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Message From the President

Dear colleagues:

When the Oromo Studies Association (OSA) was formed twenty-five years ago the world was totally different from today. At that time I was a student at the Moscow Veterinary Academy. As was the case in the Ethiopian empire, in the former USSR, it was unthinkable to form an independent scholarly organization and study issues relevant to the Oromo people. It was at this historical juncture, twenty-five years ago, that few visionary scholars decided to form the OSA in the USA. Ever since, many things have been changing locally and globally. Some of the changes are desirable and some are not. At that time, if Oromo students spoke in their native language they were referred as Xebaabi (narrow) as if Amharic language was more widely spoken than the Oromo language. Now, Afaan Oromo is a working language in Oromia. At that time the map of Oromia existed only in the mind of the few; now it is part of the global map. These changes give us hope and invigorate us to be forward looking. Nevertheless, in Oromia today, the poverty level is increasing, the natural forests of Oromia are fast disappearing and malaria free zones of Oromia are becoming malaria prone zones and HIV/AIDS is taking the lives of the young and the most productive group. In addition, Iodine deficiency, which is known to affect the educability and mental capacity of children as well as maternal health, is widespread. Human rights violations are widespread and Oromo refugees are now all over the world. These problems remind us the challenges ahead of us.

Since the OSA was formed in 1986, globally several positive changes have occurred. The idea of human rights, equity & diversity and social justice are now becoming the leading ideology. At the same time, groups, individuals, institutions and states that are committed to maintaining their privileges are working hard to extend their privileges and they are engaged in maneuvering and distorting realities. These groups only give lip services to poverty, diseases and human rights violations. We have clearly seen this in 2010 when Columbia University invited the Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, a person who is charged in genocide and who is deliberately burned the natural forests of Oromia, to be a keynote speaker. What is it that the Columbia University wants to learn from Mr. Zenawi? What is the message that this prestigious university is passing on to other dictators like Mr. Zenawi? The statement of the Development Agency Group (DAG) on Human Rights Watch report *Development without Freedom: How Aid Underwrites Repression in Ethiopia* is another example. This reveals that the monolithic Euro-American view that allowed colonialism and then justified the colonial agendas as civilizing missions (acted as healers) did not learn from history. These are the good examples of the challenges and the opportunities that the OSA should take seriously.

The challenging part is, the institutions such as the Columbia University that supposed to be engaged in research and produce knowledge that promotes the empowerment of people, regard for human rights, social transformation, sustainable development and environmental sustainability is involved in providing a forum for the Ethiopian Prime Minister who is charged in

crimes against humanity. The DAG members' very often use the rhetoric of development, which resonates the idea of civilizing mission and fund the Ethiopian Prime Minister who is engaged in incapacitating the Oromo people. The opportunity rests on the fact that many of the Euro-American institutions and individuals still function in their own epistemology. They are not prepared to see the world other than their own angles. This gives the OSA the opportunity to tell these policy makers that their experience does not necessarily represent the lived realities of Oromo people. We need to make it clear that, just as Euro-American experiences are true and valid for the Euro-American peoples the Oromo experiences are true and valid for the Oromo people. Given that the Oromo people are the single largest ethnic group in the Ethiopian empire and the Horn of Africa, any policy that does not consider their experiences and needs are subjected to be void. We need to insist that the Euro-American racist theories and practices that have contributed in the formation of the Ethiopian empire do not remain the guiding ideology in twenty-first century. We need to remind them that the capacity building policies and practices that do not take into account the colonial power relation between Abyssinians and the Oromo people will not achieve its desired goals. We need to inform them that the Oromo people better know their own problems; and that they are in a better position to identify their own needs and find culturally acceptable and financially feasible solutions. In fact, the struggle of Oromo people for self-determination is rooted on the fact that they are in a better position to manage their social, economic, political, cultural and environmental affairs.

Knowledge is power and identifying and raising research issues that are more relevant to the Oromo people have a major role in their empowerment, ending the colonial power relations and in promoting justice, equity and diversity in Oromia and the Greater Horn.

Research is seen as gathering of data and information for the advancement of new knowledge. OSA research enquiry is about asking questions from the perspective of the Oromo people and trying to answer them or solve their problems. The problems that the Oromo people are facing are very complex and no field of studies has a monopoly in providing answers. Understanding this, the OSA as a scholarly organization needs to further strengthen research collaborations between different fields of studies and attract more scholars.

This year the theme of the OSA Mid Year conference is: Re-examining Theories and Practices of Human Capacity Building in Oromia and the Greater Horn of Africa and Challenging Misguided Practices. As my grandmother, who was well versed in the Waqefaata thinking said, "namaati hindarbiin namniss siiti hindarbiin—never trespass against others and never let others to trespass against you" the Executive Committee Members of OSA, decided to be proactive and decided to open the door for other scholars to join us in searching for just world in Oromia and the Greater Horn of Africa. I hope our OSA scholars and other presenters will take a critical look at the theories and practices surrounding capacity building and identify the gaps between theories and practices.

The 2011 annual OSA conference is the 25th anniversary of the formation of the association. To make it special this year the conference will take place for three days. The theme of the conference is: Building Transformative and Dynamic Leadership and Facilitating the Empowerment of People in Oromia and the Greater Horn of Africa. Understanding the role of leadership in the transformation of a society and hoping to foster the development of communities, institutions, and national leadership in Oromia and the Greater Horn of Africa, the Executive Committee Members of OSA chose the theme of the conference to be leadership. I hope that, in this conference we will learn about the challenges that the Oromo people face in developing their own leadership and the opportunities that they have. We will also learn about the strengths and the weaknesses of Gada leadership, what we need to adapt, drop and modify for the contemporary world.

Knowledge is power and identifying and raising research issues that are more relevant to the Oromo people have a major role in their empowerment, ending the colonial power relations and in promoting justice, equity and diversity in Oromia and the Greater Horn. Before I bring this letter to an end, let me stress again what knowledge can do as I quote from the UNESCO Constitution that says, " Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defence of peace must be constructed. "

Thank you,

Galatooma,

Begna Fufa Dugassa., PhD

A paper presented at 2010 Oromo Studies Association's annual conference
July 31, 2010, Howard University
Washington DC

On the Unity of Ethiopia: Three Political Homilies

A. Beyene

Abstract

Among all possible scenarios, a Google search of "Ethiopian unity" starts with listing political parties: All Ethiopian Unity Party, Finote Democracy: Voice of Ethiopian Unity, Kinijit All Ethiopia Unity Party, Ethiopian Unity Diaspora Forum, etc, and goes into the millions. The commonality of unity to all the parties listed has a connotation of unique loyalty to unity, upfront. In the following discussion, an attempt is made to show that these parties are desperately passionate about the borders of Ethiopia, with nervousness that seems to emanate from the previous loss of a province, to which is now added another growing separatist sentiment in the country. These passionate guards of Ethiopian borders however, would willingly compromise human rights and democracy for the sake of unity. One also calls to mind that Ethiopian political setting, pulled apart by three political homilies, is not ready for a genuine unity. For this irrational political order of the day, one blames political parties that devotedly and unconditionally impose Ethiopian unity without sympathy or solidarity with the victims of the unity. Ethiopia's unaddressed urban trauma of the late 70s, the marks of the Red Terror still visible all over the social landscape of the country, has produced activists whose meaning of life has become fighting indefinitely, a phenomenon more deeply concerning than the democratization of the country. This untreated trauma, common to all ethnic and nationality groups, is also a primary cause of the lingering problems all peoples of Ethiopia face. Below I will interlink these issues as a personal overview.

I. Introduction

All Ethiopian political parties formed over the last two decades are different from their predecessors in that they are born with distinct aspiration and primary purpose of guarding the Ethiopian unity, yet advocating and using the word unity as a black box. They seem shy of enlisting what really is in the unity of Ethiopians. This new style of self absorbance with unity as a means and a goal particularly distinguishes Amhara nationalism and its political platform of the last two decades. The listing of the content, the mention of Oromo, Amhara, etc., would unsettle the absoluteness of their view of unity, and provoke at least a debate about conditions and criteria for the claimed unity, an uncomfortable discourse especially for groups that still mourn the loss of Eritrea, more precisely, the loss of access to the sea.

From the names of the mentioned parties, it is not clear as to what is to be united within Ethiopia as the peripheral box. And yet, recognition and acceptance of this abstract unity at its face value is a sufficient entry into their political camps, everything else seems minor and

sacrificial. As loyalty to the party ideal, it is expected, or preferred, or even imperative that one shall exclude listing identity nationalities or ethnic groups by their names. This seems to be the case even when unity is not openly declared as part of the adopted name. For example, I have heard the leader of Ginbot Sebat state that his party is willing to discuss with any political group that accepts Ethiopian unity – a condition which may qualify more non-Ethiopian parties than Ethiopian. Acceptance of Ethiopian unity here, as with the above mentioned parties, is a prerequisite for any discussion, proudly presented as a non-negotiable ritual. It defies logic, that so many parties that stand for unity with little or no political differences remain not united. The classical concept of Ethiopian unity, the beginning of which is credited to Tewodros, an emperor whose severely traumatized childhood is blamed for his extreme ruthlessness, is now re-celebrated by multiple parties, none of which have the military muscle to bring others under a united political roof.

In the United States of America, the States are entities that are united. In European Union, the European countries are signatories of the union and they form the content of the box in the making. Even most Ethiopian political parties of the 1970s are clear in their nomenclature. Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Party (EPRP) for example, is an amalgam of revolutionaries as the name implies, and one is debarred if one is not a communist revolutionary. Another pre-1991 party, the Ethiopian Democratic Union assembled the democrats, regardless of the view of the observer in accepting the democratic claim of the party. The All Ethiopian Socialist Movement party (popularly known as MEISON) called for all Ethiopians to join it, Ethiopians of no explicit content, but for a no less revolutionary venture than EPRP's. "All Ethiopia" was as close as the revolution could get towards embracing the South.

