

2021

ESSAYS/OPINION PIECES

1ST PLACE

Service Delivery

Nomcebo Duma

The phrase service delivery usually refers to any service that is being rendered to a specific market. However, because the theme is #ProudlySALiterature, I would like to look at this topic with reference to South Africa. According to Campbell (2014), service delivery is a common phrase in South Africa used to describe the distribution of basic resources that citizens depend on. In this essay, I would like to look at who is responsible for providing these services, the unreliability of these services, and also what can be done to improve this system.

According to the South African Constitution, municipalities are solely responsible for service delivery. This means that local governments are responsible for ensuring that all the needs of citizens are met. The citizens are given the opportunity to vote for their local government; they decide who provides services to them. These services include water supply, refuse removal and street lighting, to name a few. The municipality can choose to provide the services directly or

outsource; whichever way they choose, the responsibility still lies with them. They must provide quality services at an affordable price. This says services should be delivered in an effective, predictable, reliable and customer-friendly manner. The responsibility is huge but not impossible.

South African municipalities are unfortunately unreliable when it comes to service delivery, and this has a direct effect on the quality of life of the people. Due to the fact that municipalities are often failing to meet the demands of the communities, it directly affects their quality of life. Quality of life, according to the Oxford dictionary, refers to the standard of health, comfort and happiness experienced by an individual or group. Anon (2006) makes an example: if the water that is provided is of poor quality or refuse is not collected regularly, it will contribute to the creation of an unhealthy and unsafe living environment. It is understandable why these resources contribute to the quality of life because they are basic survival needs.

As I have mentioned, the service delivery in South Africa is unreliable and insufficient; some improvements can be made. To begin with, better communication between the service providers and citizens. This will help the municipality determine the needs of the community and whether they are met or not. Another way to improve is to work on an improved financial plan. Anon (2006) agrees and states, 'Improved financial planning will help find the best possible

way to use the available funds.’ Outsourcing is another way to ensure that the needs of the public are met. Outsourcing, in simple terms, means getting/hiring someone else to do the job for you. Municipalities can hire private companies/organisations to perform certain services for them to ensure efficiency. South African municipalities are lacking tremendously, but with dedication, improvement is possible.

The lack of service delivery contributes more than just an unhealthy and unsafe environment; it is the cause of much destruction in South Africa. If the needs of the community are not met, people become angry and retaliate, causing destruction. With the suggestions that I have made, I believe that the service delivery system can improve and work more effectively.

Reference list

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2ND PLACE

Gender-based violence against men

Cebo Ncube

Macmillan Dictionary defines gender-based violence as “violence against individuals and groups that is connected to their gender.” It disproportionately affects girls and women, but no gender is exempt. This essay will discuss four different types of GBV (systemic, physical, sexual, and psychological) and how they affect men, particularly in South Africa.

Systemic violence is where violence is built into structures that afford privileges to certain groups over others, and when unequal advantages are present in ideologies that govern a society. An example is sentencing disparity in the South African judicial system. Men are statistically more likely to be held in custody, receive more convictions, and be given harsher sentences than women for the same offences.

Physical violence is the act of intentionally inflicting bodily harm or trauma to another person. This is a huge issue in South Africa, mostly claiming women and girls as victims. Many sympathise with their plight, but almost no one cares that men experience physical abuse at the hands of women as well. It is usually domestic, intimate partner violence, and mostly goes unreported because of the shame that victims feel. This leads some researchers to believe the statistics may be underrepresented.

Sexual violence is engaging in any sexual act with someone who has not, or is not able to, give their consent. Unfortunately, South Africa has the highest rape rates for women and girls in the world. It is understandable why sexual crimes against men are not prioritised; however, that should not be an excuse for negligence. According to the work of Parker Lewis, “80% of 30000 prisoners in Pollsmoore prison were raped each month.” This is because prisoners sexually abuse other inmates to dominate them or extort them for “sexual slavery.”

Psychological violence is an aspect of all forms of violence, “since the main aim of being violent or abusive is to hurt the integrity and dignity of another person.” (Council of Europe Portal, 2021). It is common for men who experience violence to develop mental health issues that go undiagnosed because of embarrassment and lack of support services. South African men are four times more likely to commit suicide than women, and mental health is a major contributor.

