

AFFAIRS & OPINIONS

Advocacy | Elections | Demonstrations | Democracy | Tribal Erasure

by Ntha
creativity meets advocacy

Highly Underrated

How youth leaders can effectively inform policy and bring change in their societies

by Nthanda

HEALTH POLICY PLUS COMMUNICATIONS WORKSHOP FOR YOUTH POLICY ADVOCATES

In 2015, there was a policy on adolescent reproductive health in Kenya. The policy existed, but it was not comprehensive. There was a coalition of youth who worked together to build on the previous policy and place emphasis on vulnerable populations. Young people in Malawi have also played a key role in creating and reviewing policies – like setting the minimum age for marriage in Malawi, among other policies.

So what is Policy?
Our first debate ensued shortly after 10am (quite early for a workshop that started at 9am). The 20 youth from different youth advocacy organisation in Malawi convening in Nyika Conference Room at Crossroads hotel in Lilongwe, Malawi, attempted to define a policy, using their previous knowledge. The definition which stood out was that a policy is a course of principle or action that is adopted or proposed by a government, party, business, or individual. Policies can also be laws – to compel

or prohibit behavior. Policies guide actions and laws toward desired outcome. Policies can also be guidelines set by institutions to achieve certain milestones. Gives operational guidelines. A set of strategic plans. The last definition was that policies are actions and decisions taken by government and institutions to solve certain problems.

The difference between a Policy and an Agenda?
An agenda is a set of frameworks out-

lining milestones achieved overtime. A policy creates an environment for the agenda to be achieved. It is a set of regulations put in place to make work towards an agenda achievable. You need policies to guide how the milestones in the agenda are achieved. Policy is done at national level, and trickles down to the districts, and day to day communities. As young people, our duty is to make sure that stakeholders at district levels understand the policies affecting young people.

The youth are responsible for dissemination of the policies affecting them, and should demand more.

In advocacy, you have to be clear about what is being demanded. What is it you want to achieve? Are you holding the government accountable, or are you being an advocate? These are two precise fields and very different in the implementation approach. Consistency. Policy takes time, and we must be patient and always re-strategise where necessary. We must be resilient and persistent — **Tikondwe Chimkwola**



Why engage the youth?

Young people deserve to be involved in policy-making. Youth engagement might come off as obvious, but it would still be beneficial to be precise about why the youth must be involved in policy work.

- We get better policy creation on a range of

topics.

- There is stronger implementation.
- It ensure representative public participation.
- It is our right as young people to be involved in shaping up policy which will affect us now, in the future, as well as families in time.

This process involves meaningfully involving young people in creating and monitoring policy.

When young people are involved, policy becomes stronger.

What is a Youth Leader's Role?

Youth leaders are invited to the table to offer a youth perspective to guide and strengthen policy. Young people are aware of the issues affecting them. They know what their peers are facing. They are the ones engaging fellow youth. The questions to the youth then lie –

- Do we know who to approach (stakeholders) in the advocacy and implementation for policy?
- Can you make commentary on policies

to represent the concerns of your fellow youth?

Policy Landscaping:

You want to know who is doing what, what the policy says, who is implementing it, the analyses that have been done, and identifying the gaps. As advocates – how often do you do your homework. Do you take the time to read new policies created around the issues you are passionate about?

At VDC level and local government, young people should be on the forefront and in huge numbers.

WHAT DO YOUTH LEADERS DO?

- Make presentations to decision makers
- Engage with and educate peers.
- Serve as a youth representative during a meeting or conference.
- Engage with diverse audiences to ensure youth voices are heard.

What are YOU supposed to do as a YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE?

As a representative, you have to be aware of the responsibility placed on your shoulders.

- Be aware of the fact that you are representing many people, and not just

yourself.

- When you share on your personal stories, make sure you highlight that this is your experience, and does not

apply to every youth.

Use Evidence for Impact

Youth efforts backed by evidence will be more effective.

Use of data adds depth and complexity to youth-led policy change efforts

- It gives you the confidence to speak up on issues in meetings.
- You can give the 'why's to situations
- Data helps you represent demographics that you may not particularly be a part of.

Data helps the youth be taken seriously by others.

Research assists youth leaders in overcoming the challenge of being asked to represent the youth.