No doubt that Ethiopian unity has become a uniting ideology to some, an ulterior political purpose, far and beyond a tool envisaged to promote a healthy social development. It is not recognized as a process to be started, and then to be built up on, en route to a more perfect union. Ethiopian parties of Amhara dominance entered the millennium with a firm slogan for unconditional unity which is also countered with unconditional, but perhaps less perceptible disapproval of unity by parties of Oromo, Somali, etc., dominance. And yet, both groups of unity interpreters pretend not knowing about the presence or relevance of the other. The Tigrean dominated political party now in power, the TPLF, positions itself in between these major conflicts, capitalizing on their sharp contradictions, and by default claiming a stance that yields it a more strategic ally of the South than the Amharas. The Oromos and others now have to choose between 1) a return to Amhara dominance disguised under a unity emblem, and 2) a continued political and economic subjugation by the TPLF. Although the political inertia has gravitated Oromos and others towards the TPLF, they can't really seem to make up their minds. The senior Amhara establishments by and large are unwilling to give up their cultural dominance despite it seems their imperial dream has suffered irreversibly. The Tigrean click is unwilling to surrender political power and genuinely democratize the country. This complex situation has created three political homilies, each in defiance of the others. We will return to this later.

Thus, promoted as a consecrated ideology, unity of the Ethiopian unionists has also become an alienating precondition condemned by many who are not convinced about, or unconvincingly targeted by the unity. Paradoxically, both unionists and their opposition exclusively cater their messages for their own loyal members. A debate outside their comfort zones is usually avoided by both, except by those who specialize in waging open internet struggle anonymously. The wide spread condescending tones and at times foul languages do not allow the parties to even share a room with each other.

Reiterating, Ethiopian unity has emerged as a preeminent political essential for the major Amhara dominated political parties, and, at the same time, a “must be avoided” political taboo for many South-centered parties. The Orthodox Church priests have prayed for Ethiopian unity, but at the same time Orthodox followers have died to dismantle this same unity. Those who died in such actions have become celebrated heroes while other citizens of the same country condemned the martyrs as villains, hatefully exhibiting their dead bodies on the streets and on TV for a passionate disgrace, unworthy of mankind, certainly not worthy of a human citizen with whom a potential unity is sought. Legesse Wagi, one of the OLF commanders killed by the regime few years ago, was treated as such, but became an Oromo hero whose picture, with his braided hair, is a screen saver for hundreds of young Oromos in Minneapolis. The pictures of artist Ebisaa Adunya holding his guitar upright, has now found a permanent façade at California community meetings. He was murdered for singing unflattering song about TPLF brutality. I see no reason why Legesse or Ebissa shall not be heroes of all Ethiopia, their pictures posted in the front offices of Voice of Ethiopian Unity party, Kinijit Unity Party, Ethiopian Unity Diaspora Forum, etc. The Ethio-centric unionists shall learn how to mourn the death of a young Oromo artist as a common loss, and gain an Oromo trust before they demand an Oromo alliance. The beautiful tradition of mourning a loss as a truly united community independent of ethnic and nationality is common in Ethiopian traditions of all peoples until the Derg killed compassion and affection by killing innocent people and posting their dead bodies on the streets. For an Oromo, Legesse’s or Ebissa’s death is no less painful than that of an Amhara emperor or a Tigrean General. I only named these two victims as an example; the jails of Ethiopia are but full of Legesses and Ebisaas. The TPLF has become extremely brutal, and by all international accounts including Amnesty International, Africa Watch, Genocide Watch, and Oromia Support Group, it has shown excessive brutalities against Ogadeni Somalis, Beni Shangul, and Gambella citizens, brutalities at times qualified as genocide.

Despite the prayers and the massive army protecting the Ethiopian unity, at least one part or party has succeeded in separating from Ethiopia and establishing an independent state. The second party, the TPLF who fought the military regime, would have easily seceded had it so chosen, but it preferred capturing the entire state and punishing the civilian population by terror for a terror it suffered from the Derg - a generational revenge which could repeat in a vicious cycle.

Ambitions aside, the multitude of parties established for the purpose of guarding Ethiopian unity is indicative of the reactive nervousness to those who are willing to undermine the inviolability of unity. This nervousness often fuels a heated and recurrently perverse political

temperature. A political conference organized in Washington DC a year or so ago qualifies as one. The meeting joyfully gathered the scholarly guardians of unity, but angered many who interpreted it as a reincarnation of Menelekian unity cooked by Machiavellian maneuvers. In short, it is my firm observation that those parties that devotedly and unconditionally impose Ethiopian unity without sympathy or solidarity with the victims of the unity are at the forefront of those who do damage to Ethiopian unity. There is no iota of reason why Amharas alone should be the custodians of Ethiopian unity any more than Wolaitas; or a Tigrean more in charge of Ethiopian economy than a Gurage; or an Oromo shall be the only one who should fight against injustice perpetrated against Oromos or others. All these irregularities are common in today's Ethiopia, and they unmistakably encapsulate the flaws of Ethiopian unity which I will address below in more details.

The call for unity as an Amhara centric ideology is so widespread that even businesses are using the emotional outburst to make profit. There is Unity Hotel, Unity Bar, Unity (Hibret) Bank, and even Unity College in Finfinne. Yet, anything purely and clearly Oromo is forbidden or sabotaged. Even loyal political parties cannot function without clearly declaring their loyalty to Ethiopian Unity. Of the two independent Oromo parties functioning in the country, only Oromo Federalist Party is allowed to keep the name because of its implied loyalty to Ethiopian unity by adopting federalism. The other party, the Oromo National Congress was sabotaged by the TPLF which infiltrated and planted the leadership illegally. The government financed the planted group which simply took over the party office and documents. Such intervention and segmentation of parties is common throughout Ethiopia. The government has used its muscle to fragment even professional organizations – Ethiopian Teachers Association was created while the legal association was in office, and leaders were jailed or threatened into giving up their legitimate duties and offices. When complains go to court, the Kangaroo judges simply rubber stamp the orders and wishes of the government. Associations of lawyers, journalist, etc, all faced fragmentation by government interference. The only case where the government failed to fragment is the Macca Tullama Association, - in which case the leaders are constantly jailed and tortured, making it effectively none existent.

This diehard sentiment about unity is not coming from marginal old guards of the defunct monarchy; we hear these posturing about unity at all major Ethiopian political gatherings, from DC to London. I have sensed for decades, that the tone in most Ethiopian political parties is not forbearing of qualms on the absoluteness of unity, and if one challenges their versions of Ethiopian unity, it is common for one to be labeled as the enemy of Ethiopia. The Ethio-centric attitude is often willing to “punish” the wide-spread Oromo demands and resistance sentiments in all fronts, even at public places, where, for example, Oromo music is often boycotted. In a sense, the mainstream Ethio-Amharic politics has already estranged Oromos doing the same things they accuse independence movement of Oromos of instigating.

Social Identity and identity politics

The driving principle of unity of a concealed content, vis-à-vis aggressively displayed Ethiopian nationalism without nationalities or ethnicities - is at times justified by Social Identity Theory proposed by Tajfel and Turner in the 1970s. The theory was developed as a tool to better understand the psychological underpinnings of intergroup discrimination. According to the theory, “a person has not one ‘personal self’, but rather several selves that correspond to widening circles of group membership.” Some Ethiopian political scholars, including the leader of Ginbot Sebat as a guest of OSA, mistook this theory and attempted to oppose ethnicity or nationality as a basis for creating a unity of sorts. The existence of multiplicity of identity in one person is acceptable. Hierarchical adoption of these multiple identities, and using one of the identities as a basis to organize, is superbly legitimate and often essential. Identity based group formation as a reaction to identity based injustice is not in the wrong. Workers, whose identity can be defined by their profession, are often united against job discrimination or malpractice, defending their rights using labor unions. Women have organized themselves to fight for women’s rights. Scholars have created organizations that promote indigenous knowledge, and OSA is but one example. It is time to appreciate the coming of Oromia National Bank, Oromia National University, Oromia National Health Center, Oromia Human Rights League, etc., and not time to deny a healthy and natural growth of a society. Opposing the tools of identity based defensive struggle against identity based offensive cruelty is asking for capitulation to injustice. There is no such theory.

Opposing the tools of identity based defensive struggle against identity based offensive cruelty is asking for capitulation to injustice.

Since time immemorial, oppressed identities have united to fight their oppressors, and such unity has earned them better freedom and democracy more often than not. Greeks defended their tribes and territories against Persians, Cartesians against Romans, etc. It is unfair to tell Oromos not to organize as Oromos when Oromo identity is brutally attacked by another identity, the TPLF in the current case. Note that the current abuse replaced Amhara domination that lasted more than a century. The definition of intolerable identity politics should apply to identity abusers, not to those who defend their identities as a fundamental right. Political scholars who want to keep their cultural and economic domination are in fact promoting identity politics. Instead, they should object to ethnic domination, and do so before they call for Ethiopian unity. Those who are against identity politics should reconcile their action with their words and join the victims in fighting identity injustice. Identity politics becomes malicious when scholars and democrats from abusive ethnic groups close their eyes to the injustice committed against other identities. Injustice against Oromos shall not be a private business of Oromos. Unfortunately, the Ethiopian unionists are busy promoting an anti-OLF missive, instead of supporting the OLF in its struggle to bring the sufferings of the Oromo people to an end. This anti-OLF stance is not a logical step towards the formation of unity. The

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weakness of the OLF only prolongs the misery of the Oromo people and that of Ethiopia by extension. This is not to say that Ethiopian political parties are responsible for OLF's weakness; the OLF's beloved cadres are primarily responsible for that, but that is a completely separate issue for now.

