



Rescue Our Future Foundation

Transcript of the seed paper at the conference
How Can Africa Take Command of Its Destiny by Mobilizing Its Potential

COMMAND OF DESTINY: BREAKING THE WHEELS OF DOMINATION IN AFRICA

Glenn Sankatsing

January 30, 2021

Good afternoon Africa, good evening Asia, from a sunny morning here in the Caribbean. Welcome to this conference, which will discuss how to move Africa from the back seat of history to the steering wheel of its own future.

As a cosmopolitan, a citizen of the world whose only allegiance is to humanity, I am grateful to be a part of this conference in the birthplace of humanity.

Born on a sugar cane plantation in colonial Suriname that

brought together Asia, Africa and the Americas, I was confronted at birth with the common struggle and common destiny of humanity. Since my hometown is planet Earth, allow me to speak to you at this conference in deep solidarity with Africa.

A special welcome to the youth who will populate the future. At your age, as a Caribbean student in Europe, we took to the streets in the cold winter days to demonstrate against apartheid in South Africa with the slogan: “This madness in Africa must stop now!”

Today, half a century later, we must begin this conference with the same words, as if history had forgotten to move forward. Apartheid has been overthrown, but its spirit and colonial practices are more alive and damaging than ever.

Things have gotten bad, but what is most worrying is that a young African, not yet born, will stand up after fifty years and say to the world: “This madness in Africa must end,” unless we stop the madness now.

That is the reason for this conference, which is different from the high-profile summits where our politicians and disconnected elites meet and never stop talking about us without us. They do not feel our pain when they sacrifice the fate of Africa for economic growth that destroys our environment and brings violence and war that serve no African purpose.

But what makes this conference different from the many failed attempts to liberate Africa? Aren't we just trying to reinvent the wheel? The short answer is that the wheel of African liberation has yet to be invented.

Historically, Africa was forced to grow from someone else's genetic code rather than from its own potential in balance with its environment. A history of endless disruption, social collapse, economic crisis, political polarization and war stands out as a monument of colonial and imperialist destruction in every

corner of Africa.

To understand the magnitude of what has happened, we do not need to read difficult books, because colonialism can be summed up in five words. The guest became the host. An intruder enters your house and tells you: “You are my guest. Your house is mine; your land is mine: your resources are mine, and you are mine.”

This is the autobiographical story of colonialism, neocolonialism, imperialism and the continued appropriation of Africa’s wealth that undermines its ability to move forward.

Yet many of our African policy makers, experts and universities still suggest that there is a need for nuance, because beyond the regrettable violence, there was the intent to civilize, westernize, modernize and develop Africa.

You can only civilize a barbarian, otherwise there is nothing to civilize. The civilizing mission was to clone the West in other societies to incorporate them into the back seat of the project for economic gain of the West.

Since their foreign implants needed empty lands and blank minds, they abolished our history and marginalized our vibrant culture into dead folklore. To civilize was to domesticate.

After they had domesticated us, they westernized us with their mantra: What was good for the West is best for the rest. The models they brought were not adapted to reality, but our reality was modified to accommodate their models. This is not just a superiority claim to be better *than* us, because their achievements were also better *for* us and could be imposed *on* us by force if necessary.

Civilization and westernization have suspended our social evolution, discontinued our heritage, banished our gods and broken our communitarian ubuntu solidarity. They have even targeted our minds and forbidden the language we need to express our feelings and talk to the trees in the forest.

Instead of continuing the long process of social evolution inherited from our ancestors, the colonial and imperialist plan of domination was to globalize us into extinction, socially, culturally, spiritually and economically.

The history of the last five hundred years is the globalization of the local experience of the West, which has turned other societies into remote-controlled trailer societies without engines and steering wheels, like trailers dangling from the back of trucks. There is no such thing as a global village. One village went global, uprooting other communities while inserting its own image on other latitudes. The global mission of the West was not to impart, but to collect.

As the colonies began to gain independence, colonialism changed its narrative to developing backward countries by offering them their achievements to lift them up to Western standards. But if they had shared their technology with our countries with abundant natural resources and inexpensive labor, they would no longer be able to compete with us in the world market. Since capitalism is not a charitable institution, the story of bringing development to distant competitors in a colonial environment sounds very dubious.

All models of development brought from outside have failed because development is not transferable, even as a generous gift. You cannot bring development; it always comes from within. You can give a mango seed water, sunlight and fertilizer to let it grow into a strong mango tree, but it will never become an apple tree. You can't grow potatoes; potatoes grow themselves.

