

Am I my Brother's Keeper?

Barrack Obama, former President of the United States of America, speaking on the subject of being my brother's keeper, was quoted as having said, "But part of that belief comes from my faith in the idea that I am my brother's keeper and I am my sister's keeper; that as a country, we rise and fall together. I'm not an island."

President Obama conveyed the importance of reaching an understanding that ideally, we as a people ought to share a common bond. In an environment where some of us choose not to be kind one to another, and moreover show lack of care for their fellow man, life for some could become meaningless. More often than not, this leads to divisiveness and can contribute to a disgruntled people. The way to correct this would be to convince all and sundry that people are acting in good faith, and not sending mixed signals or giving false hope.

In our society there is acceptance of the social theory of equality before the law and of brotherhood among citizens. For many, this theory may have meaning when the philosophy is rooted in action. This provides a sense of security, hope and peace of mind. People who feel that they are being disadvantaged, unfairly treated or discriminated against, will not share the view that this theory has any substance. The stratification of our society does not offer much comfort to those who feel marginalized or share the view that they are being taken for a ride.

As an immediate remedy, it requires that confidence is restored in the minds, hearts and souls of the aggrieved and disaffected. This might not always be that easy to accomplish, particularly when those who are at the receiving end lose their abiding faith in institutions, people, systems and the process. To be your brother's keeper means to consider your neighbour's needs at all times. This leaves room for individuals to be thoughtful, fair and reasonable in any response which is directed at addressing the needs of a brother or sister.

If this is to happen, it will require a change in the attitudes and outlook of people. It is disturbing to those who consider that they are victims of either selfishness, greed or the exploitation of others. Exploitation in any form is recognized for what it is, and so it can be easily traced to being an insincere act which is perpetrated upon the individual, regardless of one's social status. The hard fact is that any behaviour or action which is injurious to the wellbeing of the individual, will more than likely be frowned upon.

Being our brothers' keeper is about inspiring and motivating them, demonstrating that there is a genuine sharing of their pain and suffering, providing hope for a better tomorrow, removing any doubts or fears which they may have, and most of all, providing a helping hand when needed. These can make a difference in the lives of workers who find themselves thrown in a state of hopelessness, and who have seen their dreams and aspirations all shattered right before their very eyes; all in one fell swoop.

This Christmas, spare a thought for our brothers or sisters who were once employed and no longer have a job. Consider the pain, agony and trauma they are suffering, and the fear which those who

remain employed hold of what tomorrow will bring. If it is one wish we should all share this Christmas, is for a humane touch to be applied to the treatment we give to all our brothers and sisters in whatever way we engage or interface with them.

Wishing a brother or sister a Merry Christmas at a time when their spirits are low, might not be enough to brighten their hearts at this time of the year. Our advice to those who feel depressed as a result of being unemployed, whether through termination, retrenchment, redundancy or having been laid off, is to be reminded that where there is life there is hope. As it is written in the New International Version of the Bible (NIV), Jeremiah 29:11, “ For I know the plans I have for you” declares the Lord, “ Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”