



Login

Username:

Password:

Submit

Not registered? Click
here

Forgot your password?

GO

Comment

True friends know each other's crooked ways



By CHARLES ONYANGO-OBBO (email the author)

Your Email

Message

Posted Monday, March 22 2010 at 00:00

Two Kenyan students at Makerere University were shot dead by a security guard at their hostel in Kampala last Monday.

As was to be expected, on Tuesday the students staged protests at the killings.

The killings happened after rival student camps backing two candidates vying for the presidency of the university guild, clashed at the hostel.

The deaths are tragic, and nothing can be said to the families of the victims that will mollify them, but there are also some “good” things highlighted by the deaths.

For starters, the simple fact that there are Kenyans in the race for the student leadership is a strong indicator of the pace of East African integration.

The killings also demonstrated something more complex.

While East Africans want to enjoy the pleasures of regional integration, they are not willing to suffer its pains.

This is not the first time Kenyan students have been killed in Uganda.

But it always makes big news in the Kenyan media.

During the 2008 post-election violence in Kenya, several Ugandan trucks were seized and burnt by protestors, and some drivers killed.

One was locked in a house, which was then torched.

Reading accounts in the Uganda press, you would have thought all the post-election violence was aimed at killing Ugandan truck drivers and burning their vehicles.

The same thing happens in Tanzania when Tanzanians are arrested and deported from Kenya.

And, of course, there are always those Kenyan fishermen being arrested for “stealing” fish from the Tanzanian side of Lake Victoria.

Yet, it could be argued that if an EAC country gives other East Africans jobs, lets them study in its country, or marry local men and women, it should be allowed to do to them the same things it does to its own citizens — arrest them, shoot them, and cheat them.

The reason why these arrests, killings, and transgressions are felt so deeply is that East Africans only do business together.

Otherwise, they don't play enough, or at all, with each other.

There is therefore no feel-good factor that enables these injuries to be put in a brotherly and sisterly context.

That was not the case with EAC 1, the one that died and was buried in 1977.

The big thing those days used to be the Gossage Cup, which was contested between Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika (then) and Zanzibar.

It was sponsored by soap manufacturer William Gossage, hence the name.

Played between 1926 and 1966 (my uncle was a goalkeeper for Uganda in its later years), it was an incredible tournament, and some of the accounts I found on the Internet make for some truly hilarious reading.

In the 1951 final between Kenya and Tanzania, which Tanzania won 1-2, Kenya's striker Omari Okumu claimed that the ball turned into a snake every time he made to kick it, and he got scared. In Kenya, there was general agreement that Tanzania had won through witchcraft.

Suffice it to say Uganda ruled the Gossage, winning 22 times.

Kenya took the title 12 times, and Tanganyika took it four times.

But Kenya and Uganda squabbled with and cheated each other so many times during the Gossage, I think I finally figured why there is comparatively less hostility between some establishment groups in Kenya and Uganda, than between Tanzania and Kenya.

There were so many dirty tricks between Kenya and Uganda in the early years, it seems we eventually became immunised against each other's crooked ways.

That is what the modern EAC needs.

Charles Onyango-Obbo is Nation Media Group's executive editor for Africa & Digital Media. E-mail: cobbo@nation.co.ke.

[Terms](#)[Privacy Policy](#)[Mobile](#)[Newsfeeds](#)[Help](#)[Contact us](#)[About us](#) [RSS](#)