Two sources of Ethiopia's political problem

History teaches us that it is possible to overcome feudal traditions to build a just and democratic society. In fact, this should be fairly easy in Ethiopia, where until recently about half of the population practiced traditional democratic values and systems such as the Gada. Ethiopia faces two problems in making such a transition:

1. Ethiopia has a much deeper wound than that which can be cured by separation, unity, or democratization of the country. Terror leaves a long lasting trauma, and this has been well documented by psychologists all over the world. For this reason, soldiers are counseled after wars, if possible. Those who are ignored are pushed to the margins of the society. Many psychological victims of the Vietnam War are still homeless and street beggars in the USA, in the richest country that could offer the best science and technology for its citizens. In our modern time, there are many proofs that the battle field winner loses no less than the loser, and that war of any sort is likely a negative sum game, a loss to all sides. Unfortunately the offensive brutality of the regime is the one that has to stop the war first. In the 1970s, the Derg waged an official terror against its own citizens. In those terror years, killing was more common for the young than going to the movie. Families of the deceased were billed on the spot for the bullet spent to kill young children suspected of opposing the regime. Today, few who were associated with the Ethiopian Red Terror directly or indirectly are aware that they suffer from a serious trauma that needs psychological counseling. In fact, survivors of the 1970s and 80s of urban Ethiopia need a grand counseling, a psychological cleansing of immense proportions. Talking about democracy to a battered society may be a futile effort. The survivors, both the perpetrators and the victims, who deserve our deepest sympathy, come from all ethnic groups and nationalities. Many of the victims of the Red Terror never stopped fighting in their minds, and many with political power still wage wars against innocent civilians, and those who managed to escape, continue waging anonymous internet wars from their Diaspora homes, decades after the official end of the Red Terror. They fight a perceived enemy; an Oromo who could not find an Amhara or a Tigre in his or her reach will pick his or her arms or pen against a fellow Oromo because the only definition of life he or she sees is fighting. The problem can be long-lasting because unfortunately trauma is inherited. A traumatized society fails to take care of his young, and Finfine's young are likely the most affected as they were in the heart of the battleground. This plainly shows in Finfinne, a city full of bars, restaurants, and flashy nightclubs, without a single infrastructure built for the young over the last few decades, no play ground, no park, no stadium, not even a single public swimming pool. Life's inertia goes about fighting - building the entire infrastructure needed for a perpetual fight. Even the country's sport institutions could not escape this trauma, and Ethiopia's football federation was ejected from FIFA for its symptoms of this trauma. The playgrounds of the city of 1960s and 70s were partitioned for a cadre residence or a TPLF entrepreneur. It is shocking as it is worrisome because even a democratic, but traumatized society cannot take care of its young, and without a properly raised

young, the future is grim. A war shocked society, facing severe deforestation and natural degradations must place its priorities in order, and mobilize all its citizens for a no easy task of the future. It is widely off-track as of now.

2. As stated above, the parallel loss of Eritrea and the state power among Ethiopia's unionists gave birth to a defeatist mood in some circles, breeding a political paranoia of transforming unity to an ideology, a target philosophy in itself. Ethiopian conferences are organized for the sole purpose of condemning those who oppose the sanctity of unity, and no fewer meetings are counter-organized to nullify and condemn this celebration of unity. Guerilla wars mushroomed to fight the regime which symbolizes the unity, and organizations are formed to irritate this same unity and face a mightier war machine and intolerance from the Center. The defeatist mood also affects many Southerners including Oromos. For example, the mere friendship of an Oromo with an Amhara or a Tigrean is at times condemned as if such hate facilitates liberation. During the weeks preceding the 2010 Oromo Studies Association's annual conference, I invited a notable non-Oromo unionist for participation in a panel I proposed on the Ethiopian political accounting of the last two decades. Some Oromos then saturated a website fiercely condemning the discussion before the discussion took place, without any reason whatsoever – before they heard the content of the speeches. The ferocious condemnations and foul plays against contending views always measure the intensity of the battered mentality. But in this case the contending views were not presented yet; the “to be held” forum was condemned a priori nonetheless – a clear symptom of the perpetual fighter syndrome – still fighting, creating a superficial target when obvious target is not visible, and with hidden identity when the fight may seem logically compromised and indefensible. This defeatist mood of health condition forms symmetry with the wickedness observed among unionists, and it is indeed at the forefront of voices that do damage to the Oromo struggle, albeit I am not entirely sure if they are indeed Oromos.

Alas, for an outside observer, it is difficult to understand why so much ado about Ethiopian unity, - objecting or defending the unity, in either cases to death – literally. In Ethiopian unity, there is more than what meets the eye. In short, dictating unity as a prerequisite to people who continue suffering within the imposed unity is not logical. Why can't democrats of Amharas, Tigreans, etc. join all oppressed people of Ethiopia to forge a conscious unity of struggle against so plainly documented injustices? It is difficult for the oppressor to overcome the oppressor's mindset, and yet this is the easiest step towards starting a viable mutually accepted unity, based on equality and justice. If this is not an option, separation is better than endless war, degrading poverty, and ruthless domination all in the name of unity.

In short, dictating unity as a prerequisite to people who continue suffering within the imposed unity is not logical.

II. Religion does not offer a guideline for unity

The role religions play in forging Ethiopian unity is beyond the scope of this paper. However, I would like to make myself clear, that in my opinion religion shall not be expected to facilitate unity, nor can it serve as a guideline.

In Christianity, unity emerges from the doctrine of Trinity, the unity of three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in one Triune God. Trinity is thus the central dogma of Christian theology, but also the birth place of unity.

Christianity clearly discriminates in favor of the “Children of Israelites” also known as the Twelve Tribes who are defined as the descendants of the patriarch Jacob – given lands and kingdoms as mandated in Genesis 35. The term seems later to be expanded to cover all those who worship the God of the people of Israel, regardless of their ethnic origin. Nonetheless one is tickled by jealous for the clear exclusion of the children of Oromia or Amhara or, - with implied preference of the children of Israel. In modern Judaism the children of Israel are lay members of the Jewish faith. This is even a more discriminating verse or interpretation of Genesis 35. Simply stated, even a Christian shall accept that Christianity cannot serve as a guide to unite a nation of all religions as well as no religion.

The view of unity in Islam is not drastically different from that of Christianity. Qur’an states that the Mu’minoos (Believers) are united in a Brotherhood: “The Mu’minoos are but a single Brotherhood.” (The Holy Qur’an, 49:10). Or, “the Believers, men and women, are protectors of one another: they enjoin the ma`roof (all of Islam), and forbid the munkar (all that is evil; kufr): they observe regular prayers, pay Zakat, and obey Allah and His Messenger.” (The Holy Qur’an, 9:71). The non-believers are not called for any unity, and in fact, if the believers are protectors of one another, there are always some who claim to be more believers than others. Therefore the better believers will protect each other more than the less-believers. Clearly, Islam has no room for inclusion of non-believers.

As far more outcry to the role of religion in guarding civil liberties, none of these two Ethiopia’s major religions ever spoke about prosecution of innocent civilians, and ever upheld the tenets of their teachings in defending and helping the defenseless. The Orthodox Church that has co-governed the country for more than a century has never been able to stand for Ethiopia’s subjugated societies. The current Abun is in fact busy erecting his own statue for millions of dollars while in office, and shamelessly handling the opening ceremony himself. One cannot expect much of spiritual leadership from such orthodoxy.

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I am not intimately familiar with Oromo traditional religion, and I

invite any expert to cast some light on the view of Waqefata on unity. But religion and culture in Ethiopia suffer tremendously, and the current Ethiopian regime has outlawed Waqefata, a fact which may limit indigenous participation in a healthy discussion on unity.

III. Nature gives a hint for unity

Unity is common in nature. Birds and animals live on flocks. Even solitary animals are very willing to create sexual partners. Lions are willing to share with peers if there is abundant food. But cross-racial unity is rare in the animal world, - a lion and a hyena would never strike friendship, primarily because they have a strong conflict of interest – both sharing from the same pool of meal which is acquired after a hard and often bloody hunt. It seems that generally animals are willing to share and even unite in as long as there is a common interest to alleviate life's daily hardship. This instinct is common in human psychology, and one can say that unity is universally driven by mutual interest. The bond as husband and wife is the most common and intimate form of unity. However, even sexual partnership is not forever or universal; - monogamy and divorce are very common. In a fateful design of nature that endowed the female with larger body, the black spider kills her husband after mating – a story of love to death. Nature is not conclusive about unity at any level.

As a hint from the animal world we can suggest that among societies conflict of interest overrides any unity perhaps except family kinship. It is common to see wars over grazing lands or over access to water among the same ethnic groups or culturally monolithic societies. The dispute over the use of the Nile embroiling Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia, is a conflict of interest within a food chain. According to the UN, there are about 300 potential conflicts over water around the world. It seems a conflict of interest in the food chain is not negotiable for broader unity. This rational – the negation of unity on the issue of strong interest is highly prevalent in human psychology. Naturally, unity is better than solitary at the individual level because solitary confinement is a legal punishment. However, group unity is governed by interest; in the absence of a uniting purpose, unity cannot be assumed as a lead ideology.

IV. How is unity created?

Unity can be initiated voluntarily or involuntarily. However, it can only be sustained and transformed into a useful form after it is mutually accepted, voluntarily. The Ethiopian unity is involuntary, and there are multitude of callousness and shrewdness in its politics that make this involuntary unity very fragile. It takes a lot of good will and tolerance to switch involuntary unity to a sustainable voluntary unity. Many of the machinations designed and put in place to bypass the voluntary process of unity are downright stupid and damn-founded. For example, in the 1980s, following the Ethio-Somali war, Ethiopian politicians thought the Somali army infiltrated and captured Ogaden as far as Harar virtually unnoticed, primarily because the local Ogaden Somalis were not assimilated enough to be Ethiopians and protect their territory against Somali invasion. A grand project was put in place by Derg officials to move Wallo

Moslems, believed to be religious peers, and to Ethiopianize Ogadeni Somalis by dilution. Tens of thousands of Wallo citizens, mainly men, were amassed from the streets and forcedly transported to Ogaden where they were placed, kept in put by the military. The large number of male displacement, with negligible female, created a demographic imbalance and a social nightmare in the new location, as well as back in the evacuated villages. Female Wallo were garnered in mass and shipped to Ogaden to solve the problem. The matchmaking scheme didn't work. In fact, the terrible and callous experiment didn't work; it failed miserably like many of the other forced assimilation projects meant to unite the South. So, after the fall of the Derg, over tens of thousands of Wallo Moslems evacuated Ogaden and other places just in few weeks, many on foot to their long awaited homes and families. The brutality and mindlessness of this scheme is so telling of what Ethiopia's politicians can do to force unity of their liking. Such resettlement of people in order to forge unity without asking the will of the people was started during Haile Sellasie, and continued during the Derg.

The TPLF tried a more sophisticated method some years ago attempting to unify the Southern Peoples and Nationalities region by replacing the indigenous languages by a newly and artificially fabricated language of its own, known as Ogadugu. The trick was to destroy first, and then conversion would come easier. The scheme also didn't work, and the people burned the thousands of books that were supposed to be used by school kids to learn the new language. Thousands of people died in opposition, defending their cultural identity, and Ogadugu seems dead at least for now. In those years, the Wolaitas, Kaffichos, Sidamas, etc., fought and died for their identities alone, - not a single Amhara scholar who is always busy lecturing on the rewards of unity came in defense of the Southern Peoples, or the Wallo Moslems. I am positive that this is not how unity is created; it is how it is dismantled. Here is how it is created.

