Foreword

Jannie Malan

To introduce an issue containing an article devoted to a leadership theme and four articles with between-the-lines leadership issues, some editorial thoughts on leadership seem to be appropriate. In the article discussing 'Great Heart Leadership', 'emotional and spiritual/normative leadership' is emphasised, and a case study of leadership in a particular community is given. These aspects may prompt us to engage in some thinking about *ethical* leadership and *ethnical* leadership. First, of course, we may easily agree that ethical values and principles as well as ethnical ties and loyalties do influence conflict and conflict resolution.

Ethics obviously plays a key role in initiating and in resolving conflict. It is clear, after all, that tensions and conflicts arise when one party regards as wrong what the other party regards as right. In dealing with conflict, therefore, perspectives and convictions about 'right' and 'wrong' inevitably play decisive roles. Such roles, however, are usually intriguingly complex and complicated. For instance, it sounds so simple and common-sensical to take the guideline of 'what is right, not who is right'. But what *is* right when there happen to be deeply rooted socio-economic, politico-cultural and/or religio-spiritual differences? In such a situation of cross-cultural disagreements and apparent incompatibilities, there is another simple, and at the same time traditionally African, guideline: 'Talk it out'. But what if (some of) the leaders are ethical in their talking but unethical in their being? If they ostentatiously pay lip-service to values and principles, but covertly pursue the interests of their own group – and themselves?

Jannie Malan

Ethnics often seems to be playing a definite role in conflict and in dealing with conflict. It may do so in a merely unconscious or in an intentionally deliberate way. In the 'Great Heart Leadership' article, the case study of a particular group brings in an ethnic aspect. Reference is made to intra-ethnic tensions between clans, as well as to tensions between clan members and leaders they suspect of self-interest. In this case study, however, there was no inter-ethnic tension created or exacerbated by rival politicians inciting their own ethnic groups to vote them into powerful positions. Nevertheless, the research project concerned was conducted in an ethnic setting, and note was taken of inter-ethnic clashes and conflicts of the past, including one group's involvement in a military battalion.

Secondly, we may be inclined to ask somewhat pessimistically, 'So what? Can anything be done to make leaders more ethical and less ethnical?' On account of human history, and the daily news, we may tend to think that political leaders who take ethical guidelines seriously are rare exceptions, and that those who promote their own interests by favouring their own ethnic group seem to be the vast majority. Such impressions are probably correlative with widespread and persistent realities in the domain of politics. And these phenomena seem to be understandable in light of the temptations of power which political leaders constantly have to deal with. In the conclusion to the article on the role of civil society in resolving the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), we find a telling example of the lure of ethno-political power: 'many of their [the civil society's] leaders either were directly recruited by existing political parties and platforms or simply decided to establish their own political organisations and join active politics'.

Thirdly, however, as people committed to live up to our calling as conflict resolvers, we may consider the question of whether there is a possibility, after all, of *ethic ethnic* leadership. Ethnic loyalties seem to be deeply rooted (by nature and/or nurture?) in all of us, leaders and followers. But shouldn't ethnic loyalties be honestly investigated to distinguish between the self-groupish and the coexistential ones? That is exactly what some of us white South Africans did when the untenability of the fixation

on ethnic separatedness (apartheid) dawned upon us. Our criticism of the established religio-political policy was of course firmly opposed and rejected, but eventually the process of rooting out the unjust system did get underway. As this lengthy process is continuing, we experience how ethnic diversity can be *understood* and how inter-ethnic coexistence can be *lived*. It is not impossible to transform a we-they antagonism into a we-they-*and all of us* friendliness. This is where ethic ethnic leaders, or Great Heart leaders, can model and promote inter-human coexistence – with realism about ethnic allegiance and enthusiasm about cross-ethnic relationships.

Fourthly, we can share an ACCORD research finding about unrelenting leaders of inter-ethnic and inter-political party violence who made an about-turn and began to cooperate towards coexisting with former enemies. What made this finding even more striking, was the fact that the change was not brought about by the intervention of conflict resolvers. It was the leaders themselves who came to the point of realising that there had been enough violence and killing, and that talks had to take place. Then, when the leaders took the lead, their followers followed. 'In all the consultations [at the three research sites] the value of leadership was acknowledged and praised' (ACCORD 2008:57).[1] But, in the same consultations, '[t]he leaders reciprocated the praise they received, and appreciated the wide-spreading and deep-reaching influence of their followers' (Malan 2011:50).[2]

Getting back to the articles in this issue, we should obviously remember that each of them communicates a particular message regarding a particular real-life situation, and we should indeed learn from them whatever is relevant in our own situations. At the same time, however, we may attempt a bit of imaginative thinking into the attitudes and actions of the leaders concerned. In Kenya, leaders were involved in the elections, the hostilities about the results, the transitional justice mechanisms and the

1   ACCORD 2008. *Views and visions of coexistence in South Africa*. Mount Edgecombe, ACCORD.

2   Malan, Jannie 2001. *Being similar, different, and coexistent*. Occasional Paper Series: Issue 3, 2011. Umhlanga Rocks, ACCORD.

institutions of governance. In Nigeria, leaders were involved in amnesty and reintegration programmes and in religious and ethnic conflicts as well as in attempts to resolve them. And in the DRC, leaders of various constituencies took part in the conflict-resolving talks, but as said above, some shifted their loyalties. Our exploring of leadership can obviously be undertaken from various starting points, move along various routes, and arrive at various conclusions. In many, if not most, cases, however, it may be very worthwhile to include a pertinent and penetrating focus on the ethical and ethnical aspects of leadership. There *are* ethical qualities that are not just parochial, but are universally acknowledged, and may justifiably be expected to be upheld by leaders. And in the ethnical field, there *is* the possibility of integrating a responsible intra-ethnic commitment with a remarkable inter-ethnic outreach. A leader with this expertise may inspire her/his followers to become liberated from captivity in own-groupishness and transcend into inclusive coexistence with other groups.

Finally, what do we do when we think along these lines? Do we organise sermonising campaigns for leaders? Or do we just share such perspectives and insights where they may be appropriate? Or do we in any case check our own styles as leaders or followers, and frankly assess our own ethical end ethnical commitments?