

What does it take for a community to be honest!



AHMHCBO
AFRO HERITAGE MENTAL HEALTH COMMUNITY
BASED ORGANISATION

HOW TO SITE THIS ARTICLE

Kiingati J.B. (2024) What does it take for a community to be honest
<https://afroheritageconsult.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/What-does-it-take-for-a-community-to-be-honest.pdf>

Visit our website for more articles afroheritageconsult.org

Does a nation have to disintegrate through turmoil and devastation for her citizens to sink to nothingness before deciding to be honest? Does an individual (in their generation or in those to come) have to lose all and sink into abject poverty and life-threatening situations for them to realize the importance of honesty?

A nation that sits on so much lie and deceit at the level of the state dais, of the academia platform, and even at the pulpit, is certainly headed in the wrong direction. So much information is projected as “truth” by the politician (man of state) including the politician that is not in Government, by the eloquent academia, by the religious/church leader (man of God), and by the media, to a level that no one really knows what is true anymore. It is not surprising then that our stages are often used to blame the other. A nation that emotionally chooses to address non-issues, placing the real issues under the table, is set for failure and collapse.

Let’s face the reality, it is not that the president must go, it is not that the government must change, it is not that the corrupt leaders must be jailed. Even more personally, it is not that I know, that I am the best, and that all others are wrong. Good all these may sound, yet they are not at the root of the real issues.

The African; each of us, is struggling with immense dishonesty, hate of the self, selfishness, and the rule of the jungle where as long as I enrich myself, live comfortably and amass as much as I can while the sun shines, nothing else matters. I therefore, will get the needed degrees in the educational systems, go through the vetting processes to show how honest I am, stand and shout from roof tops and from pulpits. I shall state how honest I am, how caring I am, how selfless I am and how much I care for my neighbour. Yet, in the long run, under my very watch, thought and deed, my immediate brother and sister will continue to sink into poverty, die of hunger, of communicable diseases, of disasters, and of violence. Even then, I shall again go back to the state dais, to the academia platform, and to the pulpit, and still repeat how much I care; evidently, my words will in no way match my actions informed by the lifestyle I lead. No one knows what is my motivation.

Let’s have conversations with the self and with anyone that cares to listen, after going through the following African reflections.

The siren rented the air disturbing the peace of the silent and the serenity of the calm. Such a happening had never made so much sense before. It would never have made sense were it not that the occupant of the ambulance was a close relative in his twenties, struggling for his life. Given the situation and the closeness, I had to convert my small old car into a chase machine. Only then could I take advantage of the way that was being given to the ambulance, and follow closely. It was not amusing! Our common goal was to save life.

In the very end, he still bid farewell to the world. Fate would have it that he was destined for death anyway, and that his day was due. The earth opened a portion of her belly, to allow the pronouncement of the all so well-known words, “dust to dust”. Tears rolled down the cheeks of a few who knew him; those for whom his living had meant something. Among them the mother and the siblings. Perhaps

in the crowd, was a lover who had not yet been brought to the public, who was struggling with dwindled hopes of a meant life of togetherness. With the planting of the cross and the laying of the wreaths however, the familiar bacon of, “do not leave the tea and the food prepared for guests”, was sounded. The crowd started drifting away from where the remains had been permanently placed, life had to move on, for this is the destiny of each mortal. Yet what was the lesson? Why had he been born in the first place? Why had he at all been part of my life?

Joe, now deceased had worked for women of God. When I was called upon and requested to join the convoy that was accompanying him to hospital, the family had decided to rush him to a premise owned and run by the women of God. Having been referred for specialized treatment in a higher health facility, the people of God, so certain of the word of God, thought of a safe haven in a place of God, where they dreamed of prompt attention.

I joined the convoy right at the entrance of the supposedly safe haven. All had a somber mood as we looked at the struggling soul. Yet there was immense relief as we had made it to the gates on time. The boys and girls in white coats did their speedy rounds under the supervision of a few women of God in white robes. He was in safe hands.

He was placed on a stretcher and was quickly wheeled into a waiting room at the emergency ward. Intravenous was administered as the murmurs made sense that he was low on salts, sugars and fluids. This was as a result of the profuse vomiting that had been part of his main activity in the last six or so hours. As this was going on, one of his even closer relatives had been called in to an office. I guess this was the administrative office linked to the finance. He later came out and called three or four of us to a corridor end, away from the rest.