Bruce Tuckman (1965) writes unity or group formation is a process composed of four stages,

- i) Forming: assembly and introduction,
- ii) Storming: a chaotic vying for leadership,
- iii) Norming: reaching an agreement on how the group operates,
- iv) Performing: action and performance,

A fifth step, adjourning: the process of "unforming", was added later to incorporate a possible measure to eliminate the group structure as a done deal. As a research discipline, unity is addressed in social psychology or more narrowly, in community psychology, as well as in several other research disciplines such as urban sociology, social psychology, anthropology, etc. Among theories of sense of community proposed by psychologists, McMillan & Chavis (1986) has been very influential, and serves as the starting point for most of the recent research in the field.

Both religion, nature, and lastly the theory clearly prove that inclusive unity is not a natural gift. Ethiopian political parties whose goal and dictum is the Ethiopian unity see nothing of this less travelled road.

Wrong reaction

To the Ethiopian South, the erroneous political dogma of the unionists unduly left unity as something of unworthy concept. But there is ample evidence to show that properly designed

unity is very useful. In opposition to the misguided concept of unity, the Ethiopian South has been cornered into defying unity in all forms and at face value. However, two of the world's five largest economies, USA and UK have forged and used unity of some sort to build very strong economies. If we also include the European Union, four of the five are beneficiaries of unity. It is unwise to blindly oppose unity, simply because it is promoted as a political paranoia. In the USA, fifty states united by the House and the Senate; the Senate is intended to give states with smaller population equal standing with larger states, which are given more representation in the House (known as the Connecticut Compromise). While this great nation is still in the process of creating a more perfect union, Ethiopian parties are guarding a unity that the unionists paint as a done deal. Ethiopia is not unanimous about starting the process of unity from 1) forming: assembly and introduction because many claim to have reached stage 5) adopting uniformity.

Among states that forged a successful unity, we can mention the United Arab Emirates. Or, Tanzania, with a unity that survived decades - despite challenges in building a more perfect union. But some didn't work - Egypt and Syria began to unite in 1958 and did so until 1961 when Syria seceded. Egypt continued until 1971 to later withdraw.

Even after a common interest is identified, the process of creating unity can still be a struggle. The East African Community, originally founded in 1967, collapsed in 1977, was officially revived on 7 July 2000. The customs union in East Africa signed in March 2004 and commenced on 1 January 2005. In 2008, the Community agreed to an expanded free trade area including the member states.

These and many more case studies show that some unities work, some don't. Those that failed - failed because their mutual interests were not balanced. Where it works, it helps democracy and prosperity.

V. Ethiopia – three perceptions of unity

Above, I attempted to prove that the Ethiopian unity never started "forming", and the imposed unity never passed the 2nd stage of group formation. The historical run-down never offered an exclusively positive sentiment towards unity. This historical run-down can be summed up as follows:

- Emperor Tewodros' unity aimed at eliminating the Oromo from Ethiopia,
- Emperor Yohannes' unity ordered conversion of all Muslims to Christianity or face death,
- Emperor Menelik's unity was a war against the south,
- Emperor Haile Sellasie's unity promoted cultural domination of the Amhara at the cost of creating a unity of substance for all ethnic or nationality groups,
- The military of mid-70s to end of 80s was Marxist Leninist by ideology, and attempted to merge and cement the inherited unity with Stalinian maneuvers, which its successors replaced with Machiavelian. Genuine unity was never in the picture, it never overarched the imported ideology,

- The TPLF inherited unity with heavy symptoms of failure, so it had to raise the sophistication of the means and tactics. Unity in the new era also has a more intense purpose – it serves the financial pocket of the few, to a degree not known before.

The general sentiment about Ethiopian monarchy is amazingly different among Ethiopian nationalities. Tewodros, Menelik, etc., are great Ethiopian celebrity monarchs. However, they are viewed in the South as outright murderers. The facts about Tewodros for example, his hatred for Oromos (as expressed in his own letter to the Queen of England), and brutality against Oromos, such as the disfiguring of dead bodies and sending them in pieces to the parents of the victims, might have completely biased any further neutral reading of him by current generations. But, in the final analyses, we don't have to share heroes to unite or disunite.

In raising the damages done by Ethiopian monarchs here, I am not attempting to use history to justify or nullify Ethiopian unity. I am neither claiming retributions nor giving the emperors credit for establishing a united country that was really never united. Neither pre-existence of unity, nor its historical absence is as such sufficient enough of a reason to impose or oppose efforts to commence unity in the interest of future mutual benefits. My view that no precondition shall be made to discuss unity also applies to historical claims and counterclaims - these should not be valid or accepted as a prerequisite for unity. History shall serve as a lesson, not as a condition. I am not dismissing the impact on future unity of centuries of wars or positive tributes as neighbors. Neither good neighborhood, which was never in abundance in our region, is a sufficient condition for marriage; nor should old wars be soldered to memory for ever, to block what could be a mutually benefitting new beginning.

History shall serve
as a lesson, not as
a condition.

As a result of this successive and cumulative phenomenon, three perceptions of Ethiopian unity emerged.

- a. Enat Ager (motherland) version,
- b. Edget, Edget (Growth, Growth) version,
- c. Bilisumma (Freedom) version.

In the Enat Ager version of unity, the border is more important than the people and their rights, and the followers anoint themselves as standalone guards of Ethiopia whose borders are impervious. They oppose Article 39 of the Ethiopian constitution, a clause that supports self determination of Ethiopia's ethnic and nationality groups. The bogus Article was inserted as an empty promise to ethnic democracy, and a scare crow to those Ethiopian nationalists that reject Tigrean domination.

For the Edget Edget version, political power and the economy are more important than human rights and the border. Flexible on the issues of the border as well as democracy, this version uses unity as a progressive political tool to establish economic dominance.

For the Bilisumma version, peoples' rights are more important than the borders and the economy. It is reactive to Enat Ager version, i.e., aggressive in combating Ethiopian unity as propagated by the Enat Ager sentimentalists. This aggressive stance is externally manifested by Enat Ager carriers as if the Bilisumma group is against genuine unity. The Edget Edget group has capitalized on these two contradictions. I have heard a Tigrean politician comforting the Amharas labeling the TPLF as guardians of Ethiopian unity, but also attracting Oromo confidence stating they stand in support of Article 39.

An attempt to reconfigure this tripartite contradiction and tone down Tigrean dominance by establishing an Amhara-Oromo political channel was vehemently opposed by many Amharas as well as many Oromos. In fact, many Oromos believe it is impossible to craft a political unity with Amharas, and this may indeed be the case unless the Enat Agers modify their criteria and understandings of unity. This fact has also made it virtually impossible to build a broad based Ethiopian opposition coalition in order to make a leap way towards democracy. It should now be clear why accepting unity is a serious offense among many Oromos, and opposing unity is a malevolence of national proportions to the Enat Ager guards.

As evidenced above, Ethiopia of the recent few decades was unable to forge a viable unity and embrace its cultural diversity primarily because:

- Unity was imposed by a historically and culturally favored group as an untouchable ideology,
- Unionists failed to accept the cluster as equals, and
- Driven by emotive reaction, the Southern politicians never recognized the benefits of conscious unity.

VI. Solution – conclusion

Ethiopia political realm is too static, change is avoided even within TPLF's hierarchies, a party of the same group ruled the country for nearly two decades, two decades of accumulated hate and corruption. This coincides with rejection of Ethiopia's diversity, - Oromo identity has been specifically targeted across all institutions, and even AAU President ejected 300 students for protesting against TPLF's brutality against the Oromo people. Hate and revisionism are packed and rising in the country. These revisionist tendencies cannot be undermined since they go further than objecting Article 39. An Ethiopian parliamentarian just released a book in which he expresses his chauvinism blatantly, demanding the return of indigenous Oromo city names such as Adama and Bishoftu to the forged names of Amharic origin, as well as the clearance of Finfinne from anything Oromo.

In the above discussion, I have attempted to prove that religion is not necessarily going to help the Ethiopian unity, unity will not come naturally, Ethiopia is not ready for unity, and unity has yet a positive virtue. The solution to capture this positive virtue must recognize the following.

1. Legitimacy of rights above and beyond economy or border,
2. The establishment of "conscious" unity as a missing link,

3. Keeping the struggle for equality and freedom positive; Oromo or any other just struggle is driven by love and firm wish, not hate.
4. Envisioning a wider regional unity. Here I propose the establishment of the United States of East Africa (USEA), with a capital city in Juba. Juba, with plenty of water, would be a great remedy for East African cities most of which are located on sites with no access to abundant water. The proximity to central Africa will only make it a more strategic choice.

The creation of the USEA would satisfy at least the immediate wishes of all groups. Those who put so much emphasis on borders, mainly Amhara centric scholars – will now have an even larger border to enjoy. The Tigro-centric unionists will more than double their economic domain. And finally, the Oromos and others who fight for Bilisumma will have more people to fight with or to fight for.

The Power of Asking Questions

Introduction

Our health will not improve unless we address the fact that we have no sovereignty, We're sick of hearing what's wrong with us, tell us something good for a change`, or, `Why do they always think by looking at us they will find the answer to our problems, why don't they look at themselves? Smith (2002) pp198.

The above excerpt is from the work of Linda Tuhiwai Smith-- an Indigenous New Zealand scholar who is critical of the Euro-centric research, and actually promotes the need for decolonising research methodology. In her book *Decolonizing Methodologies*, she made an interesting argument that the ways research questions are asked, data are collected and interpreted are based on the theoretical framework that the researchers use. She made a compelling argument that research can advance knowledge and address the indigenous peoples need if the people's questions are taken seriously. In short, she advises the colonized people to ask their own questions.

Questions have enormous power. Asking the right question at the appropriate time is instrumental for changing the directions of our lives and the conditions in which our people live. The type of questions we ask ourselves and others are very important. It is for the same reason that we need to carefully choose the paradigm on which we develop our questions. Research frameworks shape the ways in which we ask questions, the ways we collect data and interpret them. In research carefully choosing the frameworks in which we ask questions.