In conclusion, GBV against men in South Africa is real, and just because it happens less frequently, that does not make it a less valid concern. Systems that discriminate against men are not conducive for equality. Statistics for physically abused men are potentially higher than reported. Sexual violence being extremely high against women does not mean that

sexually abused men do not deserve support. Men rarely get treated for the trauma that they suffer from violence and are more likely to commit suicide. I think the appalling rates of GBV against women and girls are a result of men who have been victims themselves, victimising others. Unless we help them deal with their trauma in a healthy way, we cannot solve the issue.

3RD PLACE

Proudly SA

Bongeka Mgobhozi

Home is where the heart is. Nourishment is when the heart resides in such beauty, a centre of miracles and pride. South Africa is one of the fastest-growing countries, a rough diamond that constantly fights for righteousness. Each year of my life, I have lived to discover the struggles we conform to and the strength we embody, claiming our power each day as it comes. I'm delighted about my origin, and this is me saying I'm proudly South African.

I always grow very fond of places that grow from small, timid and imperfect foundations. Seeing South Africa grow from slavery, colonisation, and all forms of identity shaming has made me fall in love with the undying strength of our citizens to constantly fight the battles of previous injustices. Taking ownership of our land, not trying to crawl out of our black skins, but wearing them proudly and claiming our identity affords me the greatest form of joy. It creates within us a sense of independence and gives us fighting strength to conquer and be bold. Living in South Africa has given me an identity, one that is so strong, one that has stories to tell, and melodies to sing, verses preaching victory. A true sense of belonging.

We are a blessed continent, animals so fierce, plants so beautiful and land so rich. How could I not be proud of being a part of that? It places me in such power and grants me such a beautiful responsibility to utilise all that we have and grow from it. Beautiful people who come from far and near; the many different languages and cultures help us express ourselves the best way we know how. We are very complex, multifaceted, and unique, and we serve it as it is. Our talents knock on all doors, gifted beyond measure. Its South Africa to the world.

I'm excited about where we are going; It hasn't been a walk in the park, but I know the next generations will reap the seeds of the fruits we sow. Our struggles will be soothed by the beauty of our future. Our grandparents crawled, our parents walked, we run, and the future generations shall fly; what we have had to endure has polished and made us stronger, more than it did anything else. It has given us such a great set of values; we know that a person is human before they are black or white; you don't fight fire with fire but create peace to create beautiful things like a rainbow nation. Our cultures preach love and respect, and we know we are stronger together.

South Africa is a strong nation. Our accomplishments speak louder than our sorrows; we have lived to shine through our struggles. Our resources and abilities tell us we are destined

for greatness. It is all given; it can't fail. Because of the people, our future looks promising; we will build a distinctive legacy. A country is made gold by its people, and so is South Africa. Be a part of it.

POETRY

1ST PLACE

The last shred

Maryam Kotze

The last shred
Woven through time the threads of life lay
bare
evident through the scars she wears.
HIS blistered hands peel away
the remaining threads that refuse to shed as the little boy lay
under his bed;
staring up at the fraying edges of his torn sheets he plucks a
strand or two
as outside black turns to blue.

Steps BELLOW beyond the bedroom door. SCREAMS ring
out, then a ROAR.
With pinched eyes and bleeding hands the last thread is
freed
wafts away by the breeze, into the morning light, bright.

But the shadows cast remain
encased in pain and though the light, bright
is meant to delight,
it brings sorrow and mourning as the sirens
start
calling.

2ND PLACE

“SENZENI NA, SENZENI NA, SENZENI NA?”

- the cry of a race that is dying in the hands of its oppressors.

Tsholofelo Zulu

They know exactly what
they're doing,
this is just another
gateway to a “whites only venue”.

Senzeni na?

They don't hang us from trees anymore.
Instead, they allow public servants to
gun us down
and then reward them with pensions.

When will it stop?
Will it ever stop?
My race is dying, and this world is broken.

Senzeni na?

Broken and not ready to be repaired.
Are they ever going to reach the point

of enlightenment where they realise
that we are HUMAN –
And that we see things, and feel things
just as much as they do.

Senzeni na?