“They are asking for 300,000KSHs in cash in order to admit him!” One of those that we were with, made a sound as to desire a repeat or a clarification of what we had heard. This was given promptly and further explanation added. A few thoughts raced in my mind: the patient had no health insurance card except that of the National Health Insurance Fund, which could not be accepted in this hospital; it was seven in the evening and so banks were closed; I knew no relative or friend that would have such amounts of cash in their home or office premise; there was no money transfer services then that would allow us to contribute and come up with the moneys required. The list of questions was endless amidst the confusion. I guess I was not alone, as the others were also talking in low tones.

Soon we were joined by a few of the others that we had left around the patient. The vomiting was increasing and the hospital could not do anything more; we did not have the required amount for them to proceed with the treatment. The declaration had been stated and the giver of the directives, presumably the women of God acting based on orders from above, were in no view. The nurse who had been in the ambulance that had brought the patient advised that we needed to transfer him to a government facility. In such public amenities, there were hopes of admittance as moneys would be looked for later. The option was to watch as he wriggled to death with no action towards saving his life. We thus opted for the transfer. This we did, but within hours of arrival, he was pronounced dead.

I am neither a medic nor a diviner and so not privy to reasons for the death. I however, at times wonder what the situation would have been if he had been speedily and promptly attended to. I cannot also fail to continue placing myself in the positions of those who having lesser resources than what God has bestowed me with, have had such patients and experiences.

I am clear that health institutions must run on the stringent resources that come from the payments that patients make on entry. I am also certain that there have been scores of persons that have sought assistance with promises to pay, only to abscond and leave the health institutions with debts to clear.

I am just not so sure what to say or do, I am just placing the card of what I experienced on the table, with the hope that we one day could open up a conversation based on the right things.

Away from the experience for which I desist to give a commenting adjective, the men of God, the men of the state as well as those of the academia must run. I send you my indulgence for use of the word “men”, I actually mean human beings.

Some apparent reflections on the men of God?

They must spread the word of God. Such is their calling and mandate. On our part as the congregants, we must continue to furnish them with the needed resources for them to execute their mandate. These resources include the appropriate yet conspicuous attire befitting the men of God. The vestments have to be right so that they reflect and are comfortable with the rich and the poor; with the educated and the illiterate of the congregants. The vestments also have to be diverse to accommodate the different situations which oscillate from the happiest of wedding moments to the saddest of funeral situations. They also have to reflect the royalty, the priestly and the prophetic representations of their offices. Also with the dressing, there are other instruments of service delivery. They include vehicles and even electronic gadgets. The cost of these keeps escalating with the improved technology.

Also, for the men of God to realize their calling, they need the resources in order to place them at a lifestyle where they do not get engrossed in thoughts of poverty and so fail to deliver. For they that are celibate, their lifestyle costs are for the individual. However, a consideration needs to be accorded to their families of origin. How can one serve in calm, when there has been a call from an ageing parent that cannot afford hospital fees or is even struggling with basic needs among them food? For they that have partners and children, the congregants have to provide for an appropriate lifestyle for the entire. This includes the provision of basic needs of a family that befits the title men of God.

In addition to the attire, and to the facilities, there is also the infrastructure. Prayer and worship centres must stand out. They need to be big enough to accommodate the numbers that are continuing to increase. They too must be comfortable enough to allow the inhabitants to settle and concentrate while they are going through the long hours of service. This wave also means that the costs to enlarge the centres as well as those to improve on their looks, continue to go up. Directly proportional, is meant to be the increase of the numbers that throng the centres, and the commitment needed from congregants in terms of the quantities to give. Such is the calling of the people of God here on earth, amidst other faith-based and social-based demands that the faith-based institutions must accomplish.

Would a conversation be sparked on how high the ceiling needs to be? To what level should the investments reflect the integral growth of the individuals and of the societies concerned? With the feared and well researched bug of consumerism and materialism, how do we gauge the stings emanating from the two? Virtue is at the centre of the men of God. It is a core pillar in the stamina that is required for a coherent and just society. Among the identifiable indicators are equality and equity. How does the giant that the men of God head desist from falling prey to worldliness and thus derail humanity towards divisive practices, cut-throat competition and integral rot? How can the pulpit, among its intended use, be used by you the men of God, to educate rather than to blame and issue solutions that are at times a portrayal of taking sides, and on an ‘it’s not me’ position?

