

Refirement eZine April 2009

Dear Boomers,

This is an important month for each South African as we go to the polls on 22 April. I believe we should all take this opportunity to think very carefully about the future of our beautiful country and what we will do to help bring about positive change. I have added a great article by my good friend Pete Laburn this month on this subject.

Are you a female Boomer who has been out of the workforce for sometime? (or know of anyone like this) . I am embarking on a survey with Business Women's' Association to try and discover how we can help this group re-skill and enter the job market. Please email me on lgsmith@mweb.co.za if you are interested in being involved in this online survey?

I have also been asked to find someone to do a 6 month fulltime contract in the Linbro Park area. It is in the Conference and Travel industry and will require general administration skills. Please email me if you want more details.

I have now run two Next Chapter workshops in Johannesburg and I know that the delegates all benefited from the interaction and learning. I will be running another one in early May, please let me know if you are keen to attend.(dates to be confirmed)

I read a great blog the other day and have included it in the newsletter this month (with permission from the author) The questions he is asking are great reflection statements to help us discover and fine tune our journey towards REFIREMENT. Enjoy.



I have spent the last three weeks enjoying a family visit and again am reminded on how different our journey is compared to previous generations. Family living all over the planet brings new challenges that we need to address as part of our journey. Joining a site to do this may help you to get answers to some of these challenges.

Join the Refirement Social Network and share your own experiences. Have a blessed month and make sure you vote on 22 nd April.

Lynda Smith

Refirement Social Network

This is a new social network that I have set up for Refirement Network. Please join and invite all other Baby Boomers. [Click to join](#)

The Road Less Traveled by Harold Frick

This week I will be in Palm Coast with my son, daughter in law, and grandsons. In addition to spending time with my family, this is also a good time to think about my life, my plans for the future and also spend time to reach out to people in my network.

In this fast paced world, we need to take time to see where we have been, where we are going, where we want to go, and who is important to us. Being raised in the Midwest, I have always been a workaholic. When I was younger I rarely reflected. Now I realize how important reflection is for my health, my outlook, my business and my life.

Here are some things I am evaluating. This is a continuous process so I come back to many of these things again and again:

As a young man starting out in the world:

1. What did I stand for?
2. What did I want to be?
3. What impact did I want to make?
4. What were my passions
5. What did I think I needed to improve then?
6. Who were my friends? My mentors?
7. What did I do right and wrong in my first jobs?
8. What were my hobbies, my avocations?
9. What was I reading then?
10. Was I balanced? If so why? If not, why not?
11. What were my spiritual feelings?

As I progressed in my life:

1. What things did I discard? Why?
2. What new things did I embrace? Why?
3. What friends and mentors did I discard? Why?
4. What friends and mentors did I embrace? What new friends and mentors did I make?
5. What were my biggest accomplishments? What did I learn?
6. What were my biggest failures? What did I learn?
7. Was I balanced? If so, why? If not, why not?
8. What were my spiritual feelings?

These are not one answer questions, but drill down questions-perhaps lifelong questions.

Why do this?

1. I want to make sure that I have not strayed away from my core values and moral compass
2. I want to revisit old passions, avocations, and goals, to see if I should "try them on" again
3. What actions and directions should I take on?
4. If I retire tomorrow, or if I only have 5 years to live, what things are important? And what things would I do.

I think of Frost Poem, The Road Not Traveled:

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence
Two roads diverged in a wood
And I took the one less traveled by
And that has made all the difference

We are faced daily with taking one of many roads. We discard some things, and embrace others. Those decisions change our lives. We can, however, look back and reflect and perhaps find new paths that take us to some of the roads we could have taken. In ways it is a second chance.

What is our common purpose - where are our values ?

South Africa's National Strategy has no backbone

Why is Barack Obama such a breath of fresh air? It is because he is not behaving like a politician, but is bringing in a new way of thinking and doing things that is giving people hope in the political system and its ability to bring about change. Amid the partisanship and bickering of today's public debate, he believes in the ability to unite people around a politics of purpose - a politics that puts solving the challenges of everyday Americans ahead of partisan calculation and political gain. He is leaving behind all back biting and has a genuine respect for the outgoing administration and his opposition. Since his days in the Illinois State Senate he has been working with both Democrats and Republicans to help solve the problems faced by working families, and now as the US president he has brought in many members of the opposition to serve with him on his leadership team, in order to make up the best possible team to take on the challenges his nation is facing at present. Not least of which is Democratic presidential rival Hillary Clinton, who Obama has put in charge of US foreign policy as the Secretary of State. The way he is behaving as a politician is unheard of, and it is utterly delightful.

In addition, it would seem that Barack Obama is focusing on all that unites Americans together in an effort to mobilise them behind a joint vision and strategy to deal with the challenges they now face as a nation. He has cast a vision that the majority of Americans believe in and they have hope again for the future. This is exactly what is needed in order to build a nation. People need to focus on what they agree on and work together to make a difference.

He is a true example of unconstrained leadership. This type of leadership looks at the negative circumstances around us, and then gets involved in asking what can I do to contribute, what is the ideal or right response to the challenges we face? The right response is not determined by personal agendas, but rather by what is right for the whole, for the nation, society or organisation as a whole. This is the type of leadership that is so desperately needed on our own African continent. We have seen glimpses of it in Botswana's former president Festus Mogae, a man who has been heralded for his impeccable example of African leadership and has helped to create a nation marked by peace, economic growth and the containment of HIV/Aids. Mogae, 69, stepped down 8 months before the end of his term of office and handed over power to his successor in a smooth transition otherwise unknown in Southern Africa, and in stark contrast to the political turmoil in neighbouring Zimbabwe.

