

Hello Africans!

A child of promise was born in a community with a purpose to redeem his people from the shackles of bondage, strife and crises. These community problems had been in existence for decades. Few individuals who were the leaders in the community profited from the situation and as such would prefer the status quo. The prophecy was that some day this child would liberate his people. The irony of it was that the child never knew he was destined for such a purpose. He lived his life not realizing who he was except for those few selfish individuals who knew but would not want to give him a chance. Why was it so? They knew that it would be over with them if the child realized himself! The boy's major task was not even that of liberating his people but of realizing himself.

This is the situation with Africans. Since we have not realized and defined ourselves, we cannot grow. The rest of the world cannot also take a step forward. Our uniqueness, heritage and cultures are so distinctive and beautiful that they have great hopes for humanity. Providence endowed on us great human and material resources to build our lands and those of our neighbours. We have enviable climate and rich vegetations. Our lands are also fertile and productive. Despite all these outstanding attributes, we often experience crises, violence, bloodshed and other forms of maladies- caused by ourselves. Other continents sometimes experience natural disasters such as tsunami, earthquake, volcanic eruption, tornadoes which were not under their control. Since we are blessed dear Africans, why can't we realize ourselves?

Over fifty years ago, Africa produced great leaders with visions for their countries. They had a purpose- gaining independence and sovereignty for their people. They pursued it rigorously and selflessly because they realized themselves. Their unified and sincere vision for freedom brought a renaissance that swept through the continent in the fifties and sixties. Their sacrifices and efforts were not in vain. They fought and gave us our independence. What happens today? Why is it that such leaders do not exist again? What happened to our leaders? Where are their voices? Africans still yearns for the replica of leaders such as Nelson Mandela of South Africa, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, Edward Fredrick Mutesa II of Uganda, Ahmed Sekou Toure of Guinea, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Felix Houphouet-Boigny of Cote d'Ivoire, Partrice Lumumba of Congo, Kofi Annan of Ghana etc. Africa needs a new generation of leaders with a common vision for her people and the rest of humanity.

In his speech at the opening of the 'Africa 21' conference on Africa's 50th anniversary in Yaoundé, Cameroon, Ali Bongo, President of Gabon said, "young Africans can change the world, and must change the world." Yes, he believes in us. Other nations of the world believe in us too. But what matters most is whether we believe in ourselves. Dear young Africans, we are the leaders of

tomorrow. We need to realize and define ourselves as soon as possible, strategize our plans on how we can chart a new course, inspire our people towards an African dream and be fully prepared towards holding the mantle of tomorrow's leadership. Some day, our chance to lead the way will come. *And if we are well prepared, we shall lead our people right!*

This is my dream. I believe it is your dream too. It is for better Africans and a greater AFRICA!

John Obiechina