Some apparent thoughts in reference to the men of State?

Traditional schools of thought interrogating politics elucidated different types of governments: monarchy (hereditary ruler controls and decides all); republic (people govern themselves without a monarch); democracy (ordinary citizens hold supreme power and all decisions ultimately come from the people); dictatorship (power in the hands of an individual with a small group deciding all); totalitarian (dictatorial government that controls all of citizens’ life); and theocracy (religious leaders control the government) (Types of Governments; Chapter 14. n.d).

If the monarch, or the (benevolent) dictator was a philosopher king: for whom “Virtue is knowledge” and where “Knowledge is ‘beauty without beautiful things’”, justice “each person performing his duties as per the dominant element of their personality” would prevail (Sarin, 2021). If a democracy would elect a philosopher king, then again right for all would prevail, a nations’ progress with equality and equity would be prevalent. In addition, such a philosopher king would be in a position to nominate other lesser philosophers that would in turn ensure that all progresses. However, the reality among us as the electing individuals, founded on our ignorance and dishonesty, hate of the self, selfishness, and the rule of the jungle mentality, vote wrong leaders. In addition, we hardly follow up to keep them on toes and ensure that they deliver. As long as I am profiting, then all is well. This means that these leaders have a cake and a knife to themselves. What then is expected of the individuals, some of whom the bug of corruption and ethnicity propelled them to the heights they enjoy? In times of crises, when we attempt to come together to vouch for justice, our intentions are faulty for they are filled with underlying vice. It is for that reason that we easily and speedily crumble; it is for that reason that each time we are on state dais, academia platforms and on pulpits, we deceive the ignorant populace by pointing a finger at the other; it is for that reason that the prey easily turns the predator. Efforts towards imminent delivery cannot be long lasting and can hardly be profitable.

Our state leaders are meant to collect taxes for the country to run. None of us is of the admiration of anarchy, of a stateless group of people manned by militias. In case you had not thought about it, kindly reflect a little on our neighbour Somali or on the other neighbour South Sudan; more so in times when they had no one at the helm. Do not forget to also throw a glance at Haiti. They say that patience is at the bottom of heaven, and also that decisions arrived at based on emotions hardly point to the right direction. As the taxes are collected, no one has the expectation that these will be swindled and that they will end up in the pockets of individuals, enriching the selves and their immediate families, while impoverishing their very faithful subjects. Negatively so, we cannot remain blind to this fact. It is not surprising then, that unimaginable monies will be spent during campaigns, and if need be, eliminations may be considered, to ensure that this coveted seat is secured. Yet, since the way to address the matter through demonstrations, courts, dais, pulpits and even academia platforms does not appear to have yielded transformative fruit, there needs to be a re-thinking of strategy. May the few benevolent philosopher rulers that we have project a path of “let’s talk’ rather than that of blame, and “it’s not me” position. May we see you standing out, even when it is not the wave of the majority.

Some apparent thoughts for and with the Academia

Universities were a dream for many of us as we were growing up. The professors carried themselves with the aura that warranted them the huge titles. In case it missed you, they were called “Dons”. I am not so sure I understand where the title was from or what it exactly meant. While they were never the wealthiest of the statesmen and women that we interacted with, they were very honourable and admirable. That does not mean that all were “good.” This is a generalization befitting the subject today.

At the universities that I attended, the talks and conversations were extremely educative and informative. With the knowledge that I was able to siphon from these institutions, today I am able to put bread on the table, and live what I would term as a decent life. The courses responded to the needs of the nations. The academia led in guiding the nation towards relevant education, competencies and skills that were needed then; to fill positions mainly of the service jobs that were all over, based on our youthful nation.