Be aware that representation matters. Be as specific as possible in the picking of a relevant youth representative. Never go with a savior mentality and want to tell people what to do. Speak to the people and engage them in conversation. They know. If you can, engage other representatives from more specific demographics.

Health Policy: Decisions, plans and actions undertaken to achieve specific health goals within a society.

An explicit health policy can achieve several things: it defines a vision for the future, which in turn helps establish targets and points.

WAYS OF EXPRESSING POLICIES

- Policy documents
- Laws
- Contracts
- Partnerships
- Funding priorities

Law vs Policy

Another cause for debate and contributions during the morning

was differentiating a law from a policy..

Law, as some argued, is used in enforcement, while a policy is only a guideline. A policy can be more targeted. The policy has to fall in line with the law.

Who Are Policy Makers?

Anyone with authority to create or change a policy. The legitimate jurisdiction is what gives the authority to one to be a policymaker. The policies created have to be consistent with the constitution.

Why Create Policies?

- To give guidance to actions on certain issues.
- To ensure that things happen.
- To change what is currently happening
- To prioritize and allocate resources and issues

Note that one policy can lead to many policies.

Implementation :

Operational policies

These are rules, regulations, guidelines, administrative norms, contracts, benefits – all developed from bigger and wider policies. Policies can address issues or people. They can also have multi-sectoral implications.

Are non-decisions policy?

At times, government or organisations choose to not take action on a policy issue.

When the government ACTIVELY opts to not comment on a trending issues, that non-decision is a policy.

Flawed Freedom: Life After the Elections

by Martyn

Democracy, in the words of Winston Churchill, is “the worst form of government, except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time”. What does he mean? How does this apply to Malawi?

I do not contest the reality that democracy is a flawed system. We need look no further than the Cashgate, Maizegate and Tractorgate scandals (to name just a few) or the failure of the Electoral Reforms Bill, or most prominently perhaps, the election we've just had in order to display this.

Perspective is vital here. Malawi is a 25 year old democracy – rising out of the ashes of a 30-year tyrannical regime. To us democracy is a novel concept – one that the country voted for in 1993 in the hope of a new dawn. The day that followed this dawn has been darkened by corruption, misrule and bad governance. Does this mean we made a mistake in 1993, should we throw democracy out as a bad job and start again? Sometimes it seems that in 1993 our nation was sold a fairytale – and that the establishments of power have since crushed those dreams.

There is a difference from the promises of colonialism and of Banda however, we now have a voice that is protected by a constitution.

The constitution is the supreme law of the land and in it the most fundamental human rights and dignities are enshrined – as is our voice as a people in our democracy. So this time, we have a voice to use and institutions through which to exercise that voice. Without democracy the very concept of a free and versatile press is foreign, when democracy falls free press and free expression are the first things to disappear.

The most frequently posited alternatives to democracy leave us vulnerable to abuse of a far greater magnitude than the democratic system does. Despite the hope and belief that a 'benevolent autocrat' will use their power to help citizens, there is no fetter whatsoever on this power. This comes at the cost of freedoms that have been shown

throughout history to promote development and poverty relief more than any autocratic system. It is important to realise that absolute power cannot be retained without abuse of the rights of the poor.

Within the democratic system we have institutions within which we can work to rid ourselves of leaders who do not work for us, and to actively participate as leaders ourselves.

In a Technocracy there is an institutionalized elite which is given the power to legislate, govern and adjudicate based on their status as 'experts and technocrats'. The 'technocracy' alternative is referred to by economist William Easterly as 'the technocratic illusion'.

He explains that “The technocratic approach ignores the real cause of poverty – the unchecked power of the state against the poor... authoritarian development is a pragmatic tragedy. History and modern experience suggest that free individuals with political and economic rights make up a remarkably successful problem-solving system... the technical problems of the poor (and the lack of technical solutions) is a symptom of poverty, not a cause of poverty.”

What can we do as citizens and members of the public to secure our democracy? We must work to fix the flaws in our system as we identify them, it's not a matter of simply accepting that we have 'democracy' and that is enough. Clearly something is going wrong, and we can all play a role in fixing it.

