

A Nigerian Solution: APN

by

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In 1900, after a century of painstaking coordination against slavery, colonialism and white domination, Henry Sylvester Williams (1869-1911) made a formal linkage among peoples in the African Diaspora and called the first Pan African Conference in London, England. About thirty "educated blacks" attended that conference. Then, Pan Africanism was a cultural idea and a political movement.

Most of those who participated were "educated blacks" reacting to the socio-political issue of that time - The Scramble For Africa. A century down and tracing the memory lane, palpable successes and failures have evolved, especially in political and cultural aspects of the Pan-Africanist movement. History has recorded focused contributions of great Africanists like W. E. B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, Kwame Nkrumah, Jomo

Kenyatta, Herbert Macaulay, E. Casley Hayford, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, Steve Biko, Nelson Mandela, Ken Saro-Wiwa and several others. But, it has also recorded some failures in the quest for a total Africa emancipation, especially in the economic sectors.

The second half of the twentieth century witnessed various forms and strengths of Pan-Africanism, from the famous Black Parliament and Garveyism to versions such as negritude. In 1944, the fifth Pan-African Congress generated a wind of change that created indigenous governing class and began the process of decolonization. Kwame Nkrumah became a key player and actually brought Pan-Africanism onto the West African soil.

Today, 100 years and 50 years from efforts of Messrs Henry Williams and Kwame Nkrumah respectively, we reflect on their struggles to count gains and losses. As we celebrate the rich ideological platform founded by these fathers and the evolution of Pan-Africanism through blood, sweat and

struggles of selfless Black men and women, we must also examine why Pan-Africanism has not yet gelled as the total emancipator of the Africans in general.

Now, We posture for more advanced tasks of forcing desirable ends from earlier struggles of our grand patriots. We seek to additionally redefine Pan-Africanism in contexts of economic emancipation of Africans (Nigerians in particular) within the global community, building upon strong foundations set by earlier principals while stripping some undesirable stereotypes and faults that have developed from growth processes. By logic of incremental progress in Pan-Africanism and prevalent imperatives of globalization, we are set to jumpstart another era of Pan-Africanism through the African Renaissance.

We, therefore, do not see Pan-Africanism as an adversarial, radical, anti-Western democracy struggle or an anti-white racial program. Rather, we see it as a Renaissance movement that focuses on establishing a particularly unified African identity while also positioning for global trade partnerships, poverty alleviation, qualitative education, superior healthcare deliveries, infrastructure development and maintenance, capacity development and utilization, scientific and technological development, investment and private sector development in a free market economy, etc.

Pan-Africanism must derive from the inevitability of solving Africa's problems through proven democratic and economic systems carefully crafted and blended within our indigenous ideological framework in order to arrive at worthy and prosperous destinies dreamt of by selfless Africanists like Kwame Nkrumah, Martin L. King, Jr., Nelson Mandela, etc. Pan-Africanism must be geared toward the origination of consumer and industry presence and must adopt a utilitarian approach in defining new paradigms necessary for projection of common values in institutions and for the prevention of effects of ensuing global entropy on Nigerians and Africans at large.

Pan-Africanism must, therefore, become a replacement value seeking to re-channel excessive forces of globalization for regional and national unity. It cannot operate from utopia or theoretical approaches based on unattainable ideals, but must become an equitable, pragmatic balance toward feeding the people, creating jobs and strengthening the middle class, lessening conflicts through preemptive or resolution templates, enhancing ecological well-being and preventing uncontrolled spread of plagues. Pan-Africanism must also embrace all that are sympathetic to and supportive of Nigeria and Africa and must champion the inclusion

of women and other minorities in processes of government, commerce and industry.

It must adopt the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and advocate maximum optimal distribution of human values. We believe that basic human values of health, shelter, education, faith, rectitude, etc. must, together with all other natural resources, be ensured and distributed equitably through Legally Enforced Redistribution Plans. It is the absence or sheer neglect of veritable distribution plans that has led to problems such as in the Delta Region of Nigeria.

Today's Pan-Africanism incorporates cultural perspectives and ideals of all peoples of African descent, especially of the Africans in the Diaspora, into a unified spirit of self-determination and multi-lateral cooperation. It is obvious fact that continental Africa desperately needs involvement of African-Americans in research and development areas of medicine, science and technology. Limited relationships and cooperation could not have been the goal of founding parents of Pan-Africanism.

Indeed, time has come for the creation of a permanent observer status for the African-American caucus in the OAU. Time has come for selectively targeting African-American investors and investments in areas of mechanized agriculture, education, information technology and finance. Time has come to completely embrace one another in all areas of cultural and political developments. The case for a proper and suitable vehicle for the establishment of these Pan-African ideals has been made and its inevitability deduced from on-going imperatives of globalization and nation building.