How and why is there still a slave trade
in these modern times?
Not only is my race a crime,
but I guess it also sells quite fast.

Senzeni na?

Yini Yini Yini bo?

Yini enijabulisa kakhulu uma nibona ubuhlungu bethu?

Yini enijabulisa kakhulu uma nibona izinyembezi zethu?

*Yini enijabulisa kakhulu uma nibona imizimba negazi
elingenalutho isizungezile?*

Yini Yini Yini bo?

Senzeni na?

In the end, you choose
What you want to see,
even in the mirror.
Remember that ...

3RD PLACE**Confessions of a teenage boy (gay poem)*****Qiniso Ngubeni***

I am, right now,
as when I discovered loving me!
Turning back is beyond imagination
though I cry by each delicate moment,
I have made a decision to rather cry
in solitary than have friends who spite my nature
though it feels like gradually I'm withering.

Standing like a haunted house
in a forgotten field;
lonely, forlorn, abashed and silent!
But I cannot turn back to that concealing place;
more a tomb than a closet, where
darkness fell, and thus began the true me!

No more will I bind my soul with restricting
clothing, sheltering my soul
against your dire religious condemnation.

I have stumbled out
perplexed but alive!
Struck by unusual light that blurs my search
for the voice that called me by name.

And I look at you
and I see that you've been crying!

SHORT STORIES

1ST PLACE

Triggers

Amanda Shabalala

Judge Dube: How does the defendant plead towards the charge brought against her?

I know you must be asking yourself how I got here. This is not how I had imagined my life would turn out. Trust me; I am not this kind of person. I am no murderer.

So let me take you back to how it all started.

I was four years old when I first witnessed my mom bruised and bleeding on the floor..., powerless, as she was, pleading for her life at the feet of a dreadful monster who called himself my papa. Her voice is still engraved in my memories, “*please, please stop... I’m sorry*”. I still remember the screams in response to the kicks, which took her breath out and made her even weaker to talk or cry. The exhaustion in her voice. Every Friday night, she would sing the same song, dance to his beat, as he beat the life out of her and called it love.

For years, her screaming and crying became a normal song I could not stop or pause.

When I was six, I thought that I had finally mastered the way to trap the voices, which made me cringe. I was later to find out that on this particular night, she had kissed the cup of death.

Two months passed after her death, and I was the one screaming for my life as he forced his genital in between my thighs. I had become his dollhouse. Silenced with fear, I could not tell nobody. I could only scream inside in hopes that somebody, anybody could hear me, but nobody did. At the age of twelve, I told myself I only had myself to count on. That night, I decided I was never going to find myself in this place ever again. That night, I stood still outside and watched that old shack burn to the ground with my father's corpse inside. I had made sure he sang the same hymn he made my mother sing to the angel of death. I could feel my soul escape the lifetime sentence nobody could help me out of.

I grew up in houses where I was yet to become a victim of rape from the people who said they loved me.

Years passed, and I found myself a man who said he loved me. Well, he did most of the time. He acted right more like a gentleman most of the time. I do not remember what had happened this night, all I can tell you is that he had come

back from work; you could see the anger in his face. I tried to calm him down as I always did. He tried to take out his anger on me as he would sometimes. On this day when he put his hands on me, it took me back to when I was a child. When I could not do anything to protect myself. A thousand thoughts ran through my mind. I remembered the day I had told myself I would not let a man love me the way men around me love women because their love hurts. That night, he had touched the wrong one. I pushed him off me. Slowly, I could see his head fall towards the corner of the table, which took his life...

Therefore, you ask me how I plead to the charges of murder. I plead not guilty.

The only thing I am guilty of is surviving.

2ND PLACE**THEMBEKILE*****Nonsikelelo Magwaza***

Once upon a time, there was a girl called Thembekile. She was raised by both her parents in a small village called Ngudwini. Her mother was a housewife while her father was working in the mines in Johannesburg. Her father usually came back home once a year, mostly in December to spend Christmas holidays together. Thembekile had a strong relationship with her mother since she used to spend more time with her than with her father. She was a good girl.