The desire to know is natural, hence, knowingly and unknowingly we ask questions. Sometimes we ask ourselves and deeply search for the answer within us and reflect on our experiences and observations. At other times we ask others and based on the answers we get, we can visualize things from our own angle and we can also see things from the perspective of others. We ask to identify and clarify. We ask questions when we failed to understand or ask when others failed to comprehend. We ask questions to comprehend the complexities of our social and natural environmental world. We ask to bring changes and challenge the status quo. We ask to promote our views and interests. Very often we ask our own unique questions. Some times we ask just to ask. Societies construct their realities and interpret the world through their socio-cultural 'lenses. This makes the questions we ask and the ways we collect the data and

Asking the right question at the appropriate time is instrumental for changing the directions of our lives and the conditions in which our people live.

interpret the information quite different. That is why the history of human beings is about the history of contest and conflict about the validity of knowledge as well as social progress. This makes asking question the centre of power and conflict.

By asking questions, societies interpret, imagine, create, control, regulate and disperse knowledge. As we ask to identify and clarify, we make sense of our chaotic world; we better understand others and in doing so expand our reasoning and knowledge transfer. As we ask, and compare ourselves with others, we learn our own strengths and weaknesses. As we continue to ask we learn to identify our needs, opportunities and risks. As we ask, we construct knowledge, develop the capacity to modify, change, shape, fix and eliminate conditions that put us at risk. Asking question makes you knowledgeable. Knowledge prepares you for action if needed and helps to identify the type of actions we need to take. This gives us the power to critically see, understand and then approach the issue at hand in a unique way. Critically understanding the problem is halfway to solving the problem.

Many of the questions we ask have been asked by some one out there in the past and probably the answer is already there as a written document. This necessitates being a critical reader and a multilingual one. Some of the answers are there in the oral stories, which necessitate that we be critical and good listeners. We need to be critical readers and listeners because not all answers are valid. The more clearly we see how knowledge has changed and grown in the past, the present past the more accurately we can predict the challenges that are likely to occur in the future and the opportunities we have.

Scholars in knowledge construction have categorized the ways we understand our world into three different philosophical epochs: Pre-modern, Modern and Post-modern. In the pre-modern epoch, the dominant concept about knowledge is that there is only one truth and that truth comes from those who are in authority and from super natural power. In this epoch, if people had questions they simply listened to those who had authority. People read the Holy Scriptures or listened to those who were authorized to teach the Holy Scriptures. Those who were in authority used such knowledge to maintain their power and privileges. On the understanding that there is but one truth, those people who had different perspectives and worldviews were categorized as uncivilized, savage and pagans. These people were subjected to harassment, exploitation and discrimination.

The second philosophical epoch encompasses modern thinkers. The modern epoch is heavily influenced by the traditions of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, and shaped by the theories and experience of colonialism in the 18th-19th Century. The modern thinkers inherited from the pre-modern epoch the idea that there is only one truth. Contrary to the pre-modern thinkers, in this epoch truth comes not from those who are in authority but from those

who are involved in scientific studies. As a result, the modern thinkers took away power from those in authority such as churches, mosques and synagogues and gave it to those who are in scientific research. This was evident in medical science theories and practices. For example, in the pre-modern epoch church, mosque and synagogue leaders claimed to have healing power. In the modern philosophical epoch, traditionally powerful institutions lost credibility and they themselves turned to those who were involved in scientific studies. Although modern thinkers successfully shifted the power of knowing and the legitimacy of knowledge from church, mosque and synagogue to scientific studies, the theory has its own limitations. Modern thinkers did not realize that the theories on which they developed their studies were guided by the Euro-cultural epistemology. As Smith stated above, the Euro-centric research methodology is not in a position to capture, analyse and provide solutions to colonized peoples. In addition, some scientific researchers found that there were times when they could not help themselves and their colleagues when they were emotionally disturbed. This made modern thinkers unwittingly recognize their limitation and forced them to go back to church, mosque and synagogue. The post-modern philosophical epoch emerged following the civil rights, anti-colonial and feminist movements. It emerged to capture the experiences of marginalized groups. Post-modern thinkers suggest that there are multiple truths and there are different ways of knowing.

The Oromo Question and Narratives

The rationale in conducting research is to acquire new insight and understanding so that we can be better prepared to respond to changing circumstances and solve the contemporary problems. Let me bring questions that the Oromo people ask. The questions they ask are unique to their colonial experiences, in which an African state (Abyssinia) supported by the European states enslaved, colonized and subjugated them. The Oromo people ask questions and convey their own narratives in their own ways. They make sense of their lives through telling their own unique stories. Realities are socially constructed; asking questions and telling stories is essential in teaching and learning. Storytelling encompasses the vivid description of ideas, beliefs, personal experiences, and life lessons. Through stories or narratives people evoked powerful emotions and insights.

Asking the right questions
takes as much skill as
giving the right answers.”
Robert

Narrative and story telling has a critical role in the process of meaning making. Storytelling has several advantages. First, it enables the articulation of emotional aspects as well

as factual content, allowing the expression of tacit knowledge (which is always difficult to convey). Second, by providing the broader context in which the knowledge is constructed, story telling increases the potential for meaningful knowledge sharing. Third, by grounding lived realities in a narrative structure, it enhances the likelihood that learning will take place and be passed on. Purposeful storytelling can deliver results that conventional, abstract modes of communications can not. By telling our own stories and asking questions from our own perspectives, we can challenge the dominant epistemological paradigm, ideas and ideologies. Theoretical concepts provide the framework in which the research questions are developed and the data are analysed and policies are set. We need to look at the influence of these social realities if we want to understand the meanings people give to their experiences, hence their lives.

Specific Questions

Millions of children in Oromia are malnourished and homeless. Let us ask critical Oromo centric questions regarding the causes of poverty and malnutrition and make efforts to answer them.

Q1. Why are millions of children malnourished and homeless in Oromia?

An1. The reason is their parents are jobless, poor and illiterate.

Q2. Why are the parents jobless, poor and illiterate?

An2. The reason is that the Ethiopian government's colonial social policies are discriminatory to the Oromo people.

Some of the questions that the Oromo people have been asking, I brought in to light in the November 2010 OSA Newsletter. The questions they ask are vital in understanding the social conditions in which the Oromo people live, thus I decide to bring up here.

Afaan Oromoo

English translation

Akkam tanee akkas taneee?

How did we become the way we are now?

Moofa uffatu taanee

We became the impoverished who wear ripped clothes

Doofa uf gaatu tanee

We became foolish, illiterate and ignorant

Fayya, dhukubsatu tanee

We were healthy, but now we are sick

Beeka walaala tanee

We were knowledgeable, now we became uninformed

Otto qabnuu deega tanee

While we have plenty we became impoverished

Akkam goone tanuree ?

What can we do about it now?

Kaam gooree jalaa banuree?

How can we overcome these burdens?

An3) Given that the Oromo people are subjected to the Abyssinian colonialism, the Ethiopian government denied them the right to decide on their social, economic, political, cultural and environmental affairs and has made them wait upon the goodwill of the Abyssinians.

The Oromo people express their hopes and wishes in the forms of gerarsa. One of them says:

Afaan Oromo

English Translation

Otto akka garaa kooti	If things go the way I wish
Abbayaan riqaa goona	We will build a bridge on the Nile River
Akka ceene banuuf	Make it easy to cross
Jalaa isaa horaa goona	The thing under the bridge (water) make it salty water
Akka jaabilee obafanuufi	Make it a place where our calves would drink
Otto akka garaa kooti	If things go the way I wish
Amaara dawee goona	I make the Amahara with no gun
Oromoo Abba Qawee goona	Arm the Oromo with gun
Taraa taraa waal moona	So, that we can rule by turn
Akka cunqursaan baduufi	Prevent oppression and injustice

Q4. How do colonial policies make the Oromo people jobless, homeless, poor and illiterate?

An4 The Ethiopian social and economic policies are designed to benefit Abyssinians. They legalized the eviction and the disposition of Oromo people from their own land. The Ethiopian education system is designed from the Abyssinian perspective. The school curricula, delegitimized the Oromo culture and experiences and legitimized the Abyssinian perspectives. This has created unfair competition between the Oromo and the Abyssinian students. The Ethiopian government language policy denies the Oromo people the right to know and employment in the federal government. Such denials are conditioning the Oromo people into poverty.

Q5. What is colonialism?

An5. Colonialism is a violation of the collective rights of people. It takes away sovereignty and the decision-making ability of the people. Hence, it is a disease or disease-causing agent.

Q6. What is collective right?

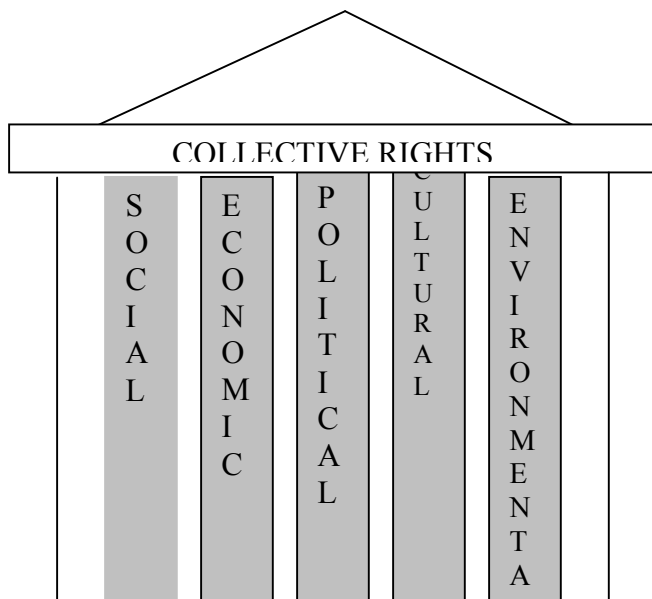
An6. Collective right is the right of people to freely decide on their social, economic, political, cultural and environmental affairs (which I called the five pillars of collective rights).

Q7. Why such rights are important?

An7. Let us see each of these rights (pillars) separately. Social rights are one of the pillars needed for the people to modify, change or maintain their social structures and social relations. The second pillar is economic right. This is the right to freely decide on human and natural resources. The third pillar is political right- the right to develop their own institutions and leaders and make use of the wisdom of their leaders to identify the challenges they face and the opportunities they can use. The fourth is cultural rights-- the right of people to freely develop and make use of their culture to run their daily affairs. The fifth pillar is environmental right-- the right to live in a healthy environment. If societies are denied all these rights, the pillars that have sustained the people will eventually break down and the safety and security of people will be compromised and exposed to preventable risks.