Malawi is a representative democracy, every Malawian is represented in the National Assembly by a Member of Parliament for their constituency. Where we identify issues and flaws our first step is to contact our MP's and to urge them to fight for a change that works for the benefit of all of us, and then to hold them to account if they fail. Pragmatically this would mean increasing civic education and informing people of their rights and contact channels to their representatives. For instance, if there had been greater pressure on MP's from their constituents in a 'run-up to elections' year to pass the Electoral Reforms Bill - then maybe

we wouldn't be having this discussion at all. Representatives must understand that their power exists only as long as they represent the will of the people. This is the fundamental basis of democracy – 'just power' is given to the government 'by the consent of the governed', if you fail to represent the people's best interests as an MP then you can't expect to be re-elected.

There are many issues beyond fixing our electoral process.

These problems are not cause to throw out the freedom that was bought at such a cost to so many. We fix nothing by throwing democracy away in favour of more despotic options. We should instead work tirelessly to fix the flaws that exist in order to create a system that works for Malawians.

Malawi has been a democracy for 25 years. As we face issues within our system, we grow to better understand what causes them and the solutions to those problems (i.e. 2019 election teaches us we need reforms). Thus a problem has been identified, and the solution to that problem is available to us – demand that our MP's table and pass comprehensive electoral reforms legislation.

We must identify problems and then work to repair those problems and by doing this we will slowly work out the challenges in the system and adapt it to match our specific needs as a nation.

It is no surprise that we have problems, this should not cause us to despair but should rather inspire us to work harder to fix the system that has brought Malawians the fundamental human rights that were a pipe-dream under colonial occupation and Kamuzu's cabal – rights such as free expression, free press, free association and assembly.

“We must safeguard these rights and the basic human dignity they afford us instead of sacrificing them and depleting the hard-fought ground we stand upon.”



“As youth policy advocates, you have much to learn on the art and we will be sharing more on what would be beneficial for you to know in your implementation.”

Mandela Mwanza | Highly Underrated

3 random things people do not know about you?

"I would prefer it stay like that. There is a reason I want it to stay that way. I don't know myself so well anyway".

Happiness is....?

... Being at peace with myself, achieving all my goals.

A role you cherish in this life

Being the husband to the love of my life.

Favorite artist/creative in the world, and why.

Jay-Z. I love all the financial literacy he puts in his music. I think that is really smart. It's really helpful to society.

Favorite Malawian Artist

Lawi. I listen to him every Sunday instead of going to church. He knows how people like me – the black sheep of society, feel; and he speaks for us. His music is for the lost, not the found.



Of fears?

I am not scared of anything. Not even death man.

When/How/and Why did you start out on your creative career?

In 1998, with Dominant One, Basssik and Lazeee when we were fooling around with the MTV Music generating app on Playstation. In 1999/2000, we got a hold of the Fruity Loops Music programme and got more serious about the music.

Plans for 2019?

I'm releasing an album called "Funerals Are More Expensive – F.A.M.E"

Bucketlist. One thing you really want to do?

I just wanted to be Third Eye – so you can say I am living my dream. My life's a movie, G.

Mandela is a very private person. Asked to tell me 3 random things most people do not know about him; he responds by saying there is a reason it is unknown, and he would prefer it remain so. I met Mandela before I met "Third Eye" – the human behind the music, in 2015 when I was still in University at Chancellor College on Twitter. We started talking via social media, and we instantly clicked. He would travel with his friend Chiko from Lilongwe to Zomba and we would have chill hang-out sessions on the Zomba Plateau.



SOUL REBEL ENTERTAINMENT

or early 2000 when I first started Dominant One, Basssick and had been producing since 1998 on this MTV Music Generator on Playstation. We were fooling around, getting better and just happy to be producing. In 1999, we got a hold of the Fruity Loops Music programme,

He believed in my writing. That was what we most times discussed. I had a lot dreams, and he had a lot faith in them. Mandela Mwanza has been in the creative industry in Malawi for 2 decades now. He started officially producing music in 2000, and is currently is the CEO of Soul Rebel Entertainment.

"It must have been 1999, recording music. I was 16 then. Lazeee beats



and I got serious about music. We would take beats to the studio on floppy disks to record over."

Asked about what he thinks must change in the industry – he says that the industry already reached its prime.

