



RE-AFRICANISING AFRICA

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Indeed, there is no obvious formula to get Africa to regain its lost glory. Efforts towards reclaiming Africa's authentic history and pride of place are ongoing and gaining traction.

When Professor Toyin Falola received an Honorary Doctorate at the University of Pretoria's graduation ceremony on 13 May 2024, in his acceptance speech, he assured the congregants that:

Africa will never fail! Africa's history is bound in excellence, and the future promises more abundance. The youth are our number one asset. To date, our achievements know no bounds. This moment is filled with more than hope. Our unwavering determination will guide us towards the future, in which we not only engage in the global discourse but also have prominence in the world...

This is a powerful message. However, for this important message together with a multitude of similar arguments to be ultimately a reality, it is critical that we keep in mind what has gone wrong about Africa and Africans. Essentially, what are the main reasons we have not succeeded in re-Africanising Africa (and Africans wherever they are)? And what could be a lasting solution, or a combination of solutions that are sustainable?

Beyond the macro dimensions such as institutional decay, relations of dependency with the rest of the world and the penchant of African leaders to copy and defer to the dictates of the global imperialist designs there are more fundamental issues of psychological and psychosocial inferiorisation in which an average African looks up to the West (and to the East of late) as the locus of enunciation and the ideal standard in culture, language, attire, social interactions, knowledge and general world view.

Arguably, we still have a long way to go in reversing the psychological and psychosocial inferiorisation that largely came about through slavery and colonisation of Africans. The colonial intrusion did not only negatively impact Africa's development but, perhaps more significantly, it affected the mind of an African. This has continued over many generations.

Some of us have for a while now been recommending thought liberation and critical consciousness as well as thought leadership. Critical consciousness has to do with being fully aware and understanding why certain things are the way they are. Thought leadership is an aspect of leadership that is shaped by a balanced view of phenomena. It is through thought leadership that those in leadership roles can have comprehensive perspectives that ensure that decision making is sound. Thought liberation entails the mind and psychology that is not entangled in confusion based on indoctrination and manipulation. It is greatly needed if Africa should never fail.

Thought liberation is desperately needed if Africa and Africans are to overcome inherited practices, orientations and attitudes that have combined to render many individuals unproductive, unambitious, less innovative, less secured to pursue meaningful purposes in life, envious and vindictive. There is no doubt that anti-development practices such as preferences to spend more on ceremonies instead of savings and investing, indulgences instead of sharing, competition and rivalries among individuals, groups and countries in Africa and lack of foresight in making important decisions have affected the realisation of development potentials of Africa and its people.

Contrary to the widespread racist records which present Africa as having been one big jungle, which manifested all of John Conrad's imagery of 'Heart of Darkness', accurate historical records show that early African kingdoms developed economic practices and built institutional networks of interactions that led to commendable levels of socio-economic development that were comparable to other regions of the world until Africa was rudely interrupted by slavery and colonialism.

Contemporary experiences of Africa are undeniably the reflections of many centuries of violent encounters with the imperialist forces. The systematic deployment of brute force and violence by imperialist powers left some indelible scars on the psychology of Africans, the result of which include the inferiorisation of the people to the West regarding taste, values, knowledge and being as well as the mimicking of what the West says or thinks. Consequently, life became of less value and compassion got lost among many Africans.

It is therefore not surprising that Africa remains an epicentre of paradoxical realities of abundance and lack, plenty and scarcity, prosperity and poverty, growth and stagnation and so on and so forth.

Africa was de-Africanised and attempts to continue de-Africanising Africa and Africans continue: Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o uses the term *dis-membered* while Paul Tiyambe Zeleza uses the term *de-centered*, as an example. It is therefore critical that more efforts are made to *re-center* and *re-member* Africa and Africans. Cheikh Anta Diop and Théophile Obenga, among many, proved that we can re-Africanise Africans and Africa. Through their efforts and that of many extraordinary Pan-Africanists, we are reminded of Imhotep and others like him.

As we celebrate another Africa Liberation Day, may we resolve that we do all that is possible to re-Africanise!