Q8. How are collective rights different from individual rights?

An8. Individual rights are the rights everyone possesses and collective rights are the right to which a group of people are entitled. For example, individual rights guarantee that everyone is fairly judged in court; such a right does not guarantee the right to use his/her native language in school, court and other places.



”Life is divided into three terms - that which was, which is, and which will be. Let us learn from the past to profit by the present, and from the present to live better in the future”.

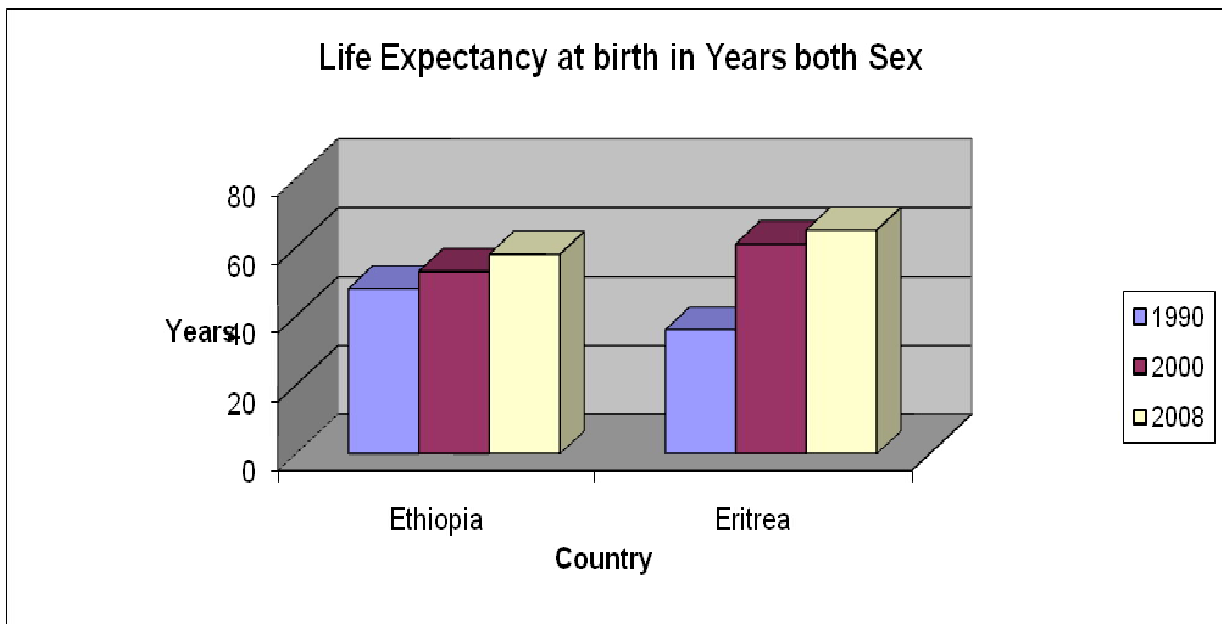
William Wordsworth

Q9. What is the evidence that regards for collective rights are important for the colonized peoples?

An9. Many indigenous people of the world have been totally wiped out under the European colonial rules. This is true to colonized peoples in North America, South America, Australia and New Zealand. For example, when Ireland was under British colonial rule they suffered from famine. After their independence they became a self-sufficient and charity giver. Under British rule, India occasionally suffered from famine. After their independence they prevented famine. This means in order to prevent famine and malnutrition, the Oromo people need to assert their collective rights.

If we look at the case of Eritrea -- a country that gained its independence in 1993, we can clearly observe some successes. The climate of Eritrea is dry and it has a relatively small amount of rainfall, and no well-developed industries. Economically Eritrea remains one of the poorest countries in the world. When Eritrea was under Ethiopian colonial rule, life expectancy at birth was behind Ethiopians. However, as you can see from figure 2, after their independence they have exceeded Ethiopia. Postliberation, they were able to freely design their own social and economic policies and achieved better life expectancy at birth.

For Ethiopia, I have only aggregated data. Although I have no separate data to compare the life expectancy of people in different parts of Ethiopia, I can accurately guess that in the Tigray it is improving much faster than the other regions. This is probably because the Tigray people are able to guarantee themselves to freely design their own social and economic policies and enjoy the privilege that the colonial power relations provide. Poor life expectancy in Ethiopia indicates what went wrong in Oromia- and other regions more so than in the Tigray region.



Q10. Is there any evidence that the Oromo people better understand their socio-economic problems than anybody else?

An10. Yes. Problems are the reflection of the social conditions in which the people live. Hence, not only do the Oromos better understand their own problems, but also they can find socially acceptable and economical viable solutions.

Q11. How and why were the Oromo people colonized by a black African state?

An11. European empire builders, driven by a biological and cultural racial theory as well as a trading partnership discourse, provided military hardware and military personnel to the Abyssinians and facilitated conditions for the formation of Ethiopian empire.

Q12. The experiences of several indigenous people show that colonial power relations are really attacks or at least obstacle to the development of public health. How come such knowledge is not used to promote the empowerment of the Oromo people?

An12. Global powers get more benefits financially and politically from the colonial power relations than they do from equitable societies. Thus, although the global powers knew the impact of colonialism they chose to finance and support the Ethiopian regime—that has been charged in genocide.

Q13. Who is responsible for the poverty and malnutrition in Oromia? Who is in the better position to know about the social problems Oromia? Why are the international communities allowing maintenance of the colonial power relation between Abyssinia and Oromia? What are the roles of Oromo scholars and others to end injustice in Oromia and elsewhere? When will this suffering end?

There is power in asking questions and we need to ask: **Who? What? When? Where? Why?**

How?

Who is responsible for the poverty and premature deaths in Oromia?

What can be done about these problems?

When would these critical issues be addressed?

Where is the dismay of world community to injustice, poverty and premature death?

Why did the world community permit the violation of collective rights and extreme poverty?

How do the Oromo scholars contribute positive roles to end injustices?

Waldaa Qorannoo Oromoo



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Email: Victoria.Chisala@undp.org

Human Rights Watch
350 Fifth Avenue, 34th Floor
New York,

Email: hrwnyc@hrw.org

November 8, 2010

Dear DAG Secretariat & Human Rights Watch,

I am writing this letter on behalf of the Oromo Studies Association (OSA) to defend the latest report of the Human Rights Watch on Oromia and Ethiopia from the attack and mischaracterization by the Development Assistant Group (DAG). OSA is a scholarly, multi-disciplinary, non-profit international organization, established to promote studies on issues relevant to the Oromo people. This scholarly organization has studied and produced scholarly works on Oromo people for the last twenty-five years. It has conducted annual and bi-annual international scholarly conferences and produced its proceedings; semi-annual peer reviewed journal as well as books that you can be found in major university libraries in the world. Most of the OSA members are born and raised in Oromia, possess a unique privilege of accessing the collective memory of the Oromo people and understanding their present realities. They are privileged to collect data in the Oromo, Amharic, Somali, Arabic, English and many other languages and make sound intellectual and cultural judgement in interpreting them.

The Oromo people constitute the single largest national group in the Ethiopian Empire and the Greater Horn of Africa. The size of the Oromo population and the geographical location of their country, Oromia, make the Oromia regional state the heart of Ethiopia. The Ethiopian Empire mainly survives on the economic and natural resources of Oromia although the Oromo people are one of the most impoverished and terrorized indigenous people of the world. Recognizing that Oromia is the richest and largest populous state, the Tigrayan-led Ethiopian government has been using collective violence to dominate, control, and exploit Oromia, which is the key in controlling the Ethiopian political economy. Understanding the situation in Oromia helps in generalizing what is going on throughout Ethiopia. Hence, by these virtues OSA is in a position to speak on and about the Oromo people and realities in Oromia, by that extension about Ethiopia.

I have carefully read the Report of Human Rights Watch, *Development without Freedom: How Aid Underwrites Repression in Ethiopia* and the response of the Development Assistant Group (DAG). If the Oromo people and others in the Ethiopia Empire were empowered on their affairs they would have given their assessment and verdict on whether or not the aid that the DAG donors give to the Tigrayan-led Ethiopian government is used to build the people's capacity to solve poverty and famine problems or utilized to foster the capacity of the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front's (TPLF) security forces, the army, and the police to control, manipulate and repress the Oromo and others. Unfortunately, only human rights organizations such as the Human Rights Watch and scholarly organizations such as OSA can expose the social, political and economic crimes in Oromia and Ethiopia at this historical moment. Consequently, the latest report of Human Rights Watch reflects the objective reality in Oromia and Ethiopia under the rule of the Tigrayan dictator, Meles Zenawi, and his henchmen and women. However, the report does not tell the whole story as we shall see below.

The ethnicized and racialized Ethiopian state with the collaboration of its Euro-American allies has effectively excluded the colonized peoples and the Ethiopian masses from decision-making positions. The TPLF regime is fully supported by the major Euro-American countries, China, and their institutions while it practices state terrorism and gross human right violations. The successive Ethiopian regimes have taken away the sovereignty of the people and denied them the opportunity to develop their own institutions and leadership and consequently conditioned them to absolute poverty, homelessness, malnutrition and preventable diseases. By denying the people, their fundamental human rights e.g. freedom of expression, assembly and equal rights, the regime eroded the safety and security of the people and gradually worn their human dignity. For over a century the Oromo and others have been denied their inalienable rights to self-determination and as a result they lost the opportunities and the means to build their social, economic, political, cultural and organizational infrastructures.

The Meles regime implements its political and economic objectives through a variety of strategies and tactics; it is highly militarized and repressive, and it tightly controls information and resources by manipulating and using foreign aid, domestic financial resources, and political appointments. It also directly controls all aspects of state power including security and military institutions, judiciary, financial institutions and other public bodies including religious institutions such as the Church and the Mosque. The Meles government uses the Tigrayan-dominated army, the police, security networks, and puppet organizations in destabilizing independent institutions intended to facilitate change in the social, economic, cultural, political and environmental conditions in Oromia and beyond. This was done to deny the Oromo people an independent leadership to incapacitate, silence and control them.

