



PARENTING
DICKSON TUMURAMYE

As our nation heads into elections tomorrow, homes across the country will not only be places of conversation and anticipation; they will be classrooms. Long before children learn about leadership in civics books and other sources, they learn it from how adults behave when power, politics and national decisions are at stake.

Elections can be confusing for children. They sense tension, listen to charged conversations and observe emotions they may not fully understand.

This moment offers parents, a powerful opportunity not to turn children or youth into political analysts, but to shape their understanding of peace, respect and responsible citizenship.

Let's teach children peace during election time

FIRST CIVIC TEACHERS

Your children's first lessons about leadership are not taught at polling stations or on television screens.

They are taught at the dining table, in car conversations, during family prayers or any dialogue opportunity.

When parents speak with contempt, fear, or hostility about leaders or fellow citizens, children quietly absorb the message that disagreement must be aggressive and that power is something to fight over at all costs.

Conversely, when parents speak calmly, respectfully and thoughtfully, children learn that leadership is a responsibility, not a battlefield.

They learn that differences of opinion do not require hatred and that society can make choices without tearing itself apart.

EXPLAIN ELECTIONS APPROPRIATELY

Avoid exposing children to graphic images, alarming rumours, or emotionally charged commentary. What children need most during such times is a sense of stability and safety.

Children do not need all the details, but they do need reassurance. Parents can explain that elections are a normal way for adults to choose leaders and that people may support different candidates.

LASTING MEMORIES

Long after posters are removed and results declared, children will remember how their parents behaved during this week. They may forget names and slogans, but they will remember whether home felt safe or stressful, hopeful or hostile. They will always recall what their parents taught them about their civil rights.

Teaching children peace during an election is not about shielding them from reality; it is about guiding them through it wisely.

What matters most is helping them understand that disagreement does not mean danger and that the country remains their home regardless of outcomes.

RESPECTFUL SPEECH AND BEHAVIOUR

Respectful language does not mean silence or lack of conviction. It means expressing views without demeaning others. In doing so, parents teach children or their families a crucial life skill: How to hold strong beliefs while still valuing human dignity.

Our family members watch more than they listen. They notice tone, body language and reactions.

How parents talk about leaders they dislike teaches children how to handle authority they disagree with. How parents talk about other communities teaches children how to live with diversity.

PEACE AS A VALUE, NOT A SLOGAN

Peace is not only something we demand from politicians; it is something we practice in homes. When parents choose calm over chaos, dialogue over insults and prayer over panic, they communicate to children that peace begins at a personal level. This is, especially important in societies where children have witnessed unrest or heard stories of past instability. Election seasons can re-open old fears. Parents have the responsibility to anchor children emotionally, reminding them that peace is preserved not only by laws, but by everyday choices made by ordinary people.

AWAY FROM COMMERCIALISED POLITICS

In the midst of election excitement, parents must also guard their families against the growing commercialisation

of politics. When money, gifts, slogans and material incentives dominate political conversations, children learn the dangerous lesson that leadership is something to be bought rather than earned through integrity and service.

Worse still, it breeds cynicism at an early age, promotes corruption, teaching them to expect personal gain from or bribery for public processes, instead of accountability, merit and sacrifice. Parents serve their children best by distancing family life from such practices and by emphasising values over rewards, character over convenience and long-term national good over short-term personal benefit.

POLITICS AS PUBLIC SERVICE, NOT A JOB

When children repeatedly hear that politics is "where the money is," or watch leaders fight to stay in power, they grow up believing that public office exists to benefit individuals rather than communities.

Parents have an important role in helping children understand that leadership is meant to be an act of service, not a career chosen primarily for personal survival or enrichment.

**The writer is a parenting coach and marriage counsellor
tumudickson@gmail.com**