

ARISE BLACK CHILD AFRICA DAY SPEECH

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Outline

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Introduction

On preparation I thought I was going to begin my speech today by saying that I send my greetings to everyone who is in the comfort of their own homes in this tough time that we are faced with, but in thinking of that my conscious bears with me that this is unfortunately not the case for the majority of us. Africa Day today finds in a time that has suggested to us that we are far from where we are supposed to be, it would therefore be careless to think that being in a lockdown due to a pandemic means everyone is enjoying the comfort of their own homes whereas this time has proven to be catastrophic to all of us, turning us into beggars in our own land, homeless, helpless and landless.

But before I make an attempt to diagnose the problems of the present times, let me take you in a short journey back into where we come from, I am a firm believer in the old saying that says sometimes we go forward best by going backward first, but those who held us captive want us to forget where we come from, lest we realize that we are capable of providing our own solutions to our problems. It is therefore necessary for us to revisit the past and gather as much knowledge as we can so that we are better prepared for the battle ahead.

Connecting with the past

It was exactly 57 years ago, when a man who now lies in his grave in the Holy Trinity Cathedral in Addis Ababa of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie, brought together leaders from across the continent with the purpose of uniting Africa, amongst those leaders was Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah who is the father of Pan-Africanism and is well known for his unshaken belief in a united Africa. These leaders, most of whom had conquered colonial rule in their own countries, saw it necessary for all of Africa to be free and to be united. They saw a united Africa as a force that no one could stand against and therefore worked all their lives to see all of Africa free and united.

The story of how a united Africa conquered the great evil of the colonial master is not one that is often told. Failed attempts by the Italians to conquer the horn of Africa is a story that has so soon disappeared from all history, the Anglo-Zulu war in South Africa which was one of the British Army's worst defeat has also been miraculously deleted from history. If we do not tell our own narrative no one will. It is important that we constantly look back to where we have come from and learn not only about our misfortunes, but also about our glory, so that we do not become comfortable with settling in defeat and misery.

There was a point in our history where it seemed as though we were on the rise, and this was so because our forefathers stood firm to fight against colonialism and neo-colonialism and I believe where they lay today, they envisage an Africa that is united and standing in power, they envisage an Africa who has carried on the progressive

work that they began, they envisage an Africa that has conquered neo-colonialism, they envisage an Africa whose resources are benefiting her people. Little do they know that the same old enemy is back and this time with better strategies, little do they know that the Organization of African Unity that they left behind, which is now known as the African Union, has become powerless and has handed us back to the hands of the same old enemy.

A diagnosis of post-colonial failures

One would have thought, that Africa day 57 years later would be a day of glory and great celebrations, that the djembe would be drumming from West Africa, and the Mbila playing from the North of South Africa, celebrations from the rivers of the North to the villages of the South, but instead Africa Day is a day of doom and a day of mourning, mourning an Africa that was and an Africa that could have been. How can we not mourn when the Democratic Republic of Congo which is supposed to be the richest country in the world is one of the poorest countries in the world? How can we not mourn when Zambia has surrendered almost all of its resources to the Chinese? How can we not mourn when governments are killing their people for demanding a decent wage? How can we not mourn when our African brothers and sisters are being discriminated against in Gaunzhou China and some of our African leaders are saying nothing about it? How can we not mourn when the Hausas and the Igbos of Nigeria are still at war? How can we not mourn when there is racism, xenophobia, tribalism and gender base violence all around?

It is indeed a day of mourning because even though the battle is not over we have stopped fighting, living as pariahs in our own land has become normal for us and those that we have entrusted with this battle have become our own foes. Oh Kwame Nkrumah, Oh Haile Selassie, Oh Julius Nyerere, Oh Sankara the Burkinabe, Oh Samora Machel, if you thought you have left behind a glorious and hopeful Africa, I am sad to inform you that we are in a worsen state than we ever were. The enemy is still very much with us.

Earlier this year, South Africa's former Apartheid leader FW De Klerk said in an interview that Apartheid was not a crime against humanity, he also said one devastating reality and I quote "When I met Nelson Mandela for the first time I spoke to him, I felt I can do business with this man". This is the tragedy we are faced with, that the enemy is still in our midst doing business with us, not business that benefits us but business that exploits us and our resources. The same old enemy is doing business with Africa, some claim they have good relations with us while they only have good relations with our resources.

The internal enemy

But while I strongly believe that we need not to stop fighting the enemy, I also believe that we need to prepare ourselves in the right manner lest we set ourselves up for failure. I remember Walt Kelly's famous cartoon derived from the Braggadocio "We have met the enemy and he is us", and it just tells me that sometimes the enemy is not only the one we are up in arms against, sometimes the enemy is us and we need to deal with ourselves and be extremely honest with ourselves. If we go up against the enemy not having dealt with ourselves, we will in the process lose ourselves and become the enemy of our own progress.

