



Barack Obama has Opened Up a New Door of Opportunity and Now We Must Move Ahead!

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One minute after 11:00 PM (EST) on November 4, 2008 was one of those significant moments in American history that will forever divide the past from the future. For the first time, a person of color—of African American heritage—was elected President of the United States of America.

For the African American, it has been a long and hard struggle starting with the emancipation from slavery in 1865 to the Civil Rights Movement of the sixties and finally to the election of President-elect Barack Obama. Great grandchildren of the slaves and great grandchildren of the owners of those slaves came together to choose this man, the child of a white mother and a black African father.

For many white Americans, race was not an issue; instead, they simply wanted the best candidate to win and Obama's message of hope resonated with them; however, for African Americans, Ethiopians, Africans and people of color from all over the world who have felt marginalized and excluded for years, Obama's election signified the beginning of a different world where skin color and ethnicity would become increasingly less important and a candidate's qualifications and positions on key issues would take precedence.

Obama emphasized that America was not for only one preferred group when he said that America was not a red America, a blue America or a white America, but the United States of America. This means that America must be for conservatives, liberals, Republicans, Democrats, Independents, people of differing ethnic, racial and religious background, people of different states and regions and in essence, for all the diverse people that make up the United States.

This is the same **“beautiful and multi-colored, multi-shaped garden of humanities” that I dream about for Ethiopia that appeared in Grant Park in Chicago when Senator Barack Obama's victory was announced.** As the people celebrated, many with tears of joy running down their cheeks, embraced each others, waved flags, news commentators could not help but remark on the uplifting picture they saw of a multi-cultural, multi-racial crowd of young and old alike, united around a candidate whose message drew them together as one, showing a real-life image of American diversity and unity at its best!

Ethiopians and Africans from all over the world were watching this historic moment in American history that is certain to affect matters “beyond the shores of America.” **Now that the celebrations are over and the tears are dried, I am making an urgent call to all Ethiopians for action.**

The end of the Obama campaign must mark the beginning of our own “**Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia**” that reflects the diversity of Ethiopians coming together around greater principles and values, just like diverse Americans came together in unity and hope of a better future for the United States of America.

Could Ethiopia hope to become the United People of Ethiopia where humanity was more important than ethnicity and where freedom, justice and opportunity for all, undergirded every part of our society because of the basic truth—no one will be free until we all are free?

Now is our time to come together in solidarity and unified purpose. Obama’s victory has opened up a new door of opportunity for Ethiopians and we must now move ahead before it closes!

If you as an Ethiopian identify with Obama’s win as signifying the importance of reaching out to many diverse groups and breaking down racial and ethnic barriers, then you too must be willing to do the same for Ethiopia. Each and every Ethiopian needs to do the same.

Let us look at how Obama did it. **Obama drew people together around shared principles and ideals, not by race or ethnicity because by his actions**, you can see that he believes that all people are equally human. Can Ethiopians do the same? Can Ethiopians use such principles to embrace, not only our own people, but also all people in the Horn and in greater Africa, as all deserving of the same rights and privileges? I am convinced we can, but first we must be open about some of our challenges.

For example, the negative attitude of some Ethiopians towards others based on skin-color or ethnicity is a part of Ethiopian society that no one wants to talk about; however, it must be addressed through respectful education of our people in order for us to move ahead or we will remain in the dark ages of thinking while America and others in the world move ahead. This is a problem that no one wants to face, but it will destroy us as a people if we do not face it. Until we can become a nation that values its minorities, its marginalized and its mainstream people groups as equally part of the future of Ethiopia, we will remain divided and find it difficult to bring freedom and opportunity to our country.

Americans have worked very hard to choose their future as a people. **What just took place in America is what Ethiopians, Africans and many in the world are hungering for—the opportunity to help determine their destiny. Ethiopians over our entire 3000-year history have rarely had a choice in determining our future.** This is what is lacking on the continent, but right now we have a new opportunity, even though it might start as a small movement of committed Ethiopians. Who knows how it might mushroom into something far greater. Look at Obama’s example.

Just four years ago, most of us had never even heard of him and now he has been elected to the highest office in the world. This man held a vision of a different America and started with just a few people at his side, working out of a basement room in Washington D.C. that sometimes flooded, causing them to have to pick up their papers from the floor.

His language of acceptance, justice, unity, inclusiveness and hope was what attracted many supporters, but the road to the presidency required perseverance, sacrifice and hard work. History was made in front of our eyes and could be made in Ethiopia, but it cannot be done as long as we are divided. The antidote is the moral and spiritual transformation of our culture, one person at a time, into a people who can work together with humility and determination for a better future not only for themselves or their ethnic groups or regions, but also for other Ethiopians.

We must be able to provide a better alternative to Meles and this is the way we can do it. If Ethiopians do not unite, Obama will not have group representative of Ethiopia with whom to work.

Ethiopians have what it takes, but need to be empowered as a people to take control of their own future so they are ready for their own historic moment. It is doable if Ethiopians start reaching out and reconciling with one another. Senator John McCain provides an example to us in what it takes to work together in his concession speech after losing the election.