"It's on the way down. As the numbers grow, the quality goes down. You won't see any new stars who you do not know already right now for a long time. That is a sign that the industry is on its way down."

Mandela deeply believes in monetising your art. His favourite artist in Jay Z, newly a billionaire (\$), who champions financial literacy through his music.

"Artists in Malawi need distribution channels that are currently inexistent. It is not up to them whether they monetise or not. They need a ready market that is ready to buy and consume this music – which is defined by economies putting luxury. That is dependent on how much disposable income Malawians have in their pockets.

I asked him if he believes the market with disposable income exists; and his response: "You tell me".

He says that he is not scared of anything.

"I don't think there is anything that I can go through that I have not survived already."

In his view, people are more scared of the unknown, and survival wipes out all fear. He feels he kinda knows everything.

Mandela is even more private about his personal life, but was able to open up a little about it.

Ntsha: "Sooo... Husband?"

Mandela: "Maybe."

Ntsha: "She is pretty though."

Mandela: "Thanks."

Ntsha: "Is she coming to Malawi with you?"

Mandela: "My private life is private, Ntsha."

I have had concerns about the creative industry (or lack there of) in Malawi having an effect of the mental health of artists in Malawi; and he shared his views on the same.

"Being a creative is usually a mental health escape route. I do not think anybody in the creative industry can complain about their creativity negatively affecting their mental health – because creativity is the medicine, the escape."

We have seen artists and creatives commit suicide – despite having creativity.

"It's because that gateway did not help. The creativity did not solve their mental health problems – and at the peak of their creative talent, they cannot picture another way out."

Most creatives invest half of their lives to their crafts. They live, breathe, and will most times risk everything for their art.

"They don't intend to find a new way of living their life".

We have had a rise of suicide cases related to mental health lately. There is a usual narrative paraded on social media painting suicide as an escape, and going further to say that suicidal people should think of the people around them as it does not stop, but only transfers the pain.

"It's more of defiance, than it is running away. That's all I can say."

Thinking about death must have got him thinking of the friends he's lost – because his last

remarks were "Rest in peace to Jaba (HHP), PRO, and Chris Kantai."

Avery's Musings

Do We Need A New Way Of Showing Citizen Dissatisfaction?: A Word On The June 20 Demos

by Nebert



Blantyre, as the Scenes became a little more chaotic.

So, June 20th came and went. What is true is that Jane Ansah is still heading the embattled Malawi Electoral Commission, and if rumour is anything to go by; her camp is visibly defiant and adamant that she won't resign and that she is sure she did a more than credible job handling the elections, maybe that is part of the "patting herself on the back" she talked about amidst the tension of the results. If there was one thing that was becoming disappointingly visible with every demonstration after the unfortunate events of July 20 2011 was that either people had lost interest in demonstrations, or they were afraid of state machinery. The streets weren't visibly patronized. But the June 20th call to action by the CSOs with the added voice of opposition political leaders changed the narrative. All 4 cities were thronged with visibly disenchanted citizens calling for action.

It wasn't really clear what people expected from the marches. But the petitions being handed called for a resignation of Dr. Jane Ansah from MEC, citing her purported incompetence in handling the May polls.

But now that she has probably offered a deaf ear to the calls, what next?

In these parts of the Sahara, it seems demon-

strations don't really do much, aside from giving non-state actors credibility, get the opposition a few brownie points and an air of importance and perhaps some vagabonds a rare day out. Hardly do we ever see petitions responded to, let alone with positive action.

The demands simply filter into oblivion and become subject of newspaper articles. Chances are, the addressees hardly take a peep at what's in those petitions. They probably just listen to a few news articles and let their assistants handle the rest.

I'm not in anyway suggesting that we should not demonstrate; it is our right. But the question remains, should we do more? Or should we start thinking of alternatives if we are to be successful in holding government accountable? Because at the rate we are going, it is all pointless and the powers that be do not even feel an ounce of pressure due to the demonstrations.

If your methods are proving to be toothless and unsuccessful overtime, it is always time to rethink. At the point we are at, it is clear that peaceful dialogue with government never works; they are an arrogant bunch with too much riding on the cusp of power to be unsettled by dialogue and petitions and thousands of people walking the streets and chanting vulgar songs about them. From this, I feel

the best solution is all out civil disobedience.