The TPLF government has been selling the lands and natural resources of non-Tigrayans in the name of privatization to satisfy the demand of structural adjustment of the control and profit oriented, biased and unjust international system. It is now completing the forced removal of Oromos from the areas surrounding Finfinnee (Addis Ababa). By evicting Oromo farmers from their homelands without or with little compensation, the Meles regime has already leased several millions of hectares of Oromo lands to foreign investors such as the Chinese, Arabs, Indians, Malaysians, and European business people and local capitalists. Today, when the Oromos are facing extreme poverty, hunger and easily preventable diseases, Tigrayan elites who depended on international food aid in the 1980s for their survival, are getting richer and powerful. That is the reason the TPLF led minority government is seen as an organized criminal agency rather than legitimate government. For example, in Finfinnee and in many places you see advertisement sponsored by the regime that says "fighting corruption starts from oneself" and in the response, people scratched the word oneself and replace it with Meles.

Clearly in the eyes of most of the people in Oromia and Ethiopia, the political and military leaders of the Meles government are not different from gangsters and robbers. The regime uses state power to expropriate state corporations and lands in the name of privatization—all with the blessing of

the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Although the Human Rights Watch because of its ideological limitation does not address these complex issues, it correctly explains how Western aid is used by the Meles regime for political repression rather than political, cultural, social, and economic development. So there is no wonder that DAG attempts to refute the report of this respected human rights organization.

In the past and present the fate of Oromo people are entirely determined by the Euro-Abyssinian guns and resources. For example, the Tigray Liberation Front (TPLF) of Meles Zenawi would not come to power if the international donors did give the blank cheque to its sisterly organization, the Relief Society of Tigray (REST), and allowed them to divert the money to buy guns. The TPLF of Meles Zenawi with its puppet organizations are determined to stay on power by all means possible. Meles came to power by using a clandestine Marxist structure of organization known as *Gooti* and *Garee* at grassroots levels. After he came to power he has used of these organizational structures and repressive security networks in all sectors of the society. In *Gooti* all villagers and city dwellers are organized in smaller groups of households known as *Garee*. The members of *Garee* are forced to spy and report the activity of their family and community members. Fertilizers and food aid are distributed through these organizational channels. The Human Rights Watch report on *Gooti* and *Garee* is accurate.

Furthermore, court decisions are made not on the rule of law but on the consultation with *Gooti* and *Garee* leaders. The legal cases are judged based on the person's political opinions rather than the rule of law. Students are accepted to higher education not necessarily on their academic achievements but also upon the recommendations from *Gooti* and *Garee* leaders. Teachers and other government employees are promoted not on their skills and performance, but on their party membership and activities in *Gooti* and *Garee*. Patients get reference to hospitals on their party membership and their role in *Gooti* and *Garee*. Farmers who resist the *Gooti* and *Garee* decisions are denied access to fertilizers and selected seeds. It is on the *Gooti* and *Garee* meetings that individuals are intimidated and instructed to vote for the agents of Meles Zenawi during election days. For an Oromo language speaking researcher collecting such evidences does not require a sophisticated enquiry. If you talk to and listen to the conversations of Oromo farmers, you hear them saying "I have an elderly mother and several children to care for, hence, I do not want to miss the next *Gooti* meeting"; "my court case is sent back to *Gooti*"; "next year only good standing members of the party will get fertilizer and selected seeds"; "he was poor, but, after he became the head of *Gooti* he is doing well"; "I knew that my son or daughter would pass the exam but my worry was if the *Gooti* leader would write him or her a recommendation". The Human Rights Watch clearly understands these realities.

If OSA confirms that the report of the Human Rights Watch is accurate, how come that DAG failed to come up with the same conclusion? Western countries and their international organizations exactly know what is going in Oromia and Ethiopia. They also know that the report of the Human Rights Watch is correct. But they refuse to accept responsibility by rejecting this report since they have financed and supported this regime. These donors have misguided policies; instead of promoting the empowerment of people they play indifferent in the life of people whom they claim to help. It seems that their main concerns are not promoting the principles set by United Nations (UN) such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) intended to assure that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and destiny. In reality, these donors only promote their respective national interests at the cost of peoples who are suffering under the policies of the Tigrayan-led Ethiopian government.

Although OSA substantiates the Human Rights Watch Report on Oromia and Ethiopia, I have concerns in the following areas. First, the Human Rights Watch Report has failed to mention the ways the TPLF government has evicted the Oromo farmers from their homes and sells their lands and other properties and conditioned them to extreme poverty. Second, Human Rights Watch is silent in reporting the deliberate and consistent TPLF actions intended to weaken the Oromo indigenous institutions such

as *Gadaa* (Oromo democratic governance) and *Waqeeffata* (indigenous Oromo religion). For that matter, all the donors that very often use the rhetoric of capacity building have failed to promote the need to support the development of Oromo civic, indigenous institutions, and organizations and to challenge the Ethiopian government policies that are intended to incapacitate them. Furthermore, these donors did not care when Oromo civic organizations such as the Macca-Tulama Associations, relief associations, e.g. the Oromo Relief Association (ORA), human right activists, e.g. the Human Rights League of the Horn, and Oromo political organizations such as the Oromo Liberation Front were violently suppressed. The Euro-American racist mindsets and modernist thinking, the ideologies driven by profit and control and national interests have blinded these donors and their agency, DAG. These donors and their agency, DAG, engage in “aidgame” politics to subordinate humanism and human rights principles to state interest regionally and internationally and proved destructive for the Oromo and others who are suffering under the Tigrayan ethnocracy and racism and the corrupt and unjust international system.

I believe that if these international donors and their agency, DAG, are truly intended to build the capacity of the Oromo and other peoples and help them overcome their social, economic, political problems and empower individuals and groups on their affairs, they need to be guided by principles set by UN such as UDHR, ICESCR and others and challenge policies that are contrary to these core principles. I suggest to those donors who are truly committed to tackle poverty and preventable diseases to ask the following questions: What are the causes of instability, poverty, and malnutrition in Oromia and Ethiopia? How do decisions are made and policies are set in Oromia and Ethiopia? How does the TPLF, the minority group’s organization, able to control Oromia and the rest of other regional states for two decades? What are the relationships between the Tigrayans and the Oromo and other peoples? Why are human rights violations widespread? What are the relationships between human rights violations and capacity building? What are the impacts of excluding the single largest national group in the Ethiopian Empire and the Horn Africa –the Oromo people from decisions making process? They also need to ask themselves why they choose to channel the aid through the TPLF institutions (administrations, state structures and religious institutions) rather than the civil and political organizations of other oppressed, exploited and dehumanized ethnonational groups. OSA is engaged in producing knowledge that promotes justice, individuals and collective rights (e.g. the rights of people to self-determination), make attempts to empower the people and create favourable conditions to foster capacity building and sustainable social and economic development. Therefore, it is ready to collaborate, and work with all organizations that are committed to those principles and frame their policies accordingly.

I believe that knowledge is a socially constructed phenomenon and through our dialogue we can construct knowledge that helps us better understand the core problems of the region and find culturally acceptable and economically viable solutions. Hence, if you have any concerns, questions, and comments, please do not hesitate from contacting me. Thank you for your concern and understanding.

Sincerely,

Begna Dugassa, PhD
OSA president

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CALL FOR PAPERS TO THE OSA 2011 MID YEAR CONFERENCE

Conference Theme:

Re-examining Theories and Practices of Human Capacity Building in Oromia and the Greater Horn of Africa and Challenging Misguided Practices

Date: April 2-3, 2011

Venue: Carlton University

Ottawa, Canada

The Oromo Studies Association (OSA) is a multi-disciplinary scholarly organization, engaged in producing knowledge that promotes social justice, individual and collective rights (e.g. the rights of people to self-determination), and democracy, and makes efforts to create favourable conditions for the people to empower themselves and advance sustainable social and economic development. In order to construct knowledge in the social, economic, cultural and political arenas and facilitating change in Oromia and the Greater Horn of Africa, OSA has decided to re-examine the theories and practices of capacity building. In this conference, the gaps between the theory and practice of the capacity building will be critically examined.

The knowledge produced by this conference will be published in the OSA proceedings and made available for sell with little cost. We believe the knowledge produced by this conference will help the Oromo and other neighbouring peoples to critically look at the policy of the rulers and international donors and encourages the peoples to participate in policy making and challenge misguided policies and practices. In addition, the knowledge that will be produced by this conference creates awareness of the entitlement of people in identifying and prioritizing their needs. At the same time, this kind of knowledge will encourage the so-called donor organizations and states to re-examine their policies and practices in providing aid. For this conference, papers will be screened on the qualities of the theories the presenters use and the practical applicability of the theories to the conditions of Oromo people and others in the Horn of Africa. The presenters are expected to base their papers on the following questions.

Theorizing capacity building

- How can we define, explain, understand, conceptualise, and reflect on and critique the idea of capacity building?

- What are the core questions to be asked in researching capacity building?
- What are the pathways in which the society can effectively build its capacity to be self-reliant and self-sufficient?
- Is it worth studying, theorizing and examining capacity building?
- What are the gaps in our knowledge in capacity building?
- What kinds of methodologies and theoretical frameworks can we apply to examine the relationship between leadership and capacity building?
- How does the dictatorial system of governance affect the capacity building of a society?
- How do the global powers influence the capacity building process?
- What are the roles of external support in capacity building?
- What are the relationships between empowerment and capacity building?

B. Entitlement and Capacity building

- What are the relationships between human rights (individual rights and collective rights) and capacity building?
- How does the absence or presence of control over the social, economic, political and cultural affairs affect the process and impact of capacity building?
- How does the incorporation of indigenous knowledge promote capacity building efforts?
- What are the roles of language policies in the efforts of capacity building?
- How do democratic governance and community participation promote the effectiveness of capacity building?
- What are the connections between community institutional structures and the effectiveness of capacity building?
- What are the importance of skills and knowledge in the capacity building process?
- How does the sense of land entitlement affect the efforts of capacity building among farming and cattle breeding communities?

Paper submissions:

You can send your abstracts from December 3rd 2010 to January 15th, 2011 to Dr. Begna Dugassa at b.dugassa@utoronto.ca

Extension: The date for submission of Abstract is now extended to February 15, 2011.

