

Muntu must become ungentlemanly

We often ask the eternal question: When will Uganda ever vote Gen [Mugisha] Muntu as president? Then, quick on its heels, comes the inevitable follow-up: Are Ugandans mad?

Approximately 14 million Ugandans (about 32 percent of the population) are struggling with mental illness, the Ugandan Ministry of Health revealed in May 2022, but that's beside the point.

Our political madness is a particular brand of sanity left standing on its head. But we are certainly not soft in the head for leaving Gen Muntu out in the political cold. It makes perfect sense why Ugandans do not vote for Muntu, I recently discovered.

The man is contradictions personified. His central contradiction is somewhat convoluted, but let's unbraid it.

Mr Muntu was nominated by the Electoral Commission as a presidential candidate on November 2, 2020, representing the Alliance for National Transformation (ANT), a party he founded in March 2019.

Following his loss in the 2021 election, Muntu stated he had no evidence to challenge Museveni's victory in court. He was nominated again for the 2026 presidential elections on July 25, 2025.

He did not win this election either nor has he yet conceded. However, based on his record, he is not likely to unfriend or unfollow any of his erstwhile competitors on social media.

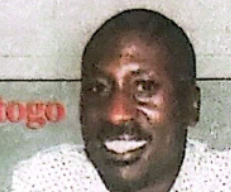
To be sure, when his campaign went to smash as he contested for the Forum for

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Politics



Democratic Change (FDC) party presidency against Kizza Besigye in 2008, he didn't repair to the proverbial bush.

Yet his origin story as a man of power begins when he joined the National Resistance Army (NRA) in 1982. He reportedly made the decision to join Yoweri Museveni's rebel group immediately after finishing his university exams at Makerere University.

One could also say he followed a leader to the bush whose party's vote percentage accounted for approximately 4.12 percent of the total popular vote in the 1980 general election. By extension, Muntu ostensibly protested the result of that election by going to war.

Accordingly, Mr Muntu appears ready to fight when it comes to fighting for justice. He went "to the bush". We admired him for it. Today, we admire him for his ability to fight without fighting. We know he's not ready to provide his politics as a sequel to the mov-

ie 27 guns.

In short, we admired him for taking up arms in the past and now admire him for being civilised enough to not do it again. Therein lies the contradiction: If viewed through the prism of time, Muntu is a bad man gone good, but he's also a good man gone bad.

For at one time, he was one of the proverbial savages at the gates. Attaining power civilised him, suddenly he was the one tasked with keeping the savages at bay.

He thus became a gentleman in ways not previously associated with the armed forces in Uganda. Today, his civility is a liability. As his adversaries savage our politics, Muntu appears like he is ready to hug a porcupine.

He keeps his manners around ill-mannered government types, staying as cool as a cucumber. This disposition makes him bad for those who require action equal to the challenges that beset our politics.

At this stage, Ugandans cannot vote for a gentleman. That's because they are forced to wear kid gloves as the government charges them, bare-knuckled. This situation cannot be resolved by pretensions to gentility. As is so often, however, poetry finds a way.

"Do not go gentle into that good night" tones a famous 1951 villanelle by Welsh poet Dylan Thomas with the refrain: "Rage, rage against the dying of the light".

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