of churches is also raising eyebrows about the sanctity of religion. Many greedy and unscrupulous persons have begun churches with a view to enriching themselves. Some church leaders have not avoided scandals that have bedevilled secular leaders. From sexual impropriety to swindling gullible worshippers, these “ministers of the
gospel” have brought disrepute to the sanctity of the church and religion in general. There has emerged stiff competition for followers in the wake of all these churches being set up.

Class has also permeated religion with cases of the wealthy being exalted regardless of the source of their wealth. Religion has the potential to sow seeds of discord, for example, when Muslims are taught extremist doctrines in the Madrassas. In addition to this, it is worrying that religion (and in this context Christianity) is almost as divisive and as partisan as ethnicity. Perhaps this explains why some churches, and not a single mosque, were burnt during the post election violence!

How Does Religion Build National Cohesion?

The role of religious institutions cannot be gainsaid. Religion, has for example, offered a forum for inter-ethnic dialogue. All religions advocate for peace and harmony and can therefore be used to advocate for the same. Religious institutions can be used to build national cohesion by advocating for an identity as one nation parallel to the identity as children of God. This aspect of one identity is supported by the words of the National Anthem “Oh God of all creation, Bless this our Land and Nation ....” and can be promoted by all religions as a common identity. When engaging in conflict resolution; religion is able to bring on board people regardless of, for instance, colour, race and status. It also fosters national cohesion through enabling interethnic marriages.

However, religion does not foster harmony always. Different religious practices create division within themselves. There is always tendency for some faithful to think that their religion is better or more superior to the others. When this happens, religion becomes an impediment to national unity and cohesion. Mainstream churches like the Catholic, Anglican, Methodist and the Presbyterian Church of East Africa have been known to disregard smaller churches, sidelining them and their opinions on matters of national importance. This has escalated feelings of disunity amongst them and their members.

Religion and the Youth

Religions provide a distinct platform for social mobility. In pursuing religious influence, it is important to harness that which is good while shunning that which may injure national cohesion. This is what guided the explorations on diversity on religion or faith. During the period of one party rule in Kenya, the religious leaders were at the forefront of advocating for reforms and social justice. Religion continues to play the role of a watchdog on matters of corruption, land grabbing and other injustices. More recently in the wake of the 2008 post-election violence, many in the country sought and expected direction from the religious leaders.
Did religion or religious institutions do enough to stop post election violence?

In the discussions, many felt that the religious institutions did not to take control of the situation; if anything, many saw musicians as the ones who made an effort to seek an end to the violence! No religious institution is remembered to have carried out elaborate campaigns to stop election violence. No religious leader was cited to have come out to calm or beseech people to restore calm. Many remembered an officer 6 of a police security unit who in Kibera-Nairobi tried (successfully) to play the role that religious leaders didn’t play; that of calming down protesters and beseeching peace of them. There were strong views that religious groups did not play a strong role in stopping the violence and that all that did was to help those affected. Citing the incident in Kiambaa-Eldoret and other places where people ran to the churches for refuge, it was felt that the displaced people were going to the church since they had no other place to go to; furthermore religious institutions are considered public places.

In the campaigns leading to the 2007 elections, even the religious leaders were seen to be partisan. As such, they would not be trusted to assist in resolving the conflicts that arose. Other religious sects/institutions like Mungiki 7 played a major role in the violence, with a number of its members hired to cause mayhem. Despite its flaws, religion is integral to the Kenyan society and many people may not separate themselves from their religious affiliations because there is a way that religion shapes their lives, socially and morally; and this is the basis of good citizenship.

So then:-

What is the ideal/good religion?

Based on the above opinions and context, the session then sought to explore the characteristics of an ideal religion, and, if any of the existing ones have or are deficient of any of these desirable aspects? Do religions propagate these values that are its essence or is it human beings that have faltered?

All the religions in Kenya are all ideal in the eyes of their followers. The participants indicated that the attributes of an ideal religion is one that:

i. Encompasses and tolerates all the diversities and beliefs of all the other religions;

6: General Service Unit Superintendent Joseph Musyoka Nthenga was captured by TV camera when he faced a crowd of 500 angry demonstrators in Mathare and attempted to reason with them, asking why they were destroying a Kenya that had taken years to build.

7: A quasi político-religious group and a banned criminal organization in Kenya originally from Central Kenya, but have expanded to many other urban towns.
ii. Is able to give a shared set of values which we all share as Kenyans;
iii. Will unite us as Kenyans;
iv. Instills respect for the positive norms and values in our society;
v. Respects all genders;
vi. Cherishes humanity;
vii. Respects life; and
viii. Is able to treat the rich and the poor in a dignified manner.