She used to help her mother fetch water from the river and wood from the forest. But the thing she loved to do most was house chores together with her mother. During December times, her father would be on leave. Thembekile loved spending time with him since she knew that her father would give her money to buy chips and sweets. Her father loved taking her to the field where he would teach her how to fight using sticks so that she would be able to protect herself while he was away.

In the village, Thembekile was known as the untouchable girl, who would beat boys and girls, even those older than her. She was a strong young girl in her village. Thembekile started school at the age of seven. She was a bright, intelligent

learner, who grasped everything quickly. Thembekile passed all her primary school grades with flying colours, but when she was in Grade 7, things changed.

Thembekile's father lost his job due to the miners' strikes and received severance pay. He was forced to come back home, and now Thembekile had a chance to live with both her parents under the same roof. She thought that it was going to be great and they will be happy together as a family. But it was a different story. Her father began to drink alcohol due to the stress about how he would provide for his family since he had lost his job.

He would wake up in the morning and go to the local tavern till midnight. And when he comes back home, he wanted everybody to wake up, not only his wife, but also Thembekile was supposed to wake up. There was no peace at Thembekile's house ever since her father lost his job. He didn't stop there, he also started to beat Thembekile's mother whenever he was drunk, and he would beat her up while Thembekile was watching.

Thembekile knew that what her father was doing to her mother was not right. She knew in her mind that she wanted to protect her mother, but not only to protect her mother, but also teach his father a lesson that he would never forget in his life. She believed that she had the power and if she played her cards well, she could teach his father to

have respect for women and know how they should be treated. It was not her intention to fight her father, but she realised that there was no other way to defeat him.

After school, she would help her mother doing house chores, and after that she would go to the fields where she met a guy called Sizwe who helped her with finding a job, so that she would be able to provide for them. With time, Thembekile forgave her father and so did her mother. Thembekile's father started applying for different jobs, and luckily, he was called back to the mines where he used to work, since there were no strikes anymore.

He specifically thanked his daughter for standing up for her mother and for being a brave girl who was able to save her family from the continuous embarrassment in the village. Thembekile and her family lived happily ever after. Never doubt the power of a woman.

3RD PLACE

As love crumbles...

Gcinile Magwaza

“I did everything for you! I loved you like no one else!” He said as he was shutting and locking the back door.

Themba was an ordinary man, as many would assume. He was neither rich nor poor. Life had taken its toll on him, too, but he survived, and we all do. Both parents had divorced, and he never really knew his mother well. His sister was his pride. “You are getting bigger by the day,” she would always say. A family of a few, and it is quite safe to say, they managed their lives on a day-to-day basis. It was a blissful day when he met beautiful Thabile on his way to work one day. His legs shook, and suddenly he lost his voice. This was not quite normal for the well-known playboy of the town.

“I’d say let’s go for coffee, but it is rather a hot day today,” the charming man said as he pulled over his car next to the young lady. His white Polo Vivo had been washed and its rims were shiny. The leather seats had been polished thoroughly and the car radio was playing soft music.

The young lady just smiled back as she could not resist the charms of this man. The conversation went on for hours until

she provided the gentleman with her contact details. Oh it was love at first sight for these two. They could not stay away from each other as calls would come through every day. Themba would pick her up from the call centre where she was working every day and bring her home. This new love adventure had caused him to put his other “lady friends” aside for a while.

And of course, which man would not go crazy over a young, tall, beautiful, and smart lady? She had this black mole on her nose, which made her even more beautiful. Unlike Themba, Thabile had a large family and a brother who was not fond of her newly found lover. Her mother lived in the rural areas as a widow.

“He’s my friend, am I not allowed to have friends now?” Thabile panted as she was pushing the angered Themba away. It was unfortunate that the honeymoon phase had disappeared at such a short space of time. This once beautiful and smart girl had turned into a naïve, told-what-to-do prisoner. We all know the saying “the leopard will always show its spots”. Indeed, Themba was the animal in question. “You’re embarrassing me!” Slaps! “ I won’t have my woman laughing with other men!”

A few ignored slaps led to this dreadful day of more punches to the face and lying in a pool of blood. Jealousy! He did not want to “share” her. He wanted her all to himself. He could

not have his woman laughing at another man's jokes. For Themba, this was his way of "fixing" her and having her respect him more. Unfortunately for him, he killed her.