After many months of hard work, after much money had been spent and after the inevitable disappointment of losing a hard campaign, McCain showed himself to be a man of grace and humility. He ended his campaign by putting the best interests of the country ahead of any self-interest as he promised to do whatever he could for America and called Obama his own president. Public servants like this are what have helped America succeed in being able to move ahead in unity despite losses, disagreements and disappointments.

Ethiopians from all over the world have seen this modeled before their eyes this past Tuesday and now let us join hands and become something bigger than our tribes, our egos, our political parties, our power and self-interest. Let the next story people will be talking about in the world come out of the success of the Ethiopian people to come together to gain their freedom.

The Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia (SMNE) has a primary goal of bringing Ethiopians together and is working behind the scenes and publicly, wherever possible, to create a stronger collective and more representative voice of the Ethiopian people that can draw on the strengths of Ethiopians across political, regional, ethnic and religious lines in creating new solutions to the many complex problems facing Ethiopians. An objective of the movement is to help open up the society to genuine political expression by diverse groups with differing needs.

The time of one tribe take all is over. It is no longer a sustainable approach to governing in Ethiopia. The sun is setting on the dictators and killers of Africa and the new dawn is coming for remembering that we are all part of the greater family of human beings, previously alienated by false teaching and the selfish interests of leaders who capitalized on our failures. **Let us be reconciled and reunited as we decolonize Africa from the African predators who keep the people enslaved and find their support to do so from the African Dictators for Life Club—the so-called African Union.**

This is the language Obama and McCain will understand. This is the language the whole world needs. It is what gave Obama the election. It is what gives McCain the humility, courage and higher principles to join Obama in solidarity now for the benefit of America.

This is what is lacking in Ethiopia and Africa. We Ethiopians must decide on the future of Ethiopia and whether we will any longer tolerate the thinking of Meles and the TPLF known for their racism, cronyism, division, hatred, greed, dishonesty, cruelty, killing and imprisoning opponents, repression, devaluation of others and backwardness, all creating a beggar nation ruled by a handful of rich and powerful elitists.

The models of focused determination of Obama's campaign and the humility of McCain to concede to Obama and work with him for the best interests of the country are models of what is desperately needed in Ethiopia and in all of Africa. **We Ethiopians must not lose the opportunity of this time in history by falling into old traps of division. We must rise above the fray and capture this moment as our own. Can we do it? Yes, we can!**

This is the time to prepare now. It is time for Ethiopians to become the team that is ready for the soccer match of its life. For Ethiopia to put that ball into our opponent's net to score a victory for freedom will require knowing the game, knowing our opponent, listening to our coaches, being willing to enter into the game to play and **TEAMWORK!** Can we do it? **Yes we can!**

Right now, the Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia is mobilizing and reaching out in anticipation of calling Ethiopians to action. Will Ethiopians be ready when the call for action comes? **Start now by reconciling with your neighbors. We must have representation from all over Ethiopia, something that can begin here in the Diaspora, but must be grounded in every region of the country and you must be talking to each other.**

We must gain a better understanding where we are going with the financial sector, the agricultural sector, with the privatization of land, with the economy, with health care, with our homeless, with education, with policies regarding our neighbors like Somalia, Sudan and Eritrea, with our armed groups and military, with HIV/Aids, with access to clean water, with foreign aid, with territorial disputes, with national debt and with inner conflicts.

We must have lines of communication between segments of society opened and secured. We must have a game plan. We must have inclusiveness. We must be willing to get into the game to play. We must be prepared and now is the time of our preparation. Do not expect Obama to make that call for us. He has helped create an open door, but we Ethiopians must be ready to move through it. Let us be prepared to create our own historic moment dividing the oppressed Ethiopia of the past from the free Ethiopia of our future.

I have a dream of Ethiopians of every region, culture, ethnic group, language, religion, political party, age, gender and of any other difference you can think of, coming together in the capital cities of the free world to show the world the solidarity that will usher in a new era for Ethiopia. **Imagine the mall in front of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC where Martin Luther King, Jr spoke. Now imagine what it would look like if one million Ethiopians from all over the Diaspora came out in solidarity that they flooded the mall with a sea of Ethiopians. Imagine seeing all the diversity of the beautiful garden of Ethiopia there, all calling for a new and better Ethiopia—one with freedom, with justice, with the rule of law, with the respect for human rights, with equality, with transparency, with civility and with opportunity!**

No one will ignore such a strong and massive outpouring! It would be a shock, but immensely inspiring to the whole world! **This can be done and all that is needed is for Ethiopians to believe it is doable and to come together in solidarity around God-given principles.**

If we Ethiopians can do this, President Barack Obama will know that there is no justice in Ethiopia. The whole world will know there is no freedom in Ethiopia. The whole world will know there is no peace in Ethiopia. The whole world will know that Ethiopians are ready for change! The whole world will know that God has not forgotten about Ethiopians—that is, if Ethiopians remember that God is in charge of the nations, their coming and going and that God created and knows every human being and hears their individual cries for His intervention.

This is one of the goals of the Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia. Will you be part? May God bless the Ethiopian people and help them to become a transformed people, a transformed nation and a blessing to other people in the world! =====

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