It is difficult to single out any existing religion as the ideal one since many people only know about the ones they've have close interaction with. As such, there was consensus that an ideal religion is one that respects all-the rich, the poor, the young, the old and so forth.

**Place for the Youth**

There is no religion that does not have the youth as its followers. Probably, religious youth groups are the best organized youth groups in Kenya.

“How then can we reconcile ourselves?”

One cannot over emphasise the important role of the youth in national cohesion. This role can be very much supported by the religious platform due to the fact that religion offers a basic and common framework for all youth to engage with each other regardless of their backgrounds.

Of interest, though, is that some participants did not seem to know their exact religion. Many reporting that they were born into one and yet brought up in another. Other youths prefer being identified as atheist. Yet others are still identifying one to which to profess their faith. Partly, this was attributable to different tribe/ethnicity parentage and being brought up and educated in urban or semi-urban areas where they were exposed to social structures that have no particular religious affiliation.

**Possible remedies-what is the role of the youth in all this?**

**Citizen Awareness and Civic Education**

Kenya is a secular state. As a result, all religions and diverse beliefs are allowed to thrive. It should be noted that even though Kenya is a secular state the freedom of religion must be preserved by all means possible. People of all religious groups must be able to have their say even if it differs from others.

However, a secular state should also be guided by some doctrines of good morals and servitude. This interestingly are what most religions aspire for.
and also what a democratic state should ascribe to. Citizen awareness and civic education should be encouraged. People need to define their identity. In this regard, do they define themselves on the basis of religion or tribe or some other identity? Regardless, they must recognise that both religion and tribe exist simultaneously.

Young people should be alert to the fact that they can never know everything at any one time. They should have the hunger to know more, seek to understand what they don’t, ask questions and be inquisitive. Each and every religion is good when it does good. One can promote good in whatever religion that they are in. The purpose is to find strategic and tactful ways to engage the status quo, to be wise and avoid being compromised.

**Religious Organs**

The Inter Religious Council of Kenya should be strengthened to spear-head inter-religious harmony initiatives. To create and encourage religious tolerance, there needs to be mediation between the various religions. Religious institutions should strive to keep religious practises free from tribalism and acts of tribalism by enforcing transparency and meritocracy in their day to day operations.

The question that should be asked is not whether the religious institutions played a role in addressing the post election violence, but rather, whether they took any initiatives to forestall the violence. Another fundamental question is whether people pledge their allegiance and commitment to their religious institutions or to the supreme power of their religions? If a religion does not subscribe to a higher power with the ability to transform for good, such a religion then is not helpful to its followers and to the citizenry as a whole.

**Leadership**

Church leaders, by virtue the role they occupy as moral guardians and spiritual conscience of the society, should provide directions on certain matters to their congregation. These include calling for good governance, condemning tribalism and fostering peace and harmony. The leaders ought to forthright in the quest to change the society and the national leadership for the better.
Conclusion

It is only natural that converts to a new ideology usually relapse after a while. The gospel of embracing diversity and fighting tribalism is too important to allow for lulls. The youth should be encouraged and supported to deepen their understanding and commitment to change.

Discussions of class, education and ethnicity are emotive because they touch sensitive aspects of human lives. Ethnicity is pervasive in Kenya and for this reason influences the thinking and outlook of many people in some cases negatively. Its interaction with religion when thoroughly explored, leads one to accept that the two shall always exist side by side and thus understanding and tolerance should be the guiding factor in embracing who we are.

Embracing religious diversity and harmony is more than merely having religious converts. It requires the broadmindedness to tolerate and appreciate other people’s religious beliefs, practices and activities. In this regard, the youth can help to clarify and de-mystify issues and stereotypes are often the cause of intolerance and misunderstandings.

The many critical issues raised in the fora were not exhaustive. Rather, they were just a modest contribution to what issues need to be tackled to make Kenya progressive. From the discussions, it is clear that the country cannot address the challenges it faces unless people take individual responsibility. The need for change agents cannot be over-emphasized amongst young people as these drive the transformations the country aspires to. This transformation is only possible if the youth seek to internally re-strategize on how to effect change by promoting reconciliation with openness, patience and diligence.

It is obvious that the youth in this country require platform on which they can regularly exchange ideas and share experiences on issues of national importance. To be helpful and inclusive, perhaps the platform should bring on board the public and constantly raise awareness on the need for tolerance on diversity.
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Angalia saa, Ukoo Fulani Mau Mau
Ukoo Fulani Mau Mau is a Kenyan Hip-hop group well known for their conscious lyrics and type of music.

Additional Material and content sourced from Nation Media