



T&U.T.A.

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Critical thinking and democracy

THE ONGOING nationwide student protests among colleges and university campuses in the US and the subsequent reactions of university administrators and media establishments have revealed the large disconnect between mainstream narratives, the perceptions of thousands of young people and the incredible intolerance of dissent thinking. The unfolding events have demonstrated the extent to which universities have become totalitarian in their modus operandi.

While the education experts have consistently impressed upon the need for schools and especially places of higher learning to promote independent and critical thinking, encouraging young people to question and challenge as the means by which they

build knowledge, we see education systems increasingly resorting to censorship and bureaucratic domination – don't think or question, just follow.

The pedagogy of obedience seems to have once again become the order of the day in our institutes of higher learning, much to their detriment. Docility, intellectual suppression and fear have been the weapons of control, reducing university environments to a bankrupt culture of intellectual colonialism. Then we wonder why our graduates are unable to display an ability to engage in objective analysis and evaluation in order to make informed judgements.

Teachers are acutely aware of the need to enable learners to question, analyse, dissect and evaluate in order to realise their full human potential. They understand it's

a process of intellectual discipline that enables people to skilfully conceptualise, analyse, synthesise and make value judgements on information gathered from or generated by observation, personal experience, reflection, reasoning or communication as a guide to belief and action.

Critical thinking should be the cornerstone of any education system that is truly interested in building true democracies.

Indeed, the ability of citizens to think critically is what true democracy is all about. This is the way in which knowledge societies are created. Innovators, inventors and problem-solvers arise from education systems that are predicated on a platform of how, what, why.

Critical thinkers make connections between logical ideas in order to see the bigger picture. They can sift through the avalanche of misinformation that has descended upon us for facts and establish truth.

This capacity enables people to important make-life decisions such as the distinction between right and wrong and consequently differentiate between truth and falsehood. This intellectual capacity

empowers citizens to truly hold leaders accountable for their actions, especially when they peddle hypocrisy and inconsistencies. A critical thinking society can preclude the ascension of dictators and autocrats via their ability to question immoral intent.

Colonial powers exercised maximum power over the masses through the forced suppression of intellectual development. Unfortunately, post-colonial societies such as ours still steadfastly retain these vestiges of obedience and docility under the guise of maintaining good social order.

The ongoing events in the US college campuses is a powerful reminder of the power of young people unleashing the quest for the truth and social justice as they challenge the corridors of self-serving duplicity and double standards. Such social activism is the bedrock of the trade union movement and fundamental to the fight for social justice and fairness in the treatment of all.

The willingness of these protesters to challenge a very powerful political order must be highly commended. They have displayed a level of moral fearlessness that will definitely define their gener-

eration just when it was thought that all was lost on this "screenage" Generation Z.

They have risen to a risk-taking call that is demanded of the times where injustice has cleverly assumed unprecedented social acceptance, placing the rights of a voiceless people above their personal interests. Their civic courage will serve as a moral compass for others to emulate.

They have chosen to stand up against powerful Western governments and a hijacked media that are guiltily supporting a regime that denies the very existence of a people, choosing to selectively apply the principles of human rights.

It's ironic that these young people, descendants of a generation that fought through civil disobedience against social injustice, have taken us back into an age of revolution as a means of establishing good governance. Attempts to suppress their call for social justice and fairness to prevail has once again assumed unprecedented prominence that has certainly taken the establishment by surprise.

They have forced this generation of xenophobic power brokers, hell-bent on re-writing history and who are inventing rules to suppress dissent, to sit up and take notice. They have reiterated the power of social activism to effect change; a lesson that has been taught many times over in history. Solidarity forever.