

Light at the end of the tunnel

Nobesuthu Mahlangu

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'Hope is the little spark that gives you faith in the possibility of a future that seems unattainable. If you lose hope, you lose everything.' - Prof Thuli Madonsela

We entered the new year with grace and appreciation for the struggles we faced, moving forward with patience and hope for the year ahead. We are moving forward with a greater sense of awareness, knowing that the future is bright and honouring what we have been through. COVID-19 has had a significantly negative impact on many people. Millions of individuals around the globe lost their lives and many more lost their livelihoods (Corpuz 2021:281). We lost out on spending time with friends, shopping, and going outside. This pandemic did not only harm public health but also caused the global economy to contract, resulting in increasing poverty and social insecurity (Kayo 2020:52). Hundreds of civil society organizations across the world collaborated with organizations such as United Nation and the World Health Organization to produce new attainable plans for constructing a better, more democratic, and environmentally sustainable world amid a pandemic.

People from all religions, social classes, and economic statuses were affected by the pandemic. We witnessed the wealthy, with all of their resources, succumbing to the stresses that the pandemic brought on. Many epidemics such Ebola, the plague, and the cholera outbreak in 19th century Europe have plagued humanity (Kayo 2020) and similarly, COVID-19 has attacked all aspects of life. While some people closed themselves up and blamed China for the virus, others found only one solution: togetherness. This pandemic taught us that times of adversity can also be times of immense opportunity, to band together in support of one another, and this has resulted in a mood of global unity. In this time of difficulty, we became world neighbours instead of competitors/enemies.

To some extent, COVID-19 developed a sense of collectively, which we, as modern people, have not experienced at this level. We evolved into socially responsible individuals who who looked after one another. To protect one another, we wore masks and practised social distancing. In other cases, NGOs banded together to provide immediate aid, such as distributing food to those in need. We saw political leaders prioritize individual and social well-being as a key component of our recovery approach. The pandemic demonstrated some of the world's wealthiest and most powerful individuals giving back to society and standing united with the rest of society. For example, Bill and Melinda Gates' foundation contributed \$305 million, the majority of which was devoted to diagnostic and vaccine development. We practised solidarity, which according to Tomasini (2021), is the collective good of being joined together to provide mutual assistance through what we consider to be some type of common interest. One can argue that more than anything COVID-19 has put our morality to the test.

COVID-19 gave birth to kindness, sensitivity, and unity. We saw the world coming together like never before. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and Twitter became safe spaces where people could share feelings, cooking tips, entertaining videos, and ways to survive indoors. The #TogetherWeWin campaign, which consisted of a series of Instagram and Facebook Live talks provides a good example of this. These platforms functioned as spaces of support and assistance, particularly for those who were lonely. In the stillness, the world still found ways to keep going and look forward to the next day. As a result, we continue to find comfort in the stories of hope and solidarity and continue to embrace COVID-19's constructive lessons.

This pandemic, I believe, represents the idea that there can be an end to selfishness, to a glimpse of a brighter future. A future that will spring from the ashes of tragedy to a future that will give us hope. COVID-19 is a test that humanity will pass if all take the initiative to vaccinate in 2022. Let us keep hoping, hoping to travel, hoping to attend major events, hoping to go around without masks, hoping that things will return to normal. However, governments should devote more attention and resources to putting the economy on a more resilient, sustainable, and inclusive growth path. So that we can withstand anything the world throws at us.

References

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