

**THE LEADERSHIP WE NEED
TO BUILD THE KENYA
AND AFRICA WE WANT**

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LEADERSHIP IS A RELATIONSHIP

It is false to be told that we are 'leaders of tomorrow' since we Africans can unify our diverse talents and be 'leaders of today'

We are lead to believe that leading is the most natural skill in the world, but that is not true. Leadership is the result of deliberate preparation. It implies a relationship where someone leads another follows and it is complicated since in relationships, the other person rarely reacts as expected, so leaders need to constantly learn from their mistakes.

The system of leadership in place in Africa and particularly Kenya often disillusion young people who visualize political institutions immediately 'leadership' is mentioned - but that should not be; leadership is simply exploiting one's potential, being a role model, giving hope and inspiring others to be the best they can be!

For us to attain the Kenya and Africa we want, we need a positively assertive, tolerant and firm leadership to address constraints in our socio-political structures, economy and education systems.

Our African political structures have been poisoned by ethnicity and differences across social classes. For that, we require empathetic leadership since we have failed to use our diversity to enhance our growth and development as a continent. We need leadership in which Africans develop their unique political institutions which they are sure will work best for Africa and concurrently encourage global co-operation. We should strive for issue-based and solution-seeking politics; not ethnic politics instituting wars and civil strife which have raged Africa across for decades where countries lucky to survive the aftermath have seen poverty, hunger, diseases, ignorance and political subjection.

It is also unfortunate when Africans embrace certain absurd trends from other continents. I believe that most of African youth do not sufficiently discern good and evil and hence they assimilate certain practices which are destructive and irrelevant to our continent. They should be of high integrity and realize that not all other cultures are bad but they should lead in pride and spread our distinct African cultures which have the basic principles of goodness in them.

For our economy we need visionary leadership whereby our policies will eradicate corruption scandals and overdependence on foreign aid, ensure food security, sustain employment, encourage industrialization and critically, conserve the environment.

As a young leader I am hopeful that with tolerant and dedicated leadership all African states will heal their divides and provide policies which will encourage investments.

The current African education systems have no provision for talent development and are thus handicap some students. Not everyone is academically gifted but they can be leaders using various talents and contribute to national building; talents like Henry Wanyoike, Samuel Wanjiru and Janet Jepkosgei who as prominent athletes have created a good perception of Kenya.

It is therefore false to be told that we are 'leaders of tomorrow' since we Africans can unify our diverse talents and be 'leaders of today'. For a start, African governments should introduce special talent academies which they sponsor, and award scholarship opportunities on merit.

However, Africans should be optimistic since there is emerging a new generation of African leaders. These leaders are approachable, team players, reputable, transparent and less myopic

about our socio-political divides. They are younger leaders who agitate for a generational change of guard.

It is quite evident as the case of P.L.O Lumumba, Christopher Khaemba (Dean: African Leadership Academy) and President Jakaya Kikwete prove, that leadership is the catalyst of change. Through them we see an African dimension on good governance, accountability and dedication to duty. We young leaders dream to emulate them and make the better Kenya and Africa that is endowed but has never been discovered.

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AFRICA NEEDS LEADERSHIP FOR THE PEOPLE

With every chirping bird, an ordinary African wakes up to face the extra ordinary challenges of life

Every prosperous country is driven by the realization that good leadership is a fundamental pillar in its growth. Countries that are the envy of many in terms of economic development are propelled to such heights by exemplary leadership. What they see that other countries do not see is that leadership is not an opportunity to satisfy ones needs but rather to resuscitate that which seems to have gone wrong, to bring to life that which seems impossible and to improve that which already exists.

Looking at the leadership currently exercised in Africa one wonders whether the dream of a self sufficient, economically developed Africa will be attained. Leadership is simply the ability to guide and direct. However, leadership in Africa has taken up a new meaning. It is a chance for people in power to amass all the country's wealth and use it to build a better and more luxurious life for themselves. It is an opportunity to manipulate and coax the masses into believing that as leaders they have their best interests at heart. And when the masses believe, the leaders have a change of heart and they think that leadership is about them and not the people.

With every chirping bird, an ordinary African wakes up to face the extra ordinary challenges of life. They hope that with each second, life will become less over bearing and that somehow, life will become an interesting journey. To attain this, Africa needs leadership that is for the people. Without people, a country is as good as dead. African leaders need to realize that the people's health is what matters; their education is what is of great importance and decent shelter for them tops the list of priorities. Leadership whose core is the people, is able to build the Kenya and Africa we want.