Today the dynamics have changed where increased reduction of these service jobs is rampant. Or rather their numbers not match the demand. There are however, blue, green and even digital jobs that show the direction to which the world is heading. There even has been a consideration of jobs in other parts of the world, where our youth are needed in order to create a world balance. Yet back at home,

the fact that scores of graduates continue to remain in the streets with hardly any ability to put food on the table, is a conversation that calls for institutionalization; for a sober, emotionless and selfless discussion. While it is all right to pursue the in-things, so that the tertiary colleges do not sink into redundancy following unmet financial demands, it is worth throwing a glance at the future of a nation. With the huge research abilities that you have, with the ability to go through huge chunks of literature, and with the access to success stories in the developed Europe, America, and the recently speedily developing Asian Tigers and Latin America, we need advice from you the academia. I am not sure how best this is to be done. Desist from the quick defeatist statement that “our voices cannot be heard”. The platforms you would command in togetherness, rather than in competition, could certainly create a voice. This voice is needed, if not audibly, at least legibly.

Parting Shot

Leaders are meant to be servants per excellence but certainly the human tilt towards selfish satisfaction often overrides and impairs the intended virtue. On our part as the citizenry, we are meant to first desist from falling into the pathway that some leaders so often yet easily open up for us; being divided and hence be ruled. When we do so, they wait for the heat to subside, then under the waters, continue their game (the corrupt continue accruing more; those that permanently want to remain in power continue setting themselves ready for coming elections; others continue nurturing their children to come and rule our children when they and us shall be gone). There are some that may continue doing good, but remember the thorn that marks us as Africans and I guess marks any human being that is let loose. We too have little choice as citizens, but to pay taxes (for men of the state) and contribute (for men of God) and pay fees (for men of the academia); only then can all these noble institutions run. However, there is also need to critically look at how the resources are spent, and hold the leaders to account; they are but human. Finally, and I think more importantly, we have to embrace the ideal, “we are therefore I am” (Ogude, 2019). Only then shall we realize that we are stewards (Francis, 2013) in a world that we inherited, thanks to the generations that came before us. We are thus meant to hand over the baton, safely to the coming generations; none of us is Alfa and Omega; I have an end at my burial, when the crowds will be reminded to go and take tea and the food for the mourners. Also, there is need to reflect on sustainability. This means that I should never do anything that jeopardizes future generations (Emina, 2021). Do my jeopardizing future generations not amount to evil? Is this not what we are easily doing by embracing the “me, I and myself” principle? How much can and should I embrace my critical thinking?

NB: Allow me to borrow from a statement that the Catholic faithful use at some place at the start of the Mass: *Mea Culpa, Mea Culpa, Mea Maxima Culpa* (Quinan, 2013). This translates for *Through my fault, Through my fault, Through my most grievous fault*; and in Swahili *Nimekosa mimi, Nimekosa mimi, Nimekosa sana*. How I wish that each of us would start a conversation with the self and with those close to us, from the disposition that “I am wrong”. The pointing of fingers, based on an exoneration of the self from guilt, and making myself the holier than thou, while accusing the other, is a repeated wrong position that each of us has chosen to hold. It is not surprising then that the problem that we encounter could easily continue escalating.

References

- Emina, K. A. (2021). Sustainable Development and the Future Generations. *Social Sciences, Humanities and Education Journal (SHE Journal)*, 2 (1) 57 – 71, Available at <http://e-journal.unipma.ac.id/index.php/SHE>.
- Francis (Pope). (2013). *Catholic Social Teaching on Care for Creation and Stewardship of the Earth*. Available at <https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/environment/environmental-justice-program/upload/Environmental-Primer.pdf>.
- Ogude, J. (2019). 'I Am Because We Are': The African Philosophy of Ubuntu. Available at <https://www.ttbook.org/interview/i-am-because-we-are-african-philosophy-ubuntu>.
- Quinan, D. (2013). Questions Liturgiques: "Mea Culpa, Mea Culpa, Mea Maxima Culpa" Available at https://www.academia.edu/6835763/Questions_Liturgiques_Mea_Culpa_Mea_Culpa_Mea_Maxima_Culpa
- Sarin, N. (2021). Plato's Philosopher king: It's relevance in contemporary era. *International Journal of Political Science and Governance*, 3(2), 138-139. Available at <https://www.journalofpoliticalscience.com/uploads/archives/3-2-31-786.pdf>.
- Types of Governments; Chapter 14. (n.d). Available from <https://www.rcboe.org/cms/lib/GA01903614/Centricity/Domain/4449/Types%20of%20Government%20Systems.pdf>.