It would seem that our own country South Africa's current political situation, marked by law suits and public backbiting, also stands in stark contrast to this wonderful example of African leadership and the new administration entering US political office. There are ongoing law suits between the country's potential president, the previous president and what is supposed to be an independent organ of state, the National Prosecuting Authority. Our own ruling party has done all it can to bring the new political party COPE into disrepute, and many of its members have been accused of interrupting other party meetings and events. Instead of working together, political parties are only involved in bringing one another down. Party agendas are placed ahead of national agendas and priorities resulting in a lack of delivery.

An additional problem with South Africa's political system is the absolute lack of divisions of power between the ruling majority party, government, and the state. This again has resulted in party specific issues being dealt with and not necessarily the most pressing issues for the country as a whole. Government organs, as well as the state, are instruments of the ruling party to fulfil their wishes and not necessarily those of the country as a whole. A case in point is our current President Kgalema Motlanthe who is often challenged by the ruling party for not towing the party line.

Where is our nation's shared vision that we can all unite behind? I would suggest that our greatest problem is that we do not have a shared purpose or set of values. As we have opted not to have an official religion, it becomes even more important to have a value system that we all share. Even a diverse society such as our own needs a common purpose to work towards and set of values to guide it. Every successful organisation, let alone country, is bound by a certain set of stated values. Purpose and values are the axils that hold a society together. They are the constants that should guide us through this turbulent and complex world, keeping us focused on what is important to us. Without a shared set of common purpose and values we are a nation tossed around by every situation that we come across.

This was not the case during 1994 when South Africa, on the brink of civil war, joined together to peacefully cast our votes and usher in a new democracy. We were lead at the time by a visionary Nelson Mandela, who showed us how to overlook our differences and embrace our commonalities as members of a rainbow nation. It was a time of hope and peace brought about by a country's shared

purpose of building a new peaceful democratic society and guided by the values of justice, equality and liberty for all. But times have changed and the years of former President Thabo Mbeki's stoic leadership style of divide and control, have taken their toll on our nations sense of unity and focus.

In addition, a sense of disappointment has permeated the nation, as what was promised by government has not been achieved. Government's own policy of Black Economic Empowerment has severely inhibited her ability to deliver on her promises, as large numbers of talented, trained black professionals have been lured into the private sector, leaving the public sector without the capacity to achieve its goals. Examples of governments' failure to deliver include the health care sector, education, water and electricity sectors, local government with issues of sanitation etc. and the provision of housing for all.

While government has been coming up with some impressive strategies and scenarios to deal with our countries challenges, the only strategy an organisation or nation is able to implement is that which they are capable of delivering, and have the capacity to implement. As a result, many of the impressive plans thought up by government are not implemented and the money allocated to projects is not spent, especially at provincial and local government level. Hence we have a public sector that moves from the management of one crisis to the other, and a disillusioned and frustrated civil society that is tired of waiting for delivery of what it was promised nearly 15 years ago.

As with the United States, we too are a country entering a new era of political change in globally turbulent times. We too have the opportunity to change things for the better by uniting behind a common purpose and set of values, and all working to make things better. This can only happen with good strong leadership at the helm of this country, casting a common vision for the nation to follow, and steering it through these turbulent times. We need someone honest enough to speak the truth about where South Africa is, even if it isn't pretty, and we need someone that South Africans can trust to lead them forward. We need a national common purpose and set of values to rally behind and a comprehensive strategy, with the corresponding capacity, to bring about change and make things better.

Unfortunately, during uncertain times, the majority of people take what they can get and just focus on taking care of their own. This is not the attitude we need to have as South Africans at this time. We are in need of a leader who will convince people of the hope for this country and the future, and that he will not act out of his own agenda's or even that of his political party, but of the nation as a whole.

Even before he took office, Barak Obama worked with his economic team and leaders of both political parties on an American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan. Faced with an economic crisis unlike any we have seen in our lifetime, and having lost 2,6-million American jobs during 2008, Barak Obama is honest enough to speak the harsh truth of the current situation, but also takes the time to cast vision and inspire hope for the future. In January 2009 Barak Obama addressed the American people regarding the grim economic situation facing that nation at present. He said "We have come through moments like this before. We are the nation that has faced down war, depression and fear itself – each time, refusing to yield or accept a lesser fate. This is the spirit that has always sustained us – that belief that our destiny is not written for us, but by us, that our success is not a matter of chance, but of our own courage and determination. Our resources may be finite, but our will is infinite. And I am confident that if we come together and summon that great American spirit once again, we will meet the challenges of our time and write the next great chapter of our American story."

South African is in need of leaders with character, honesty, courage and vision to lead us through the writing of our next chapter as a nation. We too, have gone through dark times, coming out victorious on the other side. But we need leadership, strategy and capacity in order to take us on into our future. Lets hope our leaders take a few feathers out of Barak Obama's cap before its too late.

January 2009 / pjl Pete Laburn is an international strategy consultant based in Johannesburg, South Africa

petelaburn@iafrica.com



Please contact Lynda Smith on +27 (0) 82 490 2822 or lynda@refirementnetwork.com for more details. Our web address is www.refirementnetwork.com
