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Old Men, New Hopes - Muthoni Garland

At one point during the blood-letting broadcasts, CNN cut away to analyze why Barrack Obama had won in the Iowa phase of the Democrats search for nomination. A woman in an audience said Barrack represented a break away from the politics of the past, that he seemed more honest.

I suppose I favoured Raila the candidate for the same reason. His manner is more open and accessible, his ambition more naked and vulnerable. He demonstrated willingness to negotiate with others as is evidenced in the multi-ethnic coalition of leaders he pulled together. He talked more, laughed more, played more, seemed more in touch with the needs of the youth. These qualities seemed to imply that he might have the strength and willingness to drive through a new constitution that would pave a more modern and inclusive way forward. I already knew that for all Kibaki's successes in igniting the economy and opening up democratic space, he was not prepared to address that real bone of contention – devolution and the reduction of executive power. He'd paid us scant attention over the negative issues raised in his presidency – particularly corruption and the distribution of plum jobs to his cronies. It became clear that for all his amiable benevolence, Kibaki, like his age-mates, only understands authoritarian rule.

But those who are older than I expressed a palpable fear of Raila's excesses, and fear the fanaticism of his following, as though that by itself proves him an automatic dictator-in-waiting. They murmured about his socialist education (he studied in East Germany when the wall was still up) as proof of his communist leanings even though he is a millionaire industrialist. They quoted the recent biography by a Nigerian scholar that implied Raila was complicit in the 1982 coup attempt even though he'd been investigated and cleared of all involvement. All this said in whispers and coded language that ignored any attempt at establishing proof and clarity. Their unwillingness to consider a different image underlined that the issue was greater than the man. It was a continuation of a feud that goes back to his father's time. A feud built on issues to do with the post-independence split and the assassinations in the years that followed. A feud about how our resources have been unfairly distributed. A fear that Raila would seek revenge even if in so doing, it caused the country to break-up.

The trouble is that this is a feud of old men. We yearn to measure the worth of a man by what he says and does rather than what is rumoured. We want leaders to be sensitive to what we say, and we want to hold them accountable. That is why so many of the old-guard were voted out – they represented a more secretive and authoritarian past. It is not that the post-independence generation are blind to the ills that have happened, but we are more pressed by the demands of the future. We yearn to draw a line. Whether or not Raila is the man to draw that line is now a moot point. The elders may have succeeded in painting sufficient fear of him to yet keep him from the hot seat. He may be too embroiled in that inaccessible story of the past - may carry too much baggage.

But the rigging fiasco of this election is nothing less than last kicks of a dying horse. It is time the old men went so that we can begin to hope for honesty. We need new leaders. We need to move on.