

## Just don't try defining Rawlingsism

On Friday, October 26, 2006 the Editorial of The Statesman posed this question: What is Rawlingsism? Qanawu would like to revisit that piece and borrow from it:

Too often, it seems, Rawlings - the self-proclaimed saviour of this country – sees no nation but only NPP and NDC – the former to be destroyed at any cost, even the nation itself.

For any true statesman, of course, patriotism is at the heart of their belief. For all their solid, if controversial policies, Nkrumaism, Thatcherism and Reaganism had at their very core an unshakable love of country and a stubborn conviction which informed all other decisions.

And after the end of long terms, the three leaders retreated (Nkrumah to forced exile) from politics enough to let their successors make their successes, and failures, themselves.

But not so Mr Rawlings. What is Rawlingsism, if not just provocative entertainment? And what is his contribution to Ghana post-2000?

After the break-up of any long relationship there are always complex emotions – however right, however needed the end, it is always difficult to make a clean break.

Rawlings' 19-year period of rule in Ghana came to an end almost seven years ago, but in true intellectual speak, not even his staunchest protagonist may be able to define and explain what the man stood for and still stands for beyond self-love, self-adulation, self-obsession and egocentricity.

He is simply a political narcissist, who is wrapped up in a decades-held fantasy that only he can fix Ghana. Regardless of the fact that only he has had the longest continuous period to fix Ghana.

Since he left office, Ghana has moved on: away from the somewhat rocky, sometimes overbearing relationship with a former dictator and real character in African politics to a more steady, mature, reliable, if sometimes frustratingly indecisive NPP governmental hand.

Yet for six years since the end of his presidency, we have continued to let this man dominate our airwaves, our front pages: almost as if Ghanaians, like the man himself, are not quite over the relationship; as if we, too, believe his propaganda cries, that he is the only one who has a monopoly on governing Ghana, and 'wisdom' to offer others.

Arguably, Rawlings remains Ghana's most experienced statesman: our military ruler for 11 years, and elected leader another eight years after that.

Arguably, too, that despite his firm, often repressive leadership style – his signalling left but turning right, his betrayal of the populist swell on which he was able to seize power – Rawlings, in spite of his own express despise of liberal democracy, was forced by the people and his paymasters to bring back the multi-party democracy which he took away, and put Ghana back on track to progress and economic development.

False, however, the perception he continues to peddle: that Ghana began and ended with his leadership; that Ghana and its politics cannot move on without him.

Still, Rawlings insists on his love for Ghana, whilst his actions suggest a love for a lost power and nothing more, as he pro-actively seeks to destroy the positive name Ghana is making for itself under leadership other than his.

Is there a discerning, persuasive philosophy called Rawlingsism? A philosophy is more than just what you say after you've had about 20 years to practice what you preach. Perhaps, there is none.

No, there must be, it is probably better defined by the fact that in all his political life, he signalled left and turned right, ending up often in a head to head collision with reality and escaping without any personal injuries. Unless, a head injury which we may all be choosing to ignore.

Below are just some of the things he said in the first couple of years of the Provisional National Defence Council. Enjoy or endure:

In his radio broadcast to the nation on Thursday, December 31, 1981, Jerry John Rawlings began, "Fellow citizens of Ghana, as you would have noticed we are not playing the national anthem.

In other words this is not a coup. I ask for nothing less than a revolution. Something that would transform the social and economic order of this country."

By January 7, 1993, it was obvious that there'd been, at least, an economic transformation. That transformation was, by and large, dictated by the IMF and World Bank, and others through the so-called Washington Consensus of economic liberalisation.

Ironically, one of Hilla Limann's cardinal sins was to begin flirting with the Breton Wood institutions with a view to undertaking the same economic liberalisation the PNDC did and for which they won brownie points.

Rawlings in that second maiden speech simply described the two years or so under Limann's PNP as "of nothing but repression."

But, to understand a little better when Rawlings today accuses the Kufuor administration of a worse record in human rights, just listen to what he said about the Limann constitutional administration which followed the most brutal 122 days Ghanaians had ever known, under the AFRC.

Rawlings said in that radio broadcast of 31st December, 1981, "When we talk about human rights, we realised human rights around the June 4th era till 24th September when this country for once, the masses of this country, felt that they could be a part of the decision-making process of this country.

Right after the handing-over what have we had?" Qanawu can only guess that human rights according to Rawlingsism is the democratisation of violence.

He called 31st December a 'Holy War' that would make every Ghanaian a "part of the decision-making process of this country, and not just by a pack of criminals in the PNP hierarchy."

The man who'd just overthrown a government that was elected by the majority of the people then had the pertness to announce, "Fellow citizens, it is now left to you to decide how this country is going to go from today... Now, as I've said, I am not here to impose myself on this country – far from it." Indeed!

Continuing, Rawlings said, "There's only one thing I have to say: I am prepared, at this moment, to face a firing squad if what I've tried to do for the second time in my life does not meet the approval of Ghanaians; in which case you can ask the PNP to carry on misruling."

Note, after this speech, Rawlings, aided by Kojo Tsikata and co, then went about putting in place a most ruthlessly effective system against insurgency to protect himself against any threat of a firing squad.

In that same speech he even went as far as to send a "firm warning to any country outside Ghana who might wish to attempt any kind of invasion. West Africa will burn."

