

# Let us talk about explaining politics to our children properly



Politics, at its root, is a transaction of ideas. When it becomes a transaction of violence, you have left the realm. **Sylvia Mwesigye**

We are entering the core of the election season, that time when the world appears to fray at the edges, consumed by its own political fervour. In the clamour of campaigns and the static of ceaseless debate, it is easy to forget the silent observers among us; the children.

I was reminded of this while scrolling through an application on my phone. The application is called Ground News. Its function is aggregation and disclosure; it gathers reports of an event and tells you, coldly, the bias of the source.

It shows you what the left saw, what the right saw, what the center failed to notice. I use it to maintain a kind of equilibrium, to resist the vortex of a single narrative.

The realisation arrived without sentiment; this is our assignment now. Our children are by design, loyal. They possess a terrifying faith in the narratives presented to them.

Our role, then, is not to provide an answer, but to become the function of the application. We must be the aggregator. The revealer of spectrums.

The quiet, insistent voice that says; look at how the story changes depending on who is telling it.

**Here is how one might proceed.**

**Begin with the specific, brutal fact**

Consider a hypothetical. You run for office. You lose. The reason you lose is not conspiracy, not bad luck, but a failure of your ideas to compel. A failure of your strategy to connect. Would you tell the child this? Would you look at them and say, I was not the best choice? It is a difficult thing.

One wants to offer conspiracies; it is cleaner. But the difficult thing is the truth. It teaches two things; that trust resides in the unflinching fact, and that loss is not always an injustice. Explain to them that in politics, a side loses because its vision fails to become a shared reality.

**Give them comparisons**

As parents, our natural instinct is to say; this is good, that is bad. Resist the instinct. Instead, say;

Say it plainly; no government, present or wished-for, will save you. **PHOTO/FILE**



**Irreversible.**

Certain structures; trust, civil peace, the fragile consensus of a society, are not like toys. They do not snap back together. To say this is not to traffic in fear. It is to traffic in cause, and effect.

let us examine the claims without bias. Here is what this person says they will build.

Now, here is what another person says will happen if they build it. Who is right? Who is wrong? This will help us avoid raising children who are easily swayed by the wind. We will nurture people with the ability to critically analyse issues for themselves and decide to do what is right.

**Permit the passion, but insist on common sense**

Children are drawn to the new, the vivid, the sound of something shattering. This is a necessary force. It must also be tempered by the laws of consequence. Tell them; wanting change is a moral energy.

But change is not annihilation. You can remodel a house. If you burn it down for the spectacle of the flame, you will be left with the ash, and the cold, and the permanent, weary labour of rebuilding what you did not know how to value until it was gone. Certain structures; trust, civil peace, the fragile consensus of a society, are not

like toys. They do not snap back together. To say this is not to traffic in fear. It is to traffic in cause, and effect.

## Disabuse them of the savior narrative

This is perhaps the central lesson. Say it plainly; no government, present or wished-for, will save you. Your life will be constructed from your own choices; the diligence you apply, the character you cultivate, the respect you accord to the person beside you. Think less about what the politician in the distant building promises to give you. Think more about what you can build, regardless of who is in the building.

## Define the non-negotiable boundary

Teach them that they may disagree to the point of exhaustion. But they must may never hate. They must never reduce the other to something less than human. Politics, at its root, is a transaction of ideas.

When it becomes a transaction of violence, you have left the realm of politics altogether. Warn them, explicitly, against the intoxication of the front line. Their future cannot be claimed from a stretcher. Their life is not a prop in someone else's drama.

## Reveal the game

Pull back the curtain, as you would for any complex illusion. Politics is a grand and intricate game. You must pull back the curtain to see it for what it is: a staged arena of strategies, not a natural law. It has its unwritten rules, its practiced moves, its careful gambits. There are masters who see the whole shifting board, and there are pawns who believe the space they occupy is the entire world.

One plays with immense seriousness, for the stakes are real, power, policy, the direction of a society. The objective is to win, but a true player understands that the most essential rule is knowing how to lose. Explain to them that to concede with grace is not weakness; it is the ultimate affirmation of the game itself, an acknowledgment that the structure is more important than any single player's triumph. Play it fiercely, but remember, it is a contest of wills and ideas, never a holy war. The game is a reason to debate, to struggle, to persuade. It is never, itself, a reason to die.