

**Text 1****When Did Civility Become a Dirty Word?**

By Frances Mensah Williams

The blogosphere can be horrible. The virtual world seems to have been hijacked by people who hide behind nicknames and initials to unleash vitriol, hate and – what probably upsets me just as much – pretty awful spelling and grammar onto the world. People who are more than ready to tell you what they think and yet not so quick to confess who they are. Sometimes, the best thing about computers is the delete button. When did it become impossible to argue a point or disagree with an opinion without being, well, disagreeable? When did it become okay to savage someone along with their opinion?

The explosion of reality television shows that invite us to witness public humiliation, heap abuse on those we despise (although, of course, we've never met them) and vote out those we deem not good enough, is uncomfortably close to the gladiator sports that once saw Christians thrown to the lions in front of bloodthirsty crowds.

Things are not much better when you look at what is happening in politics the world over. Simply having a different political opinion seems to be reason enough for some to demonise those on the other side of the political spectrum. Providing a country with wise and compassionate leadership seems to take a back seat to demonstrating how intellectually superior one party's position is vis a vis the others. Reports of stormed parliaments and brawling MPs scarcely seem to raise eyebrows in our morally anaesthetised times.

While some of our leaders have probably earned at least a part of the **opprobrium**\* heaped upon them on the airwaves and over the internet, we would do well to remember that trashing an institution sets up a dangerous precedent; by the time 'our' man or woman is in charge, the basis upon which we would expect others to respect their position will have been eroded or irreparably damaged.

And what in the world are we teaching our children? As experts in civility point out, it is difficult for society to expect or demand that teenagers and children stop bullying and tormenting one another, given the example they have of the behaviour of adults and political leaders.

Let's put some balance back into our discourse, both online and offline. Any individual that speaks or writes is by necessity doing it from a limited perspective, i.e. their own. It would be the height of arrogance or blindness to assume that everyone feels the same way and comments are invited so that others can share their views, from their equally limited perspectives. People are entitled to their opinions without being sneered at, insulted or derided.

Just because the technology exists to enable us to speak to thousands of people, it shouldn't require us to 'say' online that which we wouldn't say when facing someone. Hiding behind the keyboard doesn't advance our goals or our society. If the measure of our society is the measure of our civility, you have to wonder whether technology is really serving us well.

"Civility is not a sign of weakness," as the late US President John F. Kennedy once said. Civility means treating others respectfully, no matter what we think of them or what we feel they deserve. It's time to check ourselves and put our traditional values back into our discourse. Instead of shooting the messenger, shoot down the message. It is time for all of us to take personal responsibility for what we say and how we say it and return our societies to reason.

[Adapted from &lt;www.reconnectafrica.com&gt;]

\* harsh criticism, scorn

**Text 2****Body Language ... How to Tell if She's Interested**

So you're a flop in the dating world. Women are just too confusing and you can't tell if they are interested in you or not. They say one thing, but their actions indicate something entirely different.

Men are often confused because women's verbal and nonverbal messages seem to conflict, sending him 'mixed signals'. Here is the key: experts predict that 7% of a woman's attraction is shown through her verbal communication, 38% from her tone and 50% from her body language. What does that mean? Learning to read body language is the key to successful dating.

So, what are the signs she is interested? If she points toward you or faces you, she is probably attracted to you. She may point with her shoulder, her leg or her whole body. Beware if she is pointing in the opposite direction; it is time to move on.

Watch her eyes. If her eyes are not straying around the room and seem to be focused intently on you, she is most likely interested. Are her eyes dilated? This is kind of an unfair indicator because she has no control over it, but when a woman is attracted to you, her eyes will slightly dilate when interacting with you.

Does she seem to be involved in your conversation with you, or does she seem restless? If she is attracted to you, nothing else is going to occupy her attention while you are talking to her.

The more you see of her wrists, palms and the inside of her arms, the better. Look for signs of nervousness. She may show this through fidgeting with an object or adjusting her hair or clothes. If she is nervous, she probably likes you.

Does she seem relaxed around you? A woman who is interested in you will face you directly, lean in and relax her body. Folded arms, a stiff back and leaning away from you are signs that she wants out of the situation.

The best and easiest predictor of her attraction is her physical contact with you. Does she frequently touch your hand or keep it hidden in her pocket? Does she touch your arm or leg when she is making a point? The more physical contact she has with you during your conversation the better.

Learning to read body language helps you weed those who are attracted to you from those who are polite but uninterested. Study her nonverbal clues; if they seem to indicate an attraction toward you, go for it!

[<<http://online-dating-review.toptenreviews.com/female-body-language.html>>]

**Text 3**

**ENDANGERED  
WILDLIFE TRUST**  
www.endwtrg.za

**It's a small world if you're an  
animal.**

89.2% of the world belongs to humans.  
Nature is left with 10.8%  
Help us protect these areas.  
Call 011 486 1102 or find us online

[Child magazine/joburg, December 2010/January 2011]

**Text 4****SPINSTER**

A **spinster**, or old maid, is an older, childless woman who is unmarried.