In addition, Africa needs leadership that is progressive and liberal. The world is rapidly changing due to changes in the technology world. The same is true of leadership. Day in day out changes are taking place in leadership. Women are rightfully earning the top most jobs in their countries, for example Angel Merkel who is the German chancellor, and young leaders such as Barack Obama of America are coming up with policies meant to positively transform their countries. Africa needs leaders who are not tied down to accepted ways or some fossilized truths but leaders who are willing to go the extra mile and change beliefs held true by the society.

It is a well known truth that success sprouts from setting goals and working towards them. Africa needs leaders who are able to envision positive change, leaders with a plan of action on how to propel their country to greater development: a plan of action that sets goals that will challenge the people to work hard intelligently. The leadership Africa needs is one that is able to visualize a developed Africa and drive all its efforts to the realization of this dream. Projects like vision 2030 which hopes to see Kenya a fully developed state has everyone working towards the attainment of this well defined goal.

Moreover, Africa needs a kind of leadership which is responsible and accountable. Most of the African leaders are unable to fully explain the distribution of their country's national income and sadly at the end of it, the common citizen is left struggling to make ends meet hoping that someday the leaders will take up their responsibility and account for their term in service. Africa needs leaders that take up their responsibility with all honesty, seriousness and transparency so that at the end of the day Africa's and Kenya's development is attributed to the accountability of its leaders.

Kenya has a dream, Africa has a dream; to ensure that every child has access to education, to provide health care for all, and not just any health care but the best money can buy: a dream to see African countries controlling a greater part of the global economy, and to see everyone with decent shelter and a decent job. All this is possible, but only the African leaders hold the key to the realization of this dream.

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THE TIME FOR REVOLUTIONARY LEADERSHIP IS NOW

There is simply nothing wrong with Africa... The problem is unwillingness or inability of the leadership to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal examples which are hallmarks of true leadership

You may read the obituaries of leaders, but you will never see the birth announcement for a leader. I can only deduce that somewhere between birth and death, by training, by choice and by strength of character people become leaders.

As defined in Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary; a leader is a destined individual who leads or rather stands for a group of people, especially the head of a country or even an organization.

Biblically, we talk of leaders such as King Solomon, King David and others whom theologians say were chosen after the Israelites had demanded a political leader. Historically, we can talk of Nelson Mandela who preached reconciliation and peace leading the way to multi-racial democracy in South Africa. We can also talk of the 44th president of the United States of America who proved that we are at the end of a biased era and the beginning of a new and a determined generation, and many other leaders who have always done their best to make this world into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood where everything is possible.

Ben Carson in his book 'Think Big' says that 'Leadership is a tool to liberty and the best refuge in diversity'. Chinua Achebe in 'The trouble in Africa' says, 'The trouble is simply and squarely a failure in leadership'. There is simply nothing wrong with Africa, there is nothing wrong with land or climate or even water. The problem is unwillingness or inability of the leadership to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal examples which are hallmarks of true leadership.

The success of Kenya and Africa as a whole will be determined by the choices we make and the type of leaders we elect to represent us in different fields and the steps that our countries are taking to curb corruption which is an enemy to economic development. The basis of good governance is equality, integrity, and honesty which are just some of the qualities a leader ought to have.

While we bask in the success and glory of a great son of Africa, we should make a solemn decision to fight vices that have led to bad governance, negative ethnicity, corruption and a culture of impunity. Obama's win is a lesson to Africa, especially Kenya where selfish gain is the main reason why people run for high offices. To them, a sovereign state like Kenya is an ideology they are yet to understand. Such leaders should be reminded of Mother Teresa's words; 'few of us can do great things but many of us can do great things with love'.

I believe that leaders should be chosen by the level of their brains, character and their contribution to the world at large. Africans should not base their choice on ethnicity. Zig Zigler in his book 'Top Performance' put it clearly that; 'you cannot consistently perform in a manner that is inconsistent with the way you see yourself'.

Kenya and Korea got independence almost at the same time, but because of the nature and state of our country's politics and even leadership, Kenya has been rated as one of the poorest countries in the world. Our leaders should remember that the ultimate measure of a man is not seen in time of comfort but when he stands in a time of challenge and controversy. Leaders ought to be goal oriented for success is counted sweetest by those who never succeed since they observed it in those who succeeded.

