

## COMMEMORATING MOUNT SOLODA AND THE VICTORY OF ADWA WITH WORLD CLASS PAN-AFRICAN UNIVERSITY

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Ethiopia possesses many majestic mountains. They all have magnificent look and panorama that attract not only tourists and the like but indeed the native people Ethiopians as well. There is one mountain that breezes history day and night: a history of freedom, liberty, independence and sovereignty, courage, unity in diversity, love and sacrifice for the motherland, perseverance, commitment, strength, vigor and tenacity. That mountain is called The Adwa Soloda Mountain. You can't help but be attracted by its breath taking scenery and majestic views from every corner. Its grace feels your heart and soul with a sense of pride, courage and strength. That was the feeling myself and my friends used to have when we climb Mount Soloda and wrote our names at the top of it.

As a child, I grew up there and it was customary for me and my friends to climb the mountain almost regularly on weekends to write our names at the top of the mountain using stone. This was done to show off and to boast to others who do not dare to try to climb the mountain. We



also felt as if we climbed the Mount Everest because Soloda Mountain was our Mount

Everest. We talked about our usual adventures to many people for many years without knowing the historical significance of that mountain not only to Ethiopians and Africans but indeed to the Black race as well. When I got to high school, my history teacher taught me about the mountain I usually climb and my pride has been much more reinforced and felt that I was truly not only at the top of Mount Soloda but indeed at the top of the world. Then after I left my country and went to Canada, I met few African school friends and few of them were enrolled in African Studies departments. On one of our discussions I recall one friend from Uganda who is currently teaching history in one of US's Universities raised a very important question about the battle of Adwa and its significance to African independence from colonialism and to the birth of Pan-Africanism. One question that surprised us all was when he asked us if the battle of Adwa is a compulsory question in the history department: a requirement to pass the school leaving examination. I knew it was not in Ethiopia although it may be one of those questions to be selected as a choice by students taking the exam. Then the Ugandan student to our surprise told us that if you do not know your history and especially the history of courage, heroism and a history of pride not only to Ethiopia and Africa but indeed to the black Race and if that subject is not a compulsory subject then what is? He did not stop there. He further added that that subject is a compulsory subject in Uganda and if you did not correctly answer that subject, you do not pass that exam. Well! How many of us know our history? Most importantly, how many of us try to learn about our history? I leave that question to you fellow brothers and sisters the way my Ugandan friend challenged me and my fellow friends in Canada.

When Fascist Italia wanted to conquer, enslave and colonize our nation, they chose to fight our ancestors at the battle of Adwa. They wanted to show case their superiority in arms

and armaments, their professional army tactics and strategies and they wanted to shamefully defeat our ancestors in short period of time using their very qualified army generals and they wanted to tell the world that they defeated the Ethiopians and that Ethiopia will be under Italy once and for all. For that, they deployed their best soldiers equipped with best arms and armaments ready to finish the job in a very short period of time. To the enemy's surprise, the giant and majestic Mount Soloda was there looking at them from every angle and waiting for them to come and confront Ethiopians. The enemy had no clue about the magic of Mount Soloda just like the way we were when we were kids. They did not know that Mount Soloda and Enda Mariam Shewito were parts and parcels of the battle of Adwa. The enemy did not know that our Gallant ancestors had something better than sophisticated weapons. They did not know that our ancestors were equipped with stronger weapon than his sophisticated arms and armaments i.e. with courage, stamina and determination and above all, unity even against all odds, love of and sacrifice for a nation. Those weapons that our ancestors had become a winning formula not identified by the enemy and that winning formula became a symbol and a sign of Ethiopianess for generations and will continue to be so forever.

Our ancestors confronted the enemy with that eternal weapon and gave the enemy a lesson that they and their generation will not forget: lesson of defeat, a lesson of disgrace, a lesson of shame and humiliation once and for all. On the other hand, those lessons our ancestors gave the enemy later on became a lesson of freedom, liberty, courage and strength to our African brothers and sisters and indeed to all Black Race. That is the magic of the battle of Adwa and the magic of the graceful Mount Soloda and Enda Mariam Shewito where the battle took place. That magic helped our African brothers and sisters to stand up for their

rights, to say enough is enough to colonialism and slavery. They said that they can defeat the European colonizers like Ethiopia and be free like Ethiopia. They got the courage and strength to do so taking the lesson from the battle of Adwa. As a result, they learned from the battle of Adwa that if united and join their hands and stand up against colonialism, then they too can defeat the enemy and secure their freedom. That is the lesson they got from the battle of Adwa: A lesson of courage and moral strength.

Now that the battle of Adwa exemplifies freedom, courage and strength to all Black Race, something has to