

Some lives are more valuable...

Melissa Tandiwe Myambo

But to whom should I be responsible,
and why should I be, when you refuse to see
me?...

~ Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*

I read this headline this morning: “African Union sends troops to Missouri to defend black residents.” The article continues to explain that US police forces have a long history of shooting unarmed black men. The African Union (AU) advises President Obama to address the endemic racism, racial profiling and racial strife that plague relationships between local police forces and African Americans, a minority population which has seen some thousands of unarmed black men gunned down, assaulted and beaten by the police. Long-simmering tensions have boiled over in Ferguson, Missouri, where black residents have taken to the streets to protest what they describe as the outright murder of unarmed black teenager, Michael Brown.

The AU will be sending a combined force made up of troops from Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Nigeria to protect Ferguson residents. The White House objects to the deployment of AU troops saying that the risk of the Ebola virus is too great but the AU has countered by saying their own labs have produced enough serum to ensure that the epidemic is under control and their soldiers pose no risk...

##

When I woke up, I saw the actual headlines. Thankfully, there is a temporary ceasefire in Israel-Gaza but otherwise today’s headlines serve up their usual fare: war, conflict, hypocrisy and the hubris of the mighty. After declaring that they would rescue a Christian minority group under attack in Iraq, the US has backtracked but they have advised Iraqis that despite a long history of religious strife, they should try and work together and respect the rights of their minority populations such as the Christians and the Kurds.

Protests continue in Missouri but the African Union – an ineffectual and generally useless organization – is certainly not coming to the aid of Ferguson residents because the 55 countries of the African continent, even all together, do not have the geopolitical clout to even get Obama on the phone much less breach America’s sovereign borders. The AU can’t even effectively lobby the World Health Organization to pressure North American companies to hurry along the exportation

of experimental drugs to treat Ebola in Africa where over 1,000 people have died in the last months. How many more are ill?

Mysteriously, the few existing doses of the medication were first given to the three white westerners who contracted it. The Africans come second as usual...

##

In the recently-concluded World Cup in Brasil, there should have been a headline that read: "Colonialism and Slavery continue to pay off." The Ecuador-France match was testament to that. The descendants of African slaves dominated the South American team whilst the French side was full of Malians and Algerians drawn from their former empire as per usual.

If there was an African Diaspora team made up of Africans from all the world, wouldn't they be amazing?

But whilst the fantasy of this Pan-African team is enticing, the truth is that the valorization of the black athlete masks the dire circumstances facing the average dark-skinned citizen, from the US to Latin America to Europe. For every hypervisible Kanye who marries a Kim and every Half-Kenyan who becomes president of the most powerful country in the world, there are millions of blacks who face discrimination in every sphere of society, from housing to education. That discrimination erupts into police killings of black men so often that nobody even bothers to tally the figures.

The true number of African Americans who have been slaughtered by the police is unknown. There are no official numbers, one more way to invisibilify...a new verb, it means to make invisible. Personally, I would like to know how many police officers have been killed by black men since the police often claim self-defense.

##

If I were an alien who came down from Mars, I would understand from a random sampling of the headlines of last year, this year, next year, that the lives of those from powerful countries are of more value than the lives of those from regions with less geopolitical power. This trend becomes especially apparent when these countries are defending themselves.

Everyone knows that aliens from Mars are uber-rational statisticians and avid number-crunchers so I would browse the inter-webs to find out some hard and fast facts. In the latest flare up in Gaza, three Israeli civilians have thus far been killed versus over 1,500 Palestinian civilians (conservative estimate). Like US-backed Israel, the US has also embarked on a war without end to "protect itself." Since the World Trade Center was destroyed in 2001 tragically killing almost 3,000 American

civilians, the infinite “war on terror” has cost 21,000 to 23,000 Afghani civilians their lives and resulted in the death of 133,000 to 147,000 civilians in Iraq. Thus far...How much longer will the US stand its ground?

As a Martian, I am very good at maths. I would just do some simple division: how many lives of those from poor countries must pay for the lives of those from powerful countries?

Conclusion: Some lives are more valuable than others...

What do you think?

##