The only way of getting their attention is making sure you paralyse the whole machinery that sustains them in government. Starting with a complete takeover of the Government offices at Capitol Hill and other key administrative structures like airports.

A complete shutdown of government and business will likely make them notice the anger that people have and at that point they may be willing to come to the table with their hearing aids on, because as it is, we are always talking to deliberately deaf people. On a side note, I have seen a lot of people mocking UTM leader Dr. Chilima for his calls to Dr. Ansah to resign. Many people are saying he did not heed the "public" calls for resignation when he was State VP after his relationship with DPP went south. To all those on this bandwagon, call them victims of lazy thinking. The circumstances are totally different and in my earnest opinion, Dr. Chilima had no reason to resign at that particular point. In the current scenario, Jane Ansah is said to have been complicit to a fraudulent ring that aimed at [successfully] disenfranchising patriotic Malawians. If she was not complicit, then there is an air of incompetence to her that perhaps should be enough for her to resign.

Of Tyrannical Democratic Processes | #MalawiElections2019

Avery's Musings

In the Face of Tyrannical Democratic Processes, the Judiciary Remains the Only Custodian of Democracy

Someone once said Presidents are not elected in courtrooms. Even though that is true, there are certain sets of circumstances that require the law to intervene, and no one knows to apply the law more than our learned justices in the courts.

Malawi currently finds itself at a crossroads. The election that declared APM winner is widely disputed by his two main challengers. They feel at the very least, the election was marred with so many irregularities and MEC was wrong to declare a winner from what they term a "sham" election. On the other hand there are widespread allegations of rigging by the person declared winner. The issue is now in the hands of 5 learned Justices of the High Court who have panelled as a Constitutional Court. There are so many worries as to the outcome of the case. Most commentators feel that if the outcome of the case is anything other than nullifying the results, then it conforms what they already know, that the judiciary is in the pockets of the [illegitimate] government. That is where I begin to disagree. First of all let me say this, I have the utmost confidence in the Judiciary, let alone the five justices that have been panelled to hear this case. I will accept any outcome they come to and give them my utmost support. My reasoning here is that in our democracy, of the three organs, it is the unelected organ (judiciary) which has even the smallest of interests to make it work. The main criticism of the role of the Judiciary in a democracy is that usually through Judicial Reviews it is allowed to question and reverse decisions of elected officials.

This is what is called the Democratic Deficit mandate; where an elected President can make a decision to affect the masses (that elected him), and the Judiciary has been given a mandate to question that. Further to this is the competence deficit where the Judiciary can also reverse decisions of technocrats who are otherwise much more competent in the specific field.

Here is the problem, the Executive, which is headed by a popularly elected President, seems to always be in a rush to consolidate power for itself. That in itself squeezes out democracy. At every turn and point, the Executive will try

as much as it could to make sure it is in good state for the next election as such there are always subtle alterations to weaken democratic institutions and other independent actors. The Legislature, which is made up of all elected officials, is no different in that regard. They are always looking for a quick payday, whether by hook or by crook. These Parliamentarians can thus not be trusted to safeguard our democracy in the face of the threat that is provided by the Executive. In truth the Members of the Legislature are very opportunistic and are always known to shoot themselves in the foot as long as it guarantees them a short-term windfall. Most of them also do not know their job descriptions, so there is that to consider.

This leaves us with the Judiciary as the only custodian of the little man and other independent actors. From the litany of cases that the Judiciary has handled alleging malpractice on the part of the State Actors, its completely off mark to claim that the Judiciary is in the pocket of government.

It has its own flaws, more importantly individual flaws and there are traces of corruption

amongst some officials, but despite these considerable flaws and warranted criticism, the Judiciary remains the only sane arm of our government system and the only one trying to make democracy work. If the Judiciary were as rotten as people would make you believe, our governance would have broken down ages ago. Back to the Constitutional Cause before our courts, I will not be overly disappointed with whatever outcome. I more than most would of course want the elections to be nullified, but that won't mean a contrary outcome will have me questioning their integrity because I believe there are a lot of factors that inform judicial decisions, evidence more than most. Even though there will be justifiable anger and a perusal of the Justices' reasoning, I will not be buying into the histrionics that have already started to make rounds of egregious sums of money exchanging hands and threats. Those are farfetched stories and by product of rumour mongering in Post-truth reality Malawi.