Full papers are expected by March 15th, 2011

We accept both individual papers and panels

Thank you,

CALL FOR PAPERS FOR THE 2011 OSA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Theme:

Building Transformative and Dynamic Leadership and Facilitating the Empowerment of People in Oromia and the Greater Horn of Africa

Date: July 29-31, 2011---the date might change

Venue: University of Minnesota

Objective:

In Oromia and in the Greater Horn of Africa, collective violence and human rights violations are widespread and recurrent famines and preventable diseases are taking the lives of millions of people each year. The efforts made by international organizations are ill-planned and do not address the core problems. Indeed, international aid is used by the Ethiopian government to repress and terrorize, to control and manipulate, and to perpetuate absolute poverty and powerlessness. The international aid industry has created two types of societies- charity givers (Euro-Americans) and charity receivers (the people of the Horn), legitimizing the use of global power that benefits only the few. The Ethiopian government has violated individual and collective rights of the Oromo people and denied them the right to develop independent institutions and leadership. To empower the Oromo people and to end their sufferings require a strong, united, and transformative leadership. This necessitates studying critically and thoroughly about the process of leadership and examining the challenges and the opportunities the Oromo people face in developing their leadership.

Expected outcomes

At the end of the conference, participants are expected to have a better understanding of the complexities in developing leadership, the challenges that colonized people face in the advancement of leadership, and the opportunities they have to do so. The participants are also expected to understand the importance of research on the issues of leadership formation and strategic planning.

Directions

In order to construct knowledge on the process of leadership development and introduce innovative cultural and political ideas and facilitate change in Oromia and the Greater Horn of Africa, the Oromo Studies Association (OSA) has selected its theme for the 2011 Annual Conference. For this conference, papers will be screened on the qualities of the theories the presenters offer and the practical applicability of the theories to Oromia and the Horn of Africa. The presenters can organize their papers around the following questions.

Theoretical issues

- How can we define, explain, conceptualise, and reflect on and critique the ideas of leadership and empowerment?
- What are the core questions to be asked in researching the issues of leadership & empowerment?
- What does it mean in practice to have leadership that empowers people?
- What are the importance of studying, theorizing, and examining the processes of leadership and empowerment?
- What are the shortcomings in our knowledge in the areas of leadership and empowerment?
- What kinds of methodologies and theoretical frameworks can we apply to examine the relationships between leadership and empowerment?

Practical issues

- Some scholars explain that leadership is something that is learned and others regard it as something that you grow with as part of the culture. If the colonized people do not have control on their education and resources, how can they influence the type of leadership their children should develop?
- If a society is under a colonial rule and has no control over its social, economic, political, cultural and environmental affairs, what type of leadership can its children develop?
- What are the manifestations of the presence and absence of a strong leadership?
- What are the pathways through which leadership can influence the empowerment of people?
- What are the 'lived realities' of Oromo leaders under the Ethiopian colonial administration?
- How can we cultivate a kind of leadership that is accountable to the people?
- How did global powers under-develop the leadership of the colonized people like the Oromo?
- What are the relationships between human rights violations and the underdevelopment of leadership?
- How does culture positively or negatively influence the development of leadership?
- What are the impacts of the denial of leadership?

- How are the colonial schooling (formal educational curricula) and the informal teachings (religious teachings) influencing leadership development and the empowerment of people?
- What are the differences in cultures that promote democratic leadership and supports justice and equality and ones that foster dictatorship and underdevelopment?
- What are the roles of information and scientific technology in the development of leadership and empowerment of people?

Paper submissions:

You can send your abstracts from January 3rd 2011 to March 15th, 2011 to Dr. Begna Dugassa at b.dugassa@utoronto.ca

Full papers are expected by April 15th, 2011

We accept both individual papers and panels.

Thank you,

Galatooma

Academic Award to an OSA Member

One of the OSA's distinguished and productive professors, Prof. Asafa Jalata has received one of the yearly highest award from the University of Tennessee. Prof. Asafa Jalata's research started on Oromia and the Oromo people and their relation with Ethiopia. In addition, he is engaged on issues surrounding inequality, race and racism at the local and global level and links these issues with terrorism and anti-terrorism. Prof. Asafa Jalata is one of the Oromo scholars who in his works successfully challenged the Euro-American-Abyssinian theories on the Oromo people and Oromia. Prof. Asafa Jalata's works provide critical advice for Oromo scholars, politicians and the Oromo society at large to frame Oromo issues in the Oromo centric framework that he referees it as Oromuuma.

Asafa Jalata, Professor of Sociology, Global Studies, and Interim Director of Africana Studies at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, received the Senior Faculty Research/Creativity Achievement Award at the Winter Convocation of the College of Arts and Sciences on November 30, 2010. Professor Jalata's expertise focuses on the area of international inequality, social movements, nationalism, terrorism studies, and race and ethnicity. His research concentration has been on Oromia, the Oromo country, and its interactions with Ethiopia and the modern world system. Professor Jalata's most recent book, *Contending Nationalisms of Oromia and Ethiopia: Struggling for Statehood, Sovereignty and Multinational Democracy*, published in 2010 by Global Academic Publishing of Binghamton University, evaluates the content and consequences of nationalism in Oromia and Ethiopia. Recently he has been shifting his research toward examining terrorism, investigating both the groups and countries perpetrating it, and responses to terrorism. He has authored more than three dozen refereed articles in regional and internal journals, numerous book chapters, and published and edited eight books. For further information, see <http://web.utk.edu/~ajalata/>; http://works.bepress.com/asafa_jalata/; <http://quest.utk.edu/2010/asafa-jalata/>

CONGRATULATION PROF. ASAFA

The Formation of Scholarship Committee

Dear OSA members and friends of OSA:

As you all know resulting from the past and present Ethiopian government colonial social policies the Oromo people are impoverished and exposed to easily preventable diseases. Regardless of what has happened in the past, happening now and going to happen tomorrow, the future of Oromo people can only be shaped for the better by the collective efforts of the Oromo people. Shaping the future of Oromia need to start today. Raising children and mentoring the youth and young adults can be the foundation for the future Oromia. One of the beauties of Oromo culture, which can be instrumental in shaping the future of Oromo people, is the culture of carrying for the growing children. In the minds of many Oromos whether the person is a Christian, Muslim or Waqeffata there is a deeply rooted and commonly agreed philosophy--caring for the growing children. Probably the idea of carrying for growing children comes from the Waqefaata concept that teaches to win over death one has to have children. The idea of carrying, preparing and educating the younger generation for future leadership in our community, country and our institutions is consistent with the objective of OSA.

As you all know many Oromo University and high school students were expelled from their studies and now many of them are in the refugee camps. Oromo men and women who are committed to end injustice in the Horn of Africa and like to see peace and stability in this region need to support the Oromo students who were expelled from their studies for no reason other than being Oromo. The number of Oromo Student refugees is big and probably we are not in a position to provide financial support to all these students. However, supporting the few and showing the world community that we care and make efforts to be self-sufficient can be rewarding in two ways. First, we regain and develop the principle of self-sufficiency. Second, win the sympathy of the world community. For this noble cause, OSA has formed a scholarship ad hoc committee. For this noble idea, the Executive Committee of OSA asked individuals who are probably represent the cream of our society to lead the project and solicit from Oromos in Diaspora and Oromo friends. The members of this ad hoc committee are:

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Dr. Abebe Adugna | 2. Dr. Ahmed Gelchu | 3. Obbo Ahmed Hussein |
| 4. Dr. Asfaw Beyene (the lead) | 5. Dr. Asefa Jalata | 6. . Dr. Mekbib Gebeyehu |
| 7. Dr. Mohamed Hassen | | |

8. Addee Tsehay Wadajo- OSA treasurers---non-voting member

The scholarship ad hoc committee will start soliciting for this noble objective. I would like to ask for your supports and cooperation.

Thank you,

Begna

Oromo Scholarly Database

In understanding that knowledge is a socially constructed phenomenon, the Oromo Studies Association see that no fields of studies have a monopoly on it. Dialogue between scholars facilitates knowledge construction and dissemination. Communication and cooperation between scholars is instrumental in better understanding the social, economic, political and environmental problems and find culturally acceptable and financially feasible solutions. Realizing that the social, economic, political and environmental problems of Oromo people are complex, the Oromo Studies Association (OSA) is process of creating the database of Oromo scholars and scholars who are engaged in Oromo studies.

The Oromo scholars who reside in Oromia have the privilege to closely observe social realities in Oromia and effectively collect data among the Oromo people. Given that they have less access to modern technology they are facing obstacles and challenges in theorizing the cause of the problems, understanding the phenomena and communicating their findings. On the other hand, the Oromo scholars who are in diaspora, they have access to modern technology and have better access to theories and practices that are relevant to the Oromo people, however, they are in a disadvantaged position in collecting data from Oromia. Collaborative works of between scholars who are in Oromia and in diaspora can have synergetic effects.

The objectives of the database

1. To facilitate knowledge construction, dissemination and knowledge management on issues relevant to the Oromo people
2. To identify research topics that are going on in Oromia and the field of studies in which such studies are conducted
3. To identify the shortage of expertise
4. To distinguish fields of studies in which the Oromo scholars are engaged.
5. To facilitate network of Oromo scholars, who are engaged in the same field of studies to support each other in their research works.
6. To facilitate cooperation between Oromo researchers in their field of studies
7. To provide forum for those scholars who are engaged in the Oromo studies to present their research proposals, findings and publish their works.
8. To widen the scope of research in which the OSA has been engaged.
9. To effectively utilise the Oromo and other expertise in addressing the social, economic, political and environmental needs of the Oromo people.

OSA would like to ask the Oromo Scholars, Oromo communities and Oromo friends to help us in creating this database.

**OSA at the African Studies Association (ASA) Conference
November 18-22, 2010**

OSA members organized a panel and presented papers at the African Studies Association (ASA) 53rd annual meeting, held in San Francisco, California, from November 18 to 21, 2010. Dr. Asafa Jalata, Dr. Guluma Gemedo, Dr. Ezekiel Gebissa and Dr. Peri Klemm presented their papers at panel entitled: **The Oromo Diaspora: History, Culture and Nationalism**. The panel was organized and chaired by Dr. Guluma Gemedo. Dr. Tsega Etefa presented his paper, *“Commerce and Diaspora in Nineteenth-Century East Africa,”* at another panel entitled: **New Approaches to the Slave Trades in East and West Africa**. Dr. Mohammed Hassen was a panelist on a **Roundtable: Reflections and Ruminations on the Horn: Round Three**. All OSA members actively participated other ASA panels and made contacts with Africanist scholars who attended the meeting.