He concluded, "We in Ghana are prepared to die for our freedom! There is no justice in this society and so long as there is no justice, I would dare say that 'LET THERE BE NO PEACE.' You will hear from me again." [Emphasis his]

Rawlings, who is today accusing the government that succeeded him of witch-hunting, stressed to Ghanaians in his Tuesday, January 5, 1982 address to the nation, which broadly spelt out the PNDC's intended programme: "But, those who have committed crimes against the people cannot be allowed to go scot-free. Let me re-emphasise that the PNDC's desire to rid the country of corruption and to bring to book those who abuse their offices and turned the Constitution into a document of slavery must not be seen as a witch-hunt."

He went on to further assure, "The People's Tribunals, which will conduct the investigations and trials, will only act on the basis of investigations scrupulously conducted and evidence properly assembled.

Their trials will be public, but the Tribunals will not be fettered in their procedures by technical rules which in the past have perverted the course of justice and enabled criminals to go free."

Qanawu bets, Tsatsu Tsikata, who was one of the architects who stripped the system of technicalities, is today thankful for the enduring technicalities that have kept his case at the Fast Track High Court Division going for over five years.

Looking at Ghana's debt profile in 1982, on the eve of Ghana's 25th anniversary (Friday, March 5, 1982), the celebration of which the PNDC had "repudiated the wastefulness" of, Chairman Rawlings said, "These are no times for idleness or for anything less than rigorous discipline because the national coffers are completely empty." 25 years later, his party's leader and tax expert, Prof Mills, was educating Ghanaians that state coffers can never be deemed empty so long as taxes and duties are being collected everyday for the state coffers, regardless of a country's HIPC status.

At the opening of a three-day national seminar on the PNDC'S 'Strategy for National Recovery' at the Kwame Nkrumah Conference Centre on January 19, 1983, Flt Lt Rawlings disclosed that \$900 million out of the country's total receipts of about \$1.2 billion went into debt-serving and payments (\$200m), and other outstanding commitments (\$700m). Petroleum import alone took the entire balance of \$300m, he said.

The economy was in crisis, the PNDC leader expectedly blamed it on several years of mismanagement, unprecedented corruption, neglect and wanton dissipation of public funds. The other factor was external:

"Ghana's engagement in the international capital system has contributed in no small measure towards the country's present predicament."

The final solution, he said, was the complete disengagement of the Ghanaian economy from the "exploitative capitalist world economic order." He was, however, quick to add, "While such a solution should be our ultimate aim, it is not a feasible proposition in the immediate future."

That un-immediate future was progressively prolonged by his neo-liberal policies, only after which his party pronounced themselves social democrats.

On February 17, 1983, the ever-populist Rawlings in delivering a speech at Agona Swedru condemned Ghanaian workers for demanding the signing of collective agreements. "Collective agreements," he argued, "are renewed when there is increased productivity and profits." His advice to workers was to "plan how to increase productivity instead of agitating for increases in salaries."

On June 21, 1983, Chairman Rawlings said that he personally would not rest on his oars, "until the ordinary people of Ghana have comfort and satisfaction in life." In 2006 in London, he was lamenting the fact that majority of Ghanaians cannot afford a square meal a day.

Hopefully, he would, nevertheless, admit that poverty headcount, which was 52% at the end of 1992, had been brought down to 40% by his NDC by December 2000; and at the end of 2006 it had reduced to 29% by the NPP.

On July 15, 1983, Chairman Rawlings, in a speech to mark Ramadan, said, "the period of hardship Ghanaians are going through is not a punishment but a time of purification from which the nation will emerge cleansed of its injustices and build a fitting home for all people of goodwill regardless of their religion." At the end of 2000, daily minimum wage had fallen from \$4.4 in 1981 to 60 cents. It's now around \$2.

He had a very clever way of describing the famine that had gripped the nation. He said, "Ghana is passing through a time of Ramadan, a period of fasting, sacrifice and purification which enables those who take part to reflect upon their lives and resolve to do the will of Allah with greater devotion and commitment."

On August 10, 1983, Chairman Rawlings, who was at the same time embarking on a serious submission programme with the Breton Wood institutions, speaking at a reception held in Cotonou, Benin in his honour, declared that Ghana's revolutionary process would not tolerate dictation from any quarter whatsoever.

"Government will pursue a programme peculiar to the country's circumstances, its own style and within the understanding of her own people." He accused the international press at the time of "distorting the nature and aims of Ghana's Revolution to the outside world."

Yet, the Butcher of Bundase stretched irony to uncharted levels by maintaining that on "matters of humanity, reason will always triumph over force, and history has proved time and again that whenever people try to use force on others, they tend to lose the very basis of their moral authority." Of course, May 15, June 4, December 31, were all willed by the people and forced upon them.

As early as November 25, 1983, Rawlings had become disenchanted by his dream of using the concept of people's power to uproot corruption.

He wondered for instance how people could sit down apparently unconcerned when executives of the People's Defence Committee's whom they had elected, among other things, to help them stem wrong-doings, "perpetuate the same acts."

He concluded that the persistence of corrupt practices was a reflection of the weakness of the people since they could not clip the wings of the people when they drifted away from "the cherished aims and objectives of the on-going process."

10 December, 1983, Rawlings did what NPP is doing now, at the inauguration of the Volta Regional Electrification Project in Ho – blaming previous governments for energy crisis; he said the then systematic power cuts "is the price the country must pay for years of neglect and misuse of her natural environment."

Hopefully, some idea of the concept of Rawlingsism has been derived from this piece. You will hear from Qanawu again.

## About the Author

From [www.thestatesmanonline.com](http://www.thestatesmanonline.com):

Acknowledge child abuse and neglect as a major concern for the faith. They also offer advice for forming a crisis response team in your congregation. On the other hand, do not neglect important information or arguments. The second piece of advice is to include facts or opinions that disagree.

Source: <http://www.productsherbal.com>