Development is the mobilization of one's own potential in response to the challenges of nature and history to realize a sustainable project with an internal command center. This sounds like the title of our conference "How can Africa take command of its destiny by mobilizing its potential?"

The so-called 'development' that they have brought has been

disastrous for Africa. Instead of supporting Africa to maturity, it was the opposite of development. It was envelopment, like wrapping us in an envelope, including us in their project for economic gain. Development comes from within and brings life and prosperity; envelopment shapes us from the outside and brings discontinuity, destruction and death. Now we can tell Walter Rodney, who wrote the classic work on African underdevelopment, that Europe underdeveloped Africa through envelopment.

But here we see the beauty of evolution. Envelopment always triggers new development. If you cut down a tree, it will grow new shoots. Limbo dance was not born in Africa or the Caribbean. The joy of limbo was created on slave ships, where space was small and chains short, by people on their journey into centuries of hereditary slavery.

This is the power of development, linked to the driving force of evolution, which is ‘life always seeks more life’. Dominant systems can oppress people to the brink of death and deprive them of the tools of survival, but life and culture always find a way.

This dynamic interaction between development and envelopment is a powerful tool to explain history and understand our social evolution, much more powerful than all the concepts invented by traditional social science.

It explains how the chanting of sorrows in cotton fields gave us the Mississippi Delta blues and why the people of Trinidad did not throw the colonial oil barrels in the Caribbean Sea but carefully crafted the drums for their beautiful steel band music. These examples point to the deep underlying process in evolution that envelopment always triggers new development.

This is not always successful. Decolonization opened the door to recolonization, when the national liberation movements took the Western nation-state, Western democracy and Western

philosophy and science as their starting point to build what they called the postcolonial society.

This reminds me of one of the worst fiction books I have ever read, which is *Philosophy of History* by the famous Western philosopher Hegel. Hegel tells us that history has traveled from the East to the West, from Asia as the childhood to Europe as the end of history.

Hegel's basic idea that Europe is the future face of all other nations forms the Eurocentric backbone of Western philosophy, science and ideology, including Karl Marx, who tells us that the more developed country shows the less developed country the image of its own future.

For Hegel, the guru of European philosophy, all other nations are destined to one day become like Europe. This contradicts the fundamental evolutionary principle that adaptation to different environments leads to diversity. It is like saying that all the trees in the world are destined to become an oak tree one day.

The African soul and community never trusted the fable of civilization, but our political elites and Westernized intellectuals have adopted Western models and ideologies as the key assets for decolonization. Millions have died in the fanatical defense of capitalist and communist ideologies that have nothing to do with our own reality. Capitalism did not emerge anywhere in Africa. It was delivered as the cargo of a sailing ship. There is no international capitalism, only globalized Western capitalism, which has successfully colonized the world.

The anti-colonial struggle implicitly accepted Western civilization as the vanguard of human evolution and the only ticket to world history. Africa sought liberation in the system responsible for its colonization. The liberation project failed because it sought to reform hell while the devil was bringing more coal.

The independence project was the work of westernized minds who copied the Western model without testing it first. Part of the painful dilemma of decolonization was that the borders of the states they tried to liberate were the scars of colonialism created with colonial violence across tribal lands.

Their winner-takes-all democracy guarantees majority rule by the largest tribe at the expense of the smaller tribes, leading to civil wars with mathematical precision. Elections are a beauty contest for power that mobilizes people to exclude them later. In an act of political suicide, people become powerless by outsourcing all their power to elites who get the mandate to govern without them.

Power not through bullet, ballot or wallet, but echoing the voice of the people is the only viable way to achieve true democracy and trigger development. Democracy is not telling lies or even telling the truth; it is listening to the heartbeat of the people.

This urges Africa to reinvent an ubuntu-based democracy with representatives who obey the people rather than allowing disconnected elites to hijack their future. Without that, it will be difficult to achieve a united Africa with development, stability and peace. A divided Africa fights for crumbs, a united Africa is the owner of the bakery.

African universities still need to cut the Western umbilical cord and stop copying models and entire branches of science that have no validity in Africa.

What is the point of accepting cultural anthropology, the daughter of colonialism, which treats our lives and our daily behavior as exotic objects of study? Why should Africa accept modern economics, which has become the doctrine of capitalism to optimize markets and maximize profits? Why would Africa embrace capitalism, which processes nature into bank accounts and destroys our environment with impunity?