I will end by saying, "The law has a binary code – truth and justice – any application of the law that defeats the search for truth and justice is a typical perversion of the due process of the law."



India and her fading tribal communities

by Sekulu

Sarah Thomas is an Indian Film Director and Founder of STOM Productions, a leading ad film production house. She was researching on caste system in India for a project she wanted to do. Through this process, she stumbled upon a caste called Halakki Vokkaliga in Karnataka. On a road trip from Bangalore to Goa, she saw a group of women clad in half saris whose backs were bare walking through paddy fields. Out of curiosity, she enquires and finds out that they identify as a tribal community called Halakki Vokkaligas. A community she initially understood it to be caste. This was no ordinary tribe. Wikipedia defines it as a sub-caste while certain media spaces claim it to be 'an isolated group and not welcoming to outsiders.' Sarah is determined to document the truth of this tribe and present the story through her film. The documentation further projects the reality of government policies towards the marginalized, and the lie of mainstream media. In addition, how ignorance is thinning the status of India as a land of diversity. In the Northern district of Karnataka India, Halakki community lives in four areas. Pre-

dominantly in Karwar, Ankola, Kumta, and Honwara Taluks. The tribe popularly known as the singing tribe has more than 5000 folk songs passed down through oral traditions for generations. Entangled under the realms of these diverse songs, there is a different set of song for marriage, one while pounding wheat, while drawing water, and so forth. Women wear large beaded neckpieces of bright colors and cotton saris tied around their bodies. All these however are all in the past. The songs from echoes of mass have turned to whispers of a few old women struggling to water their culture that nobody else wants to grow. Along with the fading of their songs, fades their culture and all things pertaining to it. However apart from the issue of preserving their culture, the main threat they face is poverty and their fight for survival. The long thread of issues began from being displaced by the government from the forests they inhabited. The government justifies this step by pressing the need for expanding mainstream development in the area. The community struggles in fitting into a new environment and finding employment. The new generation has begun to dis-

regard their cultural identity in their attempts of being part of modern cities and modern culture.

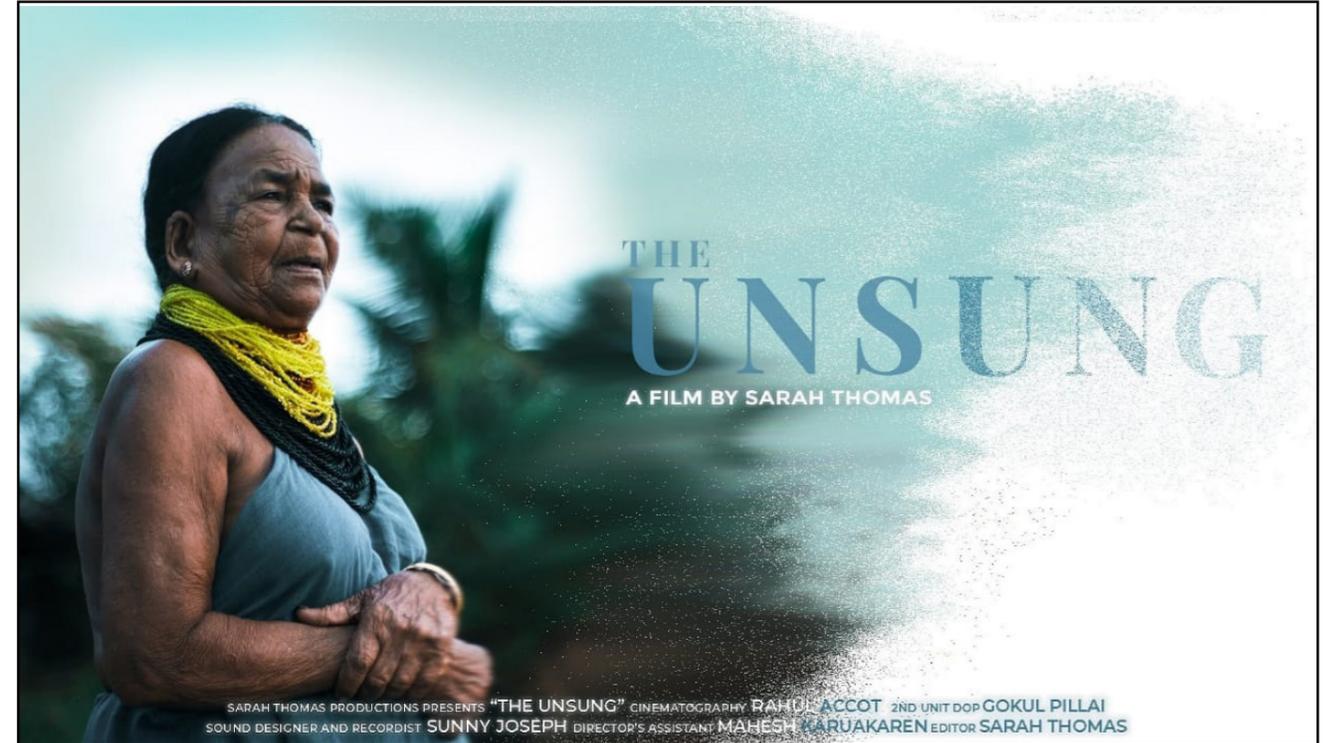
Today, the Halakki Vokkaliga community continues their 40 year-long struggle to be included in the Scheduled Tribe list instead of Other Backward Caste list. Sarah states that the legal criteria to be included in the list is flawed, ambiguous and does not clearly state the factors that determine a group as a tribe. The criteria include indications of primitive traits, having a visible distinctive culture, being geographically isolated, displaying shyness of contact with the community at large, and backwardness (via Press Release based on the information given by the Minister of State for Tribal Affairs Shri Sudarshan Bhagat in a written reply to a question in Rajya Sabha on 28.12.2017).