This is the time for our leaders to rise from the quicksands of euphoria, dishonesty, corruption and ethnic clashes to the solid rock of brotherhood. It is the time to move from the dark and desolate valley of ethnic clashes, to the sunlight path of integrity and equality where each and every individual is equal irrespective of his race, gender and specialization. To eradicate poverty in Africa, it all requires the effort of all. As Hillary Clinton puts it, 'Africa can be built on the powerful resources of each and every individual and not nothingness'. A working nation has its strength from citizens. Similarly good leadership also starts by fearing the Lord who gives to all men equally without favour.

Philip Baker in his book, 'The secret of super achievers' says, "When my external world drives me more than the dreams that are within me, I cease to be in charge, circumstances become my compelling counselors and the potential to become the world changer is changed by the world". Our character determines how others view us, our leadership and even responsibility. Let us all look forward to building a strong unity of purpose and the success of Africa at large.

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FACT IS, THERE IS NO 'BLACK MESSIAH'

The illusion that we await the chosen one, a legendary black Messiah, is but an excuse for our laziness to sit around and murmur about what is not working

The definition of leadership in one word is 'service': the ability or skill to help people by offering instructions, guidance and distinct plans or ideas needed to achieve a common goal or dream. To be a good leader means to be the guardian of a people's liberty. It is the embodiment of the spirit of service coupled with willingness to find meaning in something greater than oneself.

Sadly many leaders especially in Africa are misguided into believing that leadership is all about ultimate power. They start off with dreams and desires to change or to improve what they find, only to start drowning in greed. Power intoxicates even the best of hearts. Take for example some of Africa's 'big men'. Idi Amin a.k.a 'Big Daddy', Mengistu Haile Mariam of Ethiopia, Nguema Theodore of Equatorial Guinea and Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe. These tyrants of Africa have straddled the continent like a colossus. Their ignorance, incompetence and gross ineptitude are driven by excessive self interest. This is not the leadership we want.

We need leaders who will be deaf to the voice of greed. Leaders whose selfless desires speak louder than the cries of hopelessness and the calls of hatred. Leaders who cannot be silenced by challenges and whose dreams cannot be extinguished even by whirl winds of discouragement, failure or prejudice. Leaders who will be driven by the force of principles based on hard work, honesty, courage and fair-play, tolerance, loyalty and patriotism.

Nelson Mandela led the struggle against the apartheid regime in South Africa. He was imprisoned for 27 years and after being released he preached reconciliation and peace even to those who had him locked up. He has been described as 'the man' no prison cell, no violence, no threat of execution could ever silence. He is the ideal epitome of what leadership is all about and that we all should imitate.

I believe that the unique force that drove Nelson Mandela to battle on for more than 27 years lies within us all. It is not a supernatural energy from a mystical place. It is that hope for something better, the piercing eyes of a starving child and the cry of a bereaved mother, the desire for change, a better change. That is the force that should drive a leader.

Today in our country Kenya, our economy is not only weakened but it is in turmoil. There are thousands of poverty stricken citizens and homeless people. Our nation is at war and our hope for a brighter tomorrow has been threatened. Many blame politics and failed policies but we rise and fall as a nation. It is at this defining moment, a time like this that we demand for strong minds, great hearts, true faith and ready hands to guide us past this stormy desert to green pastures, still waters and rest.

As a people, it is time to take our future into our hands by putting an end to the petty grievances, false promises and worn out policies that have strangled our politics for far too long. There should be no more of protecting narrow interests. It is time to break the shackles of ethnicity and prejudice that has slowed down development. It is time to go beyond planning and take up an incremental and gradual approach to investment.

The leadership we so obviously yearn for lies among us and in us. We need to realize that we are our own leaders. The illusion that we await the chosen one, a legendary black Messiah, is but an excuse for our laziness to sit around and murmur about what is not working.

If we want to be a great nation, a great continent, then we must earn it. This journey is not for the faint hearted but for the doers, the risk takers. If we choose hope over fear, unity over discord and put aside childish things then we become the keepers of the legacy passed on by our fore fathers.

Let us invest in our future, into the tender and loving hands of our children's children, into their innocent hearts where the pride of the nation will be enshrined. If this is the Kenya and Africa we want, then its time we take on our individual responsibility that says we are our own leaders, our own keepers as much as we are keepers of our brothers and sisters. We need to recognize our individual duties to ourselves; to our nation and our world and to gladly accept them and give them our all, then will we begin to build the Kenya and Africa we want.