Why would Africa, with its ties to Mother Earth, accept an economic system for which the only beauty of nature is its monetary value? Why would societies that invented ubuntu embrace the warlike concept of competition, the pillar of Western economics, whose scientific formulas have no symbols for solidarity and cooperation?

African universities can be, and have been, powerful platforms for critical debate on Africa's liberation, but many still behave like fan clubs of foreign scientific centers that study Africa telepathically from afar. To become bastions of development and crown jewels of critical thinking, many African universities need an urgent overhaul.

Africa's struggle for liberation is part of a global struggle against all forms of envelopment and domination, not just by the West which has driven global injustice to extreme brutality. Long before Europe came out of the caves, domination had already been Chinese, Mongol, Aztec, Ottoman and African. Soon it became the fourfold domination which now threatens our stay on Earth, which is domination of nature that caused the environmental crisis, domination of human beings that led to global envelopment, domination of culture that caused fundamentalism, and domination of the mind that has drowned many into mental slavery.

Domination has nothing to do with the color of the skin, but with the evil of the mind. As descendants of the same African ancestors, we are a global extended family, and race is a terrible lie. To survive our journey through the world, we have had to adapt to geography, climate, sun and cold, which affected the pigmentation of the skin, but not the color of the heart. Therefore, we must eliminate envelopment by racism, sexism, supremacy, oppression and injustice, and overcome domination by choosing development in a global solidarity across national, ethnic, gender and religious divides.

Africa knows its problems; it has felt them for centuries. Africa knows the future it aspires to; it has seen it a thousand times in its dreams. The real challenge we face is in the first word of this conference, *how*, which invites us to focus on concrete actions and strategies, because action is the best prediction.

The failure of African liberation has taught us that powerful systems of domination will never provide solutions to the dominated. The solution is from outside the system of envelopment, an extra-systemic development project of the people.

We must believe in evolution and leave behind the obsession of revolution that you must always destroy before you can build. Instead of fighting the weeds, we should plant trees that deprive the weeds of sunlight and nutrients. If we nurture good, it will eventually overcome evil. Tested by the wheel of time, evolution is the best revolution. The best grip on our destiny is not our grip on the gun, but our grip on the steering wheel.

To bring Africa to a safe haven, we must not bend when we face inescapable odds, because it does not matter whether the water is cold or hot if we have to cross the river anyway. We must also reject the suggestion that we should always be pragmatic. A pragmatic slave is an eternal slave. We will not choose the lesser of two evils if neither can guarantee our survival. The coldest place in hell is not an acceptable option.

Fortunately, evolution is on our side with its beautiful law that in the face of death or extinction, all creatures, species and people become creative in finding options for survival.

I cannot wait to hear at this conference the powerful voices of our speakers Nnimmo Bassey, Vanessa Nakate and P.L.O. Lumumba, as well as the valuable contributions of our participants who have come here with a specific purpose. Let me therefore conclude with some final thoughts.

Africa must restore the natural flow of its energy to build a better society. What Africa wants is to survive, to grow, to flourish, to bear fruit and to overcome death through reproduction. The opposite has happened to Africa. Apartheid's vocation was to turn the cradle of humanity into the graveyard of humanity. Africa's vocation is to turn hope, justice and ubuntu solidarity into printed life.

The force that can rescue this continent, Africa's moral reserves, though long marginalized, will never be enslaved or silenced. As it has begun to speak out, let us make this conference a wake-up call.

Africa faces many tasks, challenges and hurdles, but all converge toward one goal: "To turn a rich continent into a rich continent!" This does not sound out of reach. But as easy as it may seem, as difficult as it may be. We need courage, perseverance, unity, solidarity and creativity, because colonialism is like a mutating virus that quickly transforms to adapt to changing circumstances.

But all colonial mutations, from colonialism to neocolonialism to modern globalization, have one thing in common that has not changed in all these centuries. They always offer us two choices, no more, no less, just two options. "You can live on your knees or you can die on your feet."

From the painful experiences of our heroic freedom fighters, Africa has learned lessons and can now draw the right conclusion. Africa has its answer ready, which this conference adopts. To mobilize its potential and take command of its destiny, this is Africa's final and non-negotiable answer: "We will live on our feet to walk towards our own destiny!"

[Home](#)