If a community fails to meet these subjective demands, they are denied educational, work and benefit opportunities that help marginalized Scheduled Tribes of India to better their quality of life and also survive their cultural identity. A community that once thrived on sustainability, lives in the phase of danger today. There has been an increasing number of suicides among the Halakki youth and a low life expectancy of men (approx. 40 years). The documentary film by Sarah Thomas, The Unsung projects all these realities and more into the screen.

Sarah as a feminist filmmaker explains, "At a time where the dominant narrative propagated by political institutions through mainstream media speak of a dying culture that needs to be saved by fanaticism and the radicalization of religion, it is important for realities like these to take the forefront. These are real cultures perishing silently on the fringes of society. While we collectively look the other side and fight over non-existent issues, whole cultures and identities are ceasing to exist."

An article on National Geographic mentions 'comprising less than 5% of world's population, indigenous people protect 80% of global biodiversity.' Halakki was a very sustainable tribe that survived on things most of which were produced by nature including medicine. Tribal communities all over face similar danger. At the face of climate urgency when such communities are at stake, the narrative becomes a global issue.

Sarah mentions that India's political status is currently blooming by the propagation that Hinduism is fading. If we are to count



The movie was selected for the Kerala State Organised Award, The International Documentary and Short Film Festival, 2019 and is currently running in other festivals. The team is holding screenings across Bangalore city. Continue to follow By Ntha Media for further information on the film.

the less documented statistics of what really is fading, we might find something else.

An excerpt from the team-

"The Unsung is a film that seeks to explore the identity crisis that tribes face in today's world, grappling against the tides of modernization and westernization. The journey to making the film has been an eye-opening one. Breaking several stereotypes that we as city dwellers have about tribals and their lives. Finding the tribes, growing a relationship with them and shooting the film was a long and challenging process, but in the end it left us with so much learning that no amount of research can provide. The entire journey took a year for us. The film touches on the struggles of the tribe, the clash between modernization and their culture, the fight to keep their forests alive and the painstakingly long battle to be included in the Scheduled Tribe list in India.

The Halakki Vokkaliga's story is a reflection of several hundred other tribes going through drastic changes in lifestyle, losing bits of their identity amidst the growth and development in the country. Their day to day battles on several fronts go unheard, unnoticed. It is a record of not just a fading tribe but the fading diversity of India, as the country loses forgotten tribes living on the fringes of society."