Unfortunately, not many African nations, governments or political parties can shoulder both intellectual and developmental needs of a veritable African Renaissance. In Nigeria for example, even with the best intentions of an angel or any arm of government, it can be seen that existing party structures compounded by anti-social factors are not situated to move the country forward and indeed cannot. It is in realization of this fact and with fervent resolve to wrestle Nigeria from clutches of cyclical corruption, indiscipline and ineffectiveness that a need to found

The Africanist Party of Nigeria must be considered. As another example, the latest and shamefully worst global vote of no confidence on Nigeria by the Transparency International is enough ground to obliterate the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). It is no excuse blaming all corruption on erstwhile

leaders and their governments. Truth is that the party, PDP, has failed in casting a web of discipline and probity over its majority members, its leadership and is by extension brazenly corrupt -morally and otherwise.

Truth also is that the corrupt society can only become well as far as the leadership it chooses leads unto a good society. We have very serious and dangerous problems at hand in the handling of Sharia, conflict diamond (Sierra Leone), institutional corruption, ethnic rivalries, falling educational standards, etc. and now a sordid review as the worlds most corrupt nation. No one can pass the buck of failure in constant denial of the obvious: our present system sucks.

If Nigeria continues to tout self as the African example and feverishly seek waiting and eager investors to buoy or develop economic infrastructure, then a covering of effectiveness, organization, honesty and vision must become the standard of leadership. As presently constituted, neither the PDP, the APP nor the AD platforms can offer anything close to such covering. Those platforms were hastily and myopically convened by certain recycled insiders and unfairly forced upon Nigerians as only available escape from Military rule and despotic Abacha. It is preposterous to expect a new paradigm shift or merit of sort from those ill conceptions. Neither should any reasonable foreign nation or investor expect much change or satisfaction within current political atmosphere.

The ideological and philosophical concepts of The Africanist Party then become the available and purposeful remedy. Such, therefore, must be an encapsulation of the best and brightest Nigerians in all intellectual, political, social and economic endeavors, seeking to exemplify leadership, integrity, honesty and patriotism toward a strong, secular, united, industrious, prosperous, a general welfare Nigeria and ultimately, Africa. That political platform may pro-actively engage all ideological principles of Henry Williams, Marcus Garvey, Martin L. King, Jr., Kwame Nkurumah, Malam Aminu Kano, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, Ken Saro Wiwa, etc. while fine-tuning with precision and for suitability a realistic political, economic, scientific and technological revolution in Nigeria and Africa.

Since African cultures and traditions overwhelmingly endorse respect and cooperation among peoples, such a desirable political platform may pro-actively position to foster mutual respect and continued unification of diverse ethnic or geopolitical blocs. It may position to work off the premise that Nigeria stands to benefit from gains of unity than perils of war and fractionalization. Today's very obvious ethnic hatred and

intolerance can be traced to deliberate actions by some of today's political and social leaders who through policy actions, bureaucracies and religion have highlighted and magnified ethnic differences instead of harnessing strengths from our diverse resources and cultures. As that platform forms on mutual respect and tolerance, we can only expect an uncompromisingly zero tolerance against ethnocentric or religious bigotry.

That political platform may adopt down-to-earth approaches toward solving real Nigeria problems such as of inadequate security for lives and property, food scarcity, corruption, unemployment, intolerance, sectional neglect or marginalization, failing educational standards, etc. with real solutions readily available from pools of intellectual capital and committed leadership. Among other things, that platform may actualize the democratic ideal of a bottoms-up government by securing a lesser Federal government and increasingly sovereign states in concepts of true federalism and equitable distribution of powers. I believe there is ample goodwill - both in care and methods - to ensure a smooth implementation that can easily carry along all states of the federation toward an ultimate goal of collective prosperity. Such goodwill may include some concessions and enforceable distributions plans that selectively and pointedly establish or consolidate pilots around which other resourceful developments and small industry incubation may bootstrap. This, I believe, is one key to our collective prosperity that has been fearfully shied away from.

Also, that platform may actualize the lofty and justifiable goal of adequate inclusion of women and minorities in positions with all spheres of political and economic leadership. It is true that both the Pan-African movement and Nigeria political history have witnessed strong advocacies and struggles by several women.

The current political and economic atmosphere in Nigeria is reactionary in limiting minorities, especially women from leadership positions and it appears so by design. In order to deflate present chauvinistic bubble, the Africanist platform may seek to establish a suitably designed and enforceable affirmative action plan, create more special micro programs for women (also infants and children) while entrenching moral, faithful and traditionally African pro-family concepts in its political doctrines.

Nigerians and Africans need arise to the hope and optimism of a very prosperous Nigeria and Africa. We must not allow history, men and mediocrity to eclipse the certainty of prosperity freely given us by God. All our problems today are solvable with diligent applications and management of our very vast resources. But, in order not to repeat carelessness and corruptions of past leaderships, Nigerians and Africans

must embrace the need for a reformatory platform with adequate ideological and philosophical resources geared toward that desired end. Such must be a people-oriented Africanist Party platform with smart leadership and purposeful direction. That way, God will continue to bless Africa and her descendants in general and the Federal Republic of Nigeria in particular.

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