The term *spinster* originally identified girls and women who spun wool. In medieval times, this was one of the few livelihoods available to a woman in order to live independently of a male wage. During the Elizabethan era, *spinster* came to indicate a woman or girl of marriageable age who was unwilling or unable to marry. 'Spinster' also evolved into a legal term to describe an unmarried woman, aged 38 or over, commonly heard in the banns of marriage of the Church of England when the prospective bride is formally described as a 'spinster of this parish'.

Used today, the term 'spinster' describes any woman that remains unmarried and childless past the conventional age for marrying. In differentiating between a woman who is 'single' versus a 'spinster', age is critical. A spinster, by definition, has not formed a human pair bond by the time she is approaching – or has already reached – menopause and the end of her reproductive lifespan.

[From *Wikipedia*, the free encyclopedia]


**It won't be my fault if I die an Old Maid.**

My mother pretends for a wife I'm too young,  
And says that men will deceive me,  
But let her look back, she'll soon hold her tongue;  
If not, tis no matter, believe me,  
Sweet gentlemen, don't be a moment in fear,  
And suffer a damsel to keep singing here,  
Remember no thought to a girl is so dread,  
As the terrible one – she may die an old maid.

Mother preaches for ever against men, the vile sex,  
And says every look is alarming,  
But, between you and I, this she says only to vex,  
For I know that she thinks they are charming.  
Three husbands she has had in the course of her life  
Now I only want one, sir, pray who'll have a good wife?  
Now men don't be stupid and look half afraid,  
Speak boldly, or else I must die an old maid.

Men boast they are kind, and are easily had,  
And lovers are willing and plenty,  
I vow it is false, for I've not got a lad,  
Although I'm turned one-and-twenty.  
The man I love best now stands in full view,  
Don't look so sharp, sir, I did not mean you,  
But that handsome man, there – O, what have I said  
But it won't be my fault if I die an old maid.

**Text 5**

A woman is shown from the waist down, wearing a vibrant red, sleeveless dress with a deep V-neckline and a full, ruffled skirt. She is holding a Marie Claire magazine in front of her torso, which features a close-up of her face. She is also wearing thin, gold-colored strappy sandals. The background is plain white.

**Let's face it  
What's the point of  
having 40 pairs of shoes  
in your closet and  
5 books on your shelf?**

Marie Claire Magazine It's stylish to  
be intelligent

**Text 6**

A woman is shown from the waist down, wearing a light blue, sleeveless dress with multiple layers of ruffles. She is holding a Marie Claire magazine in front of her torso, which features a close-up of her face. She is also wearing a purple jacket or shawl draped over her shoulders. The background is plain white.

**Beauty attracts men.  
Intelligence keeps them.**

Marie Claire Magazine It's stylish to  
be intelligent

## Text 7



**It is a cliché to say that South Africa is an extraordinary country with extraordinary people that passed relatively unscathed through an extraordinary time. Yet it is only a cliché to us who live in this extraordinary place every day of our lives, and have become blasé about our achievements.**

This respect that the world has for extraordinary South Africa is still there. You can see it in the faces of tourists and foreign audiences who stand in awe of our triumphs.

So it seems that it is South Africans who have forgotten, or become blasé, about what we have accomplished. And in this collective amnesia, we seem to have forgotten and lost a lot more besides.

We have lost respect for each other, for the elderly, for the young, for women. We have lost respect for the poor and for the sick. We have lost respect for our country's laws, and for those who wrote them. We have lost respect for the downtrodden, for refugees, for those who we don't necessarily agree with. We have lost respect for the moral, while giving in to the material.

*We have lost respect for our own future.*

But there is hope, as there always has been in this special country where the spirit of ubuntu, compassion and humanity, is never far below the surface.

Ordinary people from all walks of life are digging deep into their memories and remembering what it was like when we stood tall and were proud of each other. They remember what it is like when the excitement of looking ahead overrode the fear of the unknown.

They remember that we are all South Africans, and we are in this together. That we are more similar than we are different. And that everyday people can, and have, and do make a difference.

And looking back at our recent incredible achievement in successfully hosting the world, they understand that if we could accomplish that, we can accomplish anything.

Now is the time for you to stand up. If you care about yourself, your family, your neighbours, your friends, your colleagues – about South Africa, you must stand up.

Stand up for what's right.  
Stand up for the law.  
Stand up for decency, compassion, and respect.  
Stand up for the future.  
Stand up for your community.  
Stand up, and lead South Africa.

Not soon. Not just now. Now. Because if you don't, who will?

Go to [www.leadsa.co.za](http://www.leadsa.co.za) to find out more

[<[www.leadsa.co.za](http://www.leadsa.co.za)>]