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A NEW FORM OF LEADERSHIP

The concept of leadership has radically evolved from lording over people to one of service

Kenya and Africa in general has perpetually been besieged by a horde of seemingly impossible problems to solve: HIV/Aids and malaria, famine, food scarcity, brain drain, civil wars and tribal clashes, one crisis after another forever sinking to a new low each passing day earning ourselves a shameful tag- 'Third World'. But none of these problems come anywhere near being as dire as the lack of good leadership. Bad leadership has been the bane of Africa as a continent and Kenya as a country.

But what is 'leadership' and good leadership at that? I believe leadership at its most basic level is taking responsible charge of individuals or organizations and using insight to steer them in improving the quality of life and bettering themselves and in the process, their society. It is therefore obvious that the prosperity of people leans heavily on their leadership, embodied by leaders.

Kenya needs charismatic and transparently elected leaders. Its depressing that so many African leaders come to power by undemocratic means be it military coups, rigging elections or conducting sham elections that only do to further political dynasties as recently seen in Gabon. These types of leaders are usually unwilling to give up power since they have a lot to lose. Their actions have only served to characterize Africa as the world knows it; irremediably corrupt, self-inflicting, and poverty stricken while possessing a sizeable chunk of the world's natural resources (think of Congo and until recently, Nigeria). We need pro-democracy leaders who relinquish leadership positions to the younger generation to inject fresh ideas and energy; to do away with the outdated concept of president for life. If only the rest of Africa could follow in the steps of Ghana.

Apart from possessing the usual (but not so usual) attributes of leadership like courage, competence and confidence, Kenya and Africa at large needs exceptionally visionary leaders with perspective. Not only should they talk the talk, but walk it. How refreshing it was for President Yar'adua of Nigeria to purge the banking industry that had taken money laundering and in-trading to new infamous heights. We could do with more leaders like this with a REAL zero tolerance to corruption.

We also need leaders who at their core have the welfare of the people, who can't stand the sight of a malnourished starving child. Leaders like former vice president Moody Awori who was touched to see the appalling living conditions of convicts and remandees and led prisons reforms to correct that.

Africa needs leaders who are emancipated from imperialism and free from the shackles of neocolonialism, who aren't stooges for the West's leaders, who stand for what they believe is best for their people and don't compromise the stance in order to receive foreign aid.

We need leaders who are peace loving and do all it takes to promote inter-ethnic tolerance so as to avoid nightmares like witnessed in early 2008 here in Kenya. Leaders like Nelson Mandela who despite blatant prejudice and provocation, remained staunchly non violent and in the end redefined the meaning of 'patience pays'.

The concept of leadership has radically evolved from lording over people to one of service. Current and upcoming African leaders need to embrace this new form of servant leadership.

Heads of state should run their governments like modern companies with the focus being on quality service delivery to its citizens and their satisfaction being its motivation.

In a nutshell, Africans and especially their leaders need to work together, in their diverse and respective positions to make the UN millennium development goals a reality and endeavor to rank at the top in forums that recognize and appreciate good leadership such as the Mo Ibrahim index. I pray that God grants Africa visionary leaders who will save it from this chasm of despair it's currently in.

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THE BEAUTIFUL QUALITIES OF ALL KENYAN PEOPLE IS THE PERFECT RECIPE FOR THE KENYA WE WANT

The positive leadership we need to build a new Kenya starts with ourselves

We the young suckers that will grow when the old bananas die, have the obligation to muster courage to fulfill the obligation of our fore fathers and lead our great nation toward a better future. Even though we have misused the freedom that Kenya earned through blood, sweat and tears, we can still be architects and builders of the Kenya we want. Even though we have failed in the past, failure is not an identity, it is an opportunity to begin again more intelligently.

This is our chance, this is our moment to set new records and write a new history which the future generations will be proud of. We want a Kenya free from corruption and tribalism; a Kenya where you get employment not because of who you know; a Kenya where the future generations will not be judged by the colour of their skin or their tribe but by the content of their brains. Such a Kenya is possible and we have to be its builders.

The positive leadership we need to build a new Kenya starts with ourselves. If you are a true leader to yourself, you are a person of integrity who does the right thing at the right time, in the right place and with the right intentions. When you notice something wrong, you don't ignore it but correct the mess. If you are given the responsibility to lead, practice justice and be firm to safeguard the interest of all. If you are under authority, perform your duties whole heartedly with the mentality of being the best.

