

Local

We can keep up with Kanye



By Nejouad Al-Yagout

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Kanye West's comments are inflammatory, to say the least, but as an Arab, I want to ask Americans: Who are you? And what have you done to America?

It is the Americans who have shown us that freedom of speech and press is healthy, but you seem to be showing us that people should not voice their opinions lately because of the number of people getting offended. Is this a new phenomenon or is this only more pronounced because social media has highlighted an issue that managed to disguise itself for decades? We expect to see people get sensitive in this part of the world, a region steeped in dogma and conservatism, but it is strange, if not disconcerting, to see such a clampdown on freedom of opinion in the land of the free, home of the brave. Whatever Kanye's intentions were - whether to garner attention for his upcoming five albums or to highlight his troubles with opioids - is not for us to judge. Everywhere we go, thanks to social media, we have mobs of people, trolls, and analysts ever-ready to fulfill the role of a jury. But again, it is not for us to judge.

We all know slavery was and is and will always be wrong and most certainly was not a choice in the literal sense. Why would we argue about something we know is true? Why would we defend a statement that makes no sense? And when other celebrities say that his words are dangerous because of his influence, one might ask: Dangerous to who? Nobody in their right mind will be influenced by a statement that cannot be backed by history. Were you, who is reading this, influenced? Did it make you have less compassion for slaves? And if he influenced you, it says more about your mind than it does about Kanye.

And if we look beyond the literal diction of the statement, we can understand that as a black man, Kanye is inviting his fellow black Americans to transcend victim mentality. He thinks enough centuries have been spent living in the shadows of whites, and it is time to let go of the slave narrative in an ever-changing world. Perhaps what Kanye is reminding all of us is that holding on to the past is dangerous. There is a point where we have to catch up with reality and live in the now.

We see it here, in this region. Many people glamorize history at the expense of the present and the future, and this is causing turmoil, because we are trying to evolve, but are kept in our shackles. Perhaps Kanye wants everyone who was oppressed in the past to break free from what he sees as a trap. The present rewards people who let go. The universe rewards people who let go.

And once again, who has he influenced? Many racists will applaud his comments because it alleviates their own guilt. But we are not here to police everything that comes out of someone's mouth. Twitter has become a battlefield, a platform for fragile egos ready for any opportunity to ride on the coat-tails of celebrities. When you retaliate, whether or not you are a celebrity yourself, you are rewarded with recognition and more followers. In short: trending is good for business.

And in case none of the above arguments are convincing, let us remember that the statement regarding slavery was uttered by a man who has admitted he suffers from mental issues. Debating him, as we have seen, will not change his stance. We should feel sorry for him for wanting attention at the expense of offending others. And if we think that his words have repercussions, it is time to teach our children that sticks and stones may break our bones and words will never harm us and really, really mean it.

What are we teaching future generations? To take to Twitter each time our egos are bruised? To fight back any time we hear anything deemed offensive? What happened to good old-fashioned discussion? What happened to compassion and communication? Do we really think a black man in America is against his own race? Do we think he is denying what happened? It is taking too long to mature, to evolve from sensitivity.

As an Arab woman, this is easy for me to understand. We have been marginalized for cons. forced into marriages, subjugated. But if you come to the Arab world now, you will see promising signs of equality. In many professional fields, women are holding the fort. We have female ambassadors, ministers, Members of Parliament, women activists, artists, writers. And we have mothers who choose not to work, who raise our children. How much strength is in that as well? A twenty-four hour job.

We know we are not victims. We are looking toward the future. We are dissolving the patriarchy by immersing ourselves in our passion and reminding our

brothers that anything they can do, we can do. We are fighting for our rights vigorously without being held by the past. If I heard an Arab woman say that women subjugation is a choice, I would not get offended: I would know she is asking us to stop believing we are below men and to step up our game. I would know she is telling us to stop caving into a feminine narrative and be ourselves. I would know that - as an Arab woman - she belongs to the same minority as me, and is asking us to remember, regardless of all our strides, that the status quo is not serving us. And sometimes it takes an extreme slap on the face to galvanize us. If we want the patriarchy to dissolve, we need to reclaim our power.

Oh, and change does not happen when we see ourselves as victims. By knowing my strength as a woman, I can manifest this as reality. But, if I insisted on being a victim, like some of our ancestors, then I could never change and show my power to the world. The hero or heroine is not someone with power, but someone whose power was taken away and reclaimed stronger than ever before.

All the movers and shakers in our world taught or are teaching us to get up, stand up from victimhood and make a difference - from Paval Jangid and Rosa Parks to Nelson Mandela and Malala Yousefzai. These icons knew they were forced into victim mode, but the divine spark within them forced themselves out of it. They know the world will always find ways to offend us, but they don't get offended: they are too busy transforming our world.

In the meantime, though the world is tired of Kanye's rants, it is more tiring to read the responses and the comments and the hashtags, the movements to stop playing his music and the petitions against him. Punishing a man who claims to be mentally ill is brutal. He was hospitalized. Where is our sympathy? Kanye needs compassion and understanding. We are not helping by throwing stones at him.

