

WEF 2006: Young Africal Global Leader's Perspective

I have been fortunate to be invited to the WEF, as part of the Young Global Leaders. As someone who went there to learn and listen to my elders speak, I soon realise that I will be one day sitting in those panels and attempting to explain Africa growth potential or success.

I listened to my elders speak and decided to capture what the beautiful minds talked about and those topics I feel were most neglected and needed more attention and debate. So this is a youngster version of the WEF on paper.

Having listened I now understands my role and the citizens role in ensuring that Africa is truly FREE and that all have a better life.

I would attempt to talk about the WEF under the following forms of Freedoms

1. Political
2. Economical
3. Mental
4. Spiritual/Values/Ethics

Political Freedom

Key take out is that the continent needs Leadership that is humble, intelligent enough not to cut and paste the recipe's of others but learn form them and adapt them to suit each country's situation. Leaders who are visionaries and most importantly who truly commit themselves to servant leadership not selfishness and becoming fat cats out of honest citizens sweat.

Political leaders who do not confuse royal blood and political position acquired as a result of an election. Politicians are neither chiefs nor kings; they do not get to their position of power by bloodline, buy by the will of the people and their right to vote. Therefore our leaders need to stop suffering from 'Life time presidency syndrome- president for life" .

It came out clear that having a black president in case of SA does not necessary mean all are Free, it's an excellent start but not the final answer.

Economic Freedom

“growth of over 5-8% GDP that does not translate to real visible change on the ground is meaningless. Those in business know very well that any growth that is not profitable does not increase shareholder value”

Real growth only happens if there's visible proof of a better life such as visible changes in infrastructural development (roads, railways, clinics, electricity, and

access to water, good quality education education education etc). Growth that translate all the way down to the bottom of the pyramid and pulling the bottom of the pyramid to become Black Diamonds.

It was made clear by all including the IMF, World Bank that BEE and other government economic interventions are necessary to speed up economic equality and sustain stability.

Initially I used to be angry at the fact that in the newspapers being told that over 80% of the BEE deal went less that 10 people , whom we all know. Then I went back to history to observe if the same 80/20 principle applied (that few families or people benefited). I soon realised that during the discovery of SA mineral resources, start of retail, manufacturing, close to 5to 10 families only controlled most of the wealth.

Therefore the torture test for BEE is not the few numbers, but those who have benefited how many people they bring up with them quickly. The more the better,. They should find it necessary to pull up another young competent, hard worker, culture of excellence.

Some would ask WHY they should. Yes they are not obliged but if they are Social Entrepreneurs and have not forgotten easily of the past and their role in changing the present for the better. Social Entrepreneurs are thrown amongst the snakes, and wolves (soulless capitalist s – lack of social relevance). And we hope and pray they do not turn into snakes and wolves.

The disappointment was the shying away from my elders on the issue of Land and Minerals Ownership. Very little acknowledgement of the possibility that there is clear correlation between ownership and perhaps even greater GDP growth. Most of my leaders did not answer this question and many beat around the bushes.

Mental Freedom

“Oppression and colonisation has destroyed the minds of an African. Only now we see the effects of a master ruling from the grave”

My elders focused more of their time and energy talking about skills shortages / and capacity to deliver the plans. Little mention of the psychosocial damage of colonisation and apartheid to the African mind. Little mention of black people suffering from an inferiority complex, low self esteem, confused identities, displacement, pulling each other down syndrome (crab mentality), emasculation of the Black man and gender crisis due to Land Act 1913 and mines. Africans who are happy because they were the first graduates and first to drink team with the master and hoping it continues that way.

Africans who are happy to be called the exceptional few talented blacks “not you but they “. Africans who collaborate in their own oppression, mental slavery.

The time has come for Africans to help demystify success and stop making it look like it's only the few exceptional blacks who have what it takes.

When talking about the diaspora we should be careful to assume that skills learnt in the West can help solve some of Africa's challenges. Those who will be coming back will need to bring their skills and a huge dose of humility and immerse themselves with the people and be sensitive to their cultural nuances. Let us all remember that if diaspora is made to be the answer, Liberia will be growing double digit growth. Maybe we need more of those Africans who are in Asia, who still understand the challenges of poverty. The difference between Africa and Europe – Poverty- Crime all the social ills are on top of the table and in US and Europe are under the table.

Spiritual/Ethical/Spiritual

I have observed that my elders tend to live God outside the conference centre and talk less about the fact that in any success there is an invisible hand , some call it luck , faith etc. As future young leaders it is important we bring all of our brings and faiths to these sessions.

Rev Martin Luther King once said for religion to make sense it must have social and cultural relevance and must help uplift people out of their bondage or the things that hold them in bondage.

I am happy that some of the of my elders (Trevor Manuel, Tito Mboweni, Pres TMbeki) spoke against corruption, greed, selfishness that seem to live I the DNA of some of our politicians and business people. A bit disappointed with the role of the churches and church leaders in helping coming up with solutions , either than just prayer on how get rid of such sickness. Also it was clear that these social ills are not an African phenomenon, they are a human global problem.

I left the WEF charged and willing to do all I can to move Africa forward and be a change agent. The struggle continues....

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