Let us therefore organize ourselves for a psychological emancipation so that we have a clear conscious and adequate love for ourselves, we need to go to war armed with love for ourselves and not hate, we need to rid ourselves of all forms of miseducation and misguidance that has been perpetuated by the enemy and caused us to think that we are less human, only when we are in the right mind can we be confident in conquering the external enemy. Do not let anyone who is not in the right mind take action, for when they attain power they turn against their own people and recreate the same problem they were initially trying to solve. They do so because when they meet the enemy, they do not see any difference between him and them and therefore they cling to the enemy and forget their own people. Who am I talking about if not our once promising servants who have risen to power and have forgotten why they are there, they have now become a very efficient vehicle that advances the interest of the colonial master.

Reconfiguring the mind to realize true Africanism

If we do not understand that we are Africans we will live our lives frustrated trying to become what we were never meant to be, because the enemy has convinced us that our way of living is evil and only his is godly. We therefore try by all means to run away from Africanism and our true identity, thinking that to live well is to break out of the black skin and put on a different color. We think that for us to be successful we must forsake our own culture and our own traditions in pursuit for a better life, this is so because whether we like it or not, our minds have been colonized and programmed to think that the way to live is the white way. It may not be something we wake up and tell ourselves everyday but it is an evil that has been engraved in our hearts and it keeps following us even when we are not aware of it.

Our governments, our schools and our churches are leading the way in drawing us far from Africanism and these institutions are key pillars of our society, things may not seem wrong when they come from these and it only makes it more difficult for us to pursue what we are being drawn away from. The best schools are the ones that do not teach any of our African languages, the best churches [if there is anything like that] are the ones that embrace western music and sounds, the African rhythm has stayed away from our ears for the longest time.

It remains a difficult task to predominate Africa with African cultures and traditions while our minds are predominated with foreign ways of life. Things that were supposed to be normal to us have become foreign ideas, we are losing our culture and we are losing our languages and it seems to bother us very little.

It is quite obvious that we need to conquer ourselves first and then we can conquer our enemy and this battle will start in the mind.

Finding Afro-Centric solutions

When we have done away with miseducation, we can organize ourselves to find Afro-Centric solutions to our problems, and this we can only achieve through relearning our African customs and practices. We need to re-establish ourselves as sovereign people. And we will do this by being open to learning and having a teachable spirit. It is Jesus who said blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth, the earth will not be inherited through guns and spears, that is why those who have tried to do so will continue to fall and those who are humble and teachable will rise.

Our current model of life is one that sees us as young people doing our best to break out of the African way of life, leaving our own home to settle in cities that preserve none of our cultures, while we leave the places that are libraries of African wisdom like villages and townships desolate, and after having acquired western customs and practices, we go back to our homes and feel more developed and advanced than those who remain behind, we therefore feel the need to educate these people without realizing that the education we are giving them is foreign and anti-African.

Instead, we need to stop going back to our villages and townships thinking that our biggest mandate is to educate, but go back with the intention to learn and relearn, in doing that we will be able to contextualize our education and incorporate it with African wisdom in order to develop our communities the African way. Why have we not taken our time and learn from the village mothers who for centuries lived without western medicines but still managed to heal each other using God given herbs? How have they been able to find cures for diseases that even the western doctor cannot diagnose? Why have we not asked the village farmer how he has managed to remain self-sufficient without making it into the city? Why have we not invested our time in learning indigenous knowledge that has seen our forefathers live a life of abundance? Why have we not asked the village man how he was able to predict weather before forecasting technologies? Why have we not documented these things for our own gain? To be used now and by future generations. Why have we made our African mothers feel uneducated whereas we are the ones who are really miseducated?

Why have we not asked how in the past African families produced their own food and had enough until the next harvest? Why have we not asked how our forefathers lived without needing the white man's mercy? Are we possibly the ones who are poor and

think we are way better than those who came before us? Are we possibly the ones who have little understanding of nature because we think everything we need to know has to come from a books written by a British scientist rather than our own observations? Are we slaves disguised in a university graduation gowns and countless certificates? Have we possibly stopped relying on God given wisdom and only wait to be told what is true and what is false?

The answers to these questions are in the African way of life, in it lies great wisdom that is not found anywhere else. Let us make it our responsibility to purposefully reconfigure our minds and begin to rise as Africans that have deep roots and are unshakable. Let the young Ghanaian engineer who is in Europe come back to the villages of Ghana and compare modern technologies with ancient ideas, let the south African doctor who is in Cuba come back to the villages of the South and compare chemicals with African herbs, let the young Ethiopian Civil engineer who is in the United States of America come back and compare modern infrastructure with the with the Yeha temple (The terrific temple of the sun and moon) that was built in 500BC. When we have gathered this wisdom, let us document it and begin to implement it, and we will see the black child begin to rise, so that when the same old enemy rises against us, he will find us a well-established generation of true Africans.

Conclusion

This change begins with us, it begins with you, as Zozibini Thunzi said, we need to take up space. Take up space in your village, take up space in your township, take up space in your area of expertise. There is no limit to how far you can go. In the words of Julius Nyerere "Never be complacent, always examine yourself, can't I do better? Couldn't I do better, but don't be so self-critical that you despair, despair is an unforgivable sin". And in the words of Robert Mugabe "let no one who is negative want to spoil what we are doing for ourselves in order to unite Africa, we belong to this continent". I wish everyone a Happy Africa Day, not because we have much to celebrate, but because the black child is on the rise, **ARISE BLACK CHILD!**