What warrants attention is when someone kills or suppresses another human being because of gender, race or religion; or when we praise a soldier for fulfilling the duty of his or her country; when an adult molests a child; when children are sold into sex, when women are raped, when drugs are sold, when diseases become widespread. These are the matters we should focus on eradicating on our planet.

But instead, we spend time analyzing what celebrities, who are not monolithic, are saying. Celebrities are entertainment. They are not preachers nor do we have to follow them. If something insults us, there is a choice to silently unfollow without making a scene. It is different when someone actually does something. Then we have to speak out to protect each other. But can we let thoughts be thoughts and words be words? Words are only dangerous when they spur people to action. We know Kanye's words will not spur people to take slaves. Why can't we see that? What should concern us is action, such as when a racist person galvanizes members of his own race to shun others, or when walls are built to divide countries, or when a leader sends troops to invade a country because of resources, or when members of a religion or certain countries are denied visas, something that does not only happen in America, but everywhere, including - if not especially - in our region, lest we forget.

What happened to free speech? Yes, there are bigots out there. Yes, there are people who do not share our views. Yes, people will say insane things that are insensitive, but it has reached a point where people are so tired of censorship and suppression that people are rebelling by putting their feet (yes, not just one foot) in their mouths.

It is not our business how things evolve. We are not here to love or embrace everyone. Tolerance and coexistence entail respecting the rights of others even if we do not like them. It is very simple. Kanye did not tell people that slavery was good or that we should have slaves. Had he called people into taking slaves, the outrage would be justified. How much longer will we allow our fragile egos to take a beating each time someone insults our labels?

We are sending the message that we believe in freedom of speech as long as it reflects what we are thinking. When we are so attached to our labels, skin colors and belief systems, anything said to us can shatter our core. When we honor a sacred relationship with the unifying thread and know we are beyond physical matter, we can, like heroes and heroines in our past, present, and future - focus on changing ourselves and the world for the better.

Ahmadi has highest Kuwaiti population

Farwaniya most expat populated governorate

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Recent Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) statistics revealed that Ahmadi governorate has a majority of Kuwaiti residents, while Farwaniya has a majority of non-Kuwaiti residents. According to statistics, Ahmadi's total Kuwaiti population is 290,000, compared to 942,000 non-Kuwaitis residing in Farwaniya. Statistics also showed that Farwaniya is the most densely-populated governorate with 1,175,000 residents, while Mubarak Al-Kabeer is the least populated with a total of 262,000 residents.

Statistics also showed that the Capital governorate has a total population of 573,000 (260,000 Kuwaitis and 313,000 non-Kuwaitis), while the total population of Hawally is 947,000 (233,000 Kuwaitis and 713,000 non-Kuwaitis), the total population of Ahmadi is 985,000 (290,000 Kuwaitis and 694,000 non-Kuwaitis) and the total population in Jahra is 555,000 (193,000 Kuwaitis and 361,000 non-Kuwaitis).

In addition, statistics showed that Saad Al-Abdullah is the area most densely populated by Kuwaitis, with 63,000 residents, followed by Sabah Al-Salem with 53,000 residents and Sabahiya with 37,000, followed by Rumaithiya, Jaber Al-Ali, Ardiya and Abdullah Al-Mubarak with 35,000 residents each.

Schools warned

Education Ministry's assistant undersecretary for private education affairs Abdul Mohsen Al-Howailah warned all private schools against barring students from sitting for the final exams because of not paying tuition fees. Howailah promised to take serious measures against schools that violate such regulations, as well as against those collecting extra unauthorized fees.

Oil sector

Official oil sources said a total of 2,553 employees have been appointed in the oil sector over the past two years, including 2,004 citizens, in addition to 694 noncitizens appointed through contractors. "Citizens make up 26 percent of contractors' staff," the sources said, noting that starting from this fiscal year, this percentage was raised to 30 percent in all new contracts.

The sources expected the total number of employees working in the oil sector to reach 26,000 by 2021. They added that as part of the policy of replacing expatriate employees with citizens, oil sector companies have classified their staff into three categories - easily replaceable, gradually replaceable and hard to replace. The sources added that the policy will be applicable to the first two categories in the short term, and there are long term plans to replace the third cate-

gory by 15 percent annually.

Labor allowance

Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and Minister of State for Economic Affairs Hind Al-Sabeeh announced that the Manpower and Government Restructuring Program (MGRP) and the Civil Service Commission (CSC) have agreed to pay the national labor support allowance by the 25th of every month. Sabeeh also noted that CSC had been contacted on March 11 to arrange for paying the allowance to citizens working in non-governmental bodies. Moreover, Sabeeh stressed that transferring MGRP to the Public Authority for Manpower is part of measures to achieve economic and financial reform through merging or scrapping some authorities to cut expenses. She added that this merger was done on April 1, 2018 with the advent of new fiscal year 2017-2018.

Separate authority

The Interior Ministry yesterday rejected a proposal by the parliamentary interior and defense committee to establish a separate authority for criminal evidence and forensic medicine. In its rejection, the Interior Ministry explained that article 39 of law 17/1960 states that the police is the administrative body authorized to maintain order and prevent crimes and conduct investigations needed to identify culprits.

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