

When a Makhosini becomes a McKing

Dumisani Hlophe

A FRIEND of mine, Makhosini Shongwe, has been offered a top executive position in a big company.

Among the top five executives, he is the only black and has no decision-making powers.

I decided to go to his place at KwaMashu to congratulate him. I boarded a minibus taxi from Durban station. An agitated woman complained the driver was too slow, although he drove at 100 km/h, the legal speed limit in the area.

She urged the driver to move faster. As the taxi rolled into KwaMashu through section C, two passengers were discussing a friend of theirs who had left the area to live in the suburbs. Quite quickly, the topic was a free-for-all.

Some lamented the move by blacks from their black roots to live in the white areas. They were labelled all sorts of things: sell-outs, cowards, and wanna-be-whites.

Instead of leaving the townships for the suburbs, it was argued, blacks should stick to their areas and develop them.

A passenger identified as Skhumba countered the above argument.

This is Africa, he said, and there is no place that should be identified as a white area. Africans were at home on all the inches of African soil; SA was no exception.

He argued further that townships were apartheid creations meant to concentrate blacks in poverty and subjugation.

Therefore, it was erroneous to suggest this was where black people's roots were.

In fact, he went on, to argue blacks should stick to the townships and develop them was tantamount to a man who is forcibly and brutally locked in a toilet and, once freed, decides to stick to the toilet and develop it.

Unfortunately, I had to get off at D section and missed out on the rest of the debate.

Walking along Khumalo Street towards Makhosini's place, I came across Phindile, Makhosini's girlfriend. They were your typical childhood sweethearts, going back to early high school. Both families had grown to appreciate the couple's relationship and it was a matter of time before lobola cattle would be driven to Phindile's place.

I had not seen Phindile in a long time, so my excitement at seeing her was at a peak. But she did not smile back. Her face looked troubled and in pain. She tried to hide it, but falling tears gave her away.

Makhosini had dumped her. When he got the executive job, he left the township to live in the suburb of Kloof.

He was now living with a white woman; that was the alpha and omega of his affection.

She harboured no illusions that one day he would come back to her.

Both families tried to intervene, but Makhosini told them he was over 21 and they had no business telling him how to live his life. He warned his family to accept his choice or risk not ever seeing him again.

Phindile asked another friend of ours, Mdu, to drive me to Makhosini's new home in Kloof. Mdu owned a van that he used for distributing beer to KwaMashu's shebeens.

Fortunately, by the time we arrived he had finished the day's delivery. In any event it was mid month, so business was a bit slow.

He dropped me off at Kloof and warned me to speak English only in the house, as Makhosini's woman was very suspicious of people talking to her man in a language she did not understand. Before leaving, Mdu waited to see if they were going to open the gate and let me in. They are sensitive about who they associate with. After talking for a while through the intercom system, they let me in. The mat at the door read ``McKing & Tremelinah".

I was to learn later that ``McKing" is actually Makhosini; Tremelinah is the white girlfriend. She could not pronounce Makhosini, so he had to change to McKing to accommodate her. His surname had also changed from Shongwe to Shaun. In fact, the home affairs department was busy processing his new identity document to reflect the new names McKing Shaun.

Makhosini and Tremelinah had worked in the same company for six years; their relationship is about six-months old. The passion and affection started when Makhosini was promoted and Tremelinah became his secretary. She is four years older than Makhosini and has three kids from two dead marriages.

Actually, Makhosini and Tremelinah are planning to elope.

It's about 8 pm and Tremelinah wants them to go to bed, so she asks him to drop me at the nearest taxi rank. Unfortunately, there are no more taxis, so he has to drive me home.

As we drive through the streets of Durban, I suggest to him that we buy some fruit and vegetables from the women street vendors. He refuses because what they sell is ``unhygienic" a health inspector has not tested it. Besides, these women have no credit card facilities.

He drops me off at my place at Mzansi Township. I bid him farewell by saying Moja ke baba!
He responds with ``Cheers!''

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