Parents should be pioneers and the cornerstone of the leadership Kenya needs to build the Kenya we want. In many families, parents have no time for their children. This has robbed a generation an opportunity of learning from parents. If parents play their leading role, Kenya will move forward, for young men and women of good upbringing, good character and keen minds are mandatory ingredients of a successful nation.

The community is one of the pillars of good leadership. The community should guide those who have lost hope in life and explain the vision of society to all. This will help reclaim our young people from violence, drug abuse and a state of despair.

All community leaders, religious leaders or political leaders must instill diligence in their communities, train their communities on personal leadership and the essence of integrity and honesty, and not forgetting peaceful ways of conflict resolution for the Kenya we want cannot be a reality without peace.

For positive national leadership to be achieved, our election process should be free and fair, not marred with violence and bribery. This will help Kenya to get accountable, selfless leaders with unlimited vision and courage to make tough choices for meaningful change. Honesty is paramount, dishonesty leads to corruption and it is painfully obvious that corruption stifles development, it siphons off scarce resources that should be used to improve infrastructure, boost education systems, create jobs and strengthen public health.

Our social cohesion, economic prosperity and political maturity will only be realized when we roll up our sleeves and get down to work as a team. Our leaders should cultivate the spirit of team work and fight against tribal based politics. Instead of unifying the country it divides neighbour from neighbour.

If a musician plays both black and white keys of a piano to produce sweet melodious tunes, why can't Kenyans combine the entrepreneurial enthusiasm of the Kikuyu, the energy of the

Luhya, the zeal and zest of the Maasai, the Luo's quest for perfection with the Kamba's and Mijikenda's humility and all beautiful qualities of all Kenyan people as a perfect recipe for leadership which can drive Kenya past the dream – to the Kenya we want.

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WE NEED CONFIDENT LEADERS IN WHOM WE HAVE CONFIDENCE

The dreams of Africans however, remained a vision yet to be realised. In turn, the people whom we appointed as leaders started eating our flesh.

Leadership is not an easy term to express in one concise definition. It is a broad term that covers all aspects of life at any level, starting from one individual to the wider human society on this planet. Everybody is a leader to him or herself, to their body and soul, and has to exercise that leadership role in a manner that satisfies the soul. One should be able to make the best decision for oneself. That also applies to any type of leadership. The leader should be effective in carrying out his or her responsibilities and should always act positively.

Kenya and Africa at large has undergone different types of leadership eras, from the pre-colonial African leadership to the current modern African leadership. It has experienced the tyranny of colonial government and the pain inflicted on Africans as the whites governed the blacks to benefit themselves. Grabbing of land, detaining and torturing of freedom fighters, putting Africans into reserves among other prejudices were the pain the Africans got in return for their rich soil for agriculture and minerals.

After a long struggle of Africa's gifted brave men were able to eradicate the torture of colonialists. Africans started governing themselves in their own way. They preached equality and justice for all and yearned for peaceful environment to live in. They wanted to start a new beginning and build a prosperous democratic nation that will advance for the well being of all Kenyans. The ambition of seeing an economically stable nation that would provide high quality life to all burnt within us. We prayed to God to lead our people and leaders into the right way.

The dreams of Africans however, remained a vision yet to be realised. In turn, the people whom we appointed as leaders started eating our flesh. They practiced corruption among other evil leadership acts but it is never too late. Change can always come. It is only a matter of the society being ready to accommodate it, and this is what is clearly written in the eyes of every Kenyan today, that we are ready for change.

For the African dream to be realised we need to build up an effective leadership system where the leader is caring for the needs of the subject and the subject has confidence in the decision the leader makes. For us to get the Kenya and Africa we want we should have strong and confident leaders who can face the challenge they encounter in the task of nation building. Our leaders should be able to reconcile and unite our people as one people they should be able to make us proud of their leadership.

Our leaders should be united among themselves and be able to make strong decisions that can lead the country to a prosperous future without any external pressure. They should have strong views towards their responsibilities as decision makers and feel that the future of the whole society is in their hands. Africa needs leaders who can make smart, powerful economic decisions which will enable us to achieve African development goals. We need to achieve an economy that can support the economical well-being of every African.

At last, Africa needs vibrant leaders who can stand against corruption and other social evils; leaders who can prevent violence within Africa and build a peaceful and prosperous Africa. In order to build the Africa we want we need African leaders who can lead us in our own African way with a blend of a little of the western leadership skills.

If only our leaders can stand strong and preach peace, love and unity and help our nation get a constitution that cares for the needs of each individual Kenyan and unite us all, we will be able to achieve the Kenya and Africa we want.

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