

## Ken Bugul (Senegal)

### In Pursuit of Justice

I am unwilling to talk about justice itself because for the time being I can no longer believe in justice. I would like to talk about a topic linked with writing with which I can discuss justice as something that can occur within writing: I can create a world of justice in my dreams. Anyway I'll try to say something even though, for me and for all those victims of injustice, the word no longer has significance.

What are the key challenges for achieving a more just world today? The challenges are many—very many. But for me the key ones are the following:

#### *Obtaining Correct Information*

I have noticed that the correct information is not provided to people for helping them understand what has happened, what is happening, what will happen. The process of providing the correct information about the historical is very helpful for understanding the present and to foresee the future. It allows human beings—in whom I still try to believe—to make up their minds. That is why the correct and appropriate information is capital. Information is always falsely oriented. The media's and the politicians' speeches deliver an aspect of the information, and occult the rest. And most of the people believe in what they see, what they hear and what they read.

Many people do not have the opportunity to look for truth due to many factors such as one's level of education, and ignorance, and selfishness. In Africa, particularly in Sub Saharan Africa, we are suffering from the information internationally delivered about us. Africa is seen as the continent of poverty and misery. I have rarely seen in the media or in any speeches, or in remarks and questions about Africa, the right information given, with few exceptions. Africa is always described as the continent with only the worst images. I am very fed up with the remarks of people asking whether I am living in a hut or on a tree; whether I have AIDS or tuberculosis; whether I am eating every day; how I flew from a continent of wars, genocide, masses of refugees, and whether that is all there is in Africa. All the achievements, all we have gone through, the energy of its people—particularly women—are just disregarded. We are facing problems of poverty, but everywhere else there is poverty, AIDS, tuberculosis, nervous depression, maniacs, (Fortunately we are very concerned by nervous depression and maniacs), particularly where we are not expecting them. The so called *developed world* sent us information on their countries which only shows their best aspects, never the bad aspects. There is no justice if people do not have the right information, and do not know the truth.

#### The second challenge is *irresponsibility*

We must be aware of our responsibility of bringing about justice. Our responsibilities include a deep and honest analysis of situations and how we are responsible for them. Our responsibility for justice concerns each of us. Responsibility means recognition and involvement in responsibility's implementation. In Africa we see how the rest of the world does not care about the reasons for civil wars or what and who is responsible; or why it is always in countries with diamonds, oil, cobalt, colton, uranium, bauxite, industrial diamond,

and refile, that there are wars. The arms industry, the economic interests, the biased political interests, and corruption are flourishing. We know all the reasons. We have historians, sociologists, economists, and sometimes we feel very bad when the rest of world is occulting the reasons of our dramas and the dramas of other people. When we know that many people are dying from mines and we are not ready to stop them from spreading, that is not justice to the innocent children, young people, and old people who are everyday harmed by mines throughout the world.

We know how our environment is destroyed, how resources are savagely exploited, reducing people to poverty and dependency; how dictators are supported by the developed world because of the resources of their countries. In a country like Equatorial Guinea it is only fifty people, members of the family and entourage of the president, who are taking profit from the oil revenues. We know how the right leaders who are fighting for justice are killed or put down through coup d'etats, etc.

*Disrespect* is the third challenge for justice to occur.

We must respect differences. We cannot impose on others what is unsuitable for them. Nobody knows better than those concerned what is best for them. We must respect the socio-cultural environment of the people. We must respect the environment—look at the destruction of the Amazon forests and its populations. We must respect the resolutions and decisions of the institutions we have set up. The resolutions of Kyoto on pollution, resolution 242 and others for Palestinian borders, the resolutions on antipersonnel mines, etc. are not applied because of selfish or skewed interests. Why is discrimination going on? We must respect the rules of the game. The World Trade Organization exists with nice buildings for offices in Geneva, a well paid staff, with beautiful cars and nice houses, while that organization cannot make any decision that has application.

If we consider the cotton market, how can the agricultures of Burkina Faso, Benin, Mali, Senegal, etc., survive when they cannot sell their cotton on the market at an appropriate price? It is because some countries like the USA dump their agriculture. The Commodities Stock Exchange defines the prices of goods according to the western economy. Why in the Ivory Coast, which used to be the first producer of cocoa, are there children who do not have hot chocolate for breakfast? Why in Sierra Leone do the women not wear their diamonds that they mine in their own country? Why does the colton and the refile of Democratic republic of Congo, instead of profiting the welfare of its people, contribute to civil wars by exchanging these resources for guns and mines to fight their own people? Why in Congo do people pay much more for a gallon of oil than the developed world, when they are producing oil? The oil companies do not care about that. Economic interests, profit, Wall Street, the London Exchange, the apartments for the mistresses, are the only things they know about. Why is Gabon while producing the main medical plants unable to heal their children from diseases? How can we struggle against those who have vetoes when our interest—our international equality—is contrary to their interests?

We must respect the indigenous people instead of destroying them with the bad alcohol and manufactured products which are killing them. We must be aware that no one can be happy alone for a long time. The gap between the rich and the poor is growing very quickly, and this leads to frustration; and from frustration it is easy to jump to reaction. Developed countries are spoiling food while children are dying of malnutrition. And they send to them

expired milk and meal, through humanitarian aid, which is unfair. More and more, humanitarianism serves the interest of the provider's countries. Humanitarian organizations are no longer welcome in many places in Africa. We must let a people profit from its own resources.

A more just world would mean that the rest of the world has to go through deep changes, and many countries are not ready for that. They do not want to complicate their interests. They do not want to lose their comfort. They do not want to lose the privileges gained from the exploitation of others. They do not want to share. All the religions have recommended generosity. A just world is a dream. And this cannot go like that. Injustice will lead definitely to a world without peace. No justice; no peace. In Africa and elsewhere, we know how the world is functioning and we do not want to be fooled anymore. The new generations have started complaining. If the world does not look for justice for everybody through respect, through freedom, through recognition, through correct information, I will say that all of us are moving towards an inevitable global conflict. It is no longer time for words. It is time for action. Senegal also wants to develop, to live, to care for our families, and to be free. And nobody has the right to impose anything on us whatever. We have the right for justice; if not, we have the right to look for it, by any means necessary. *We have to get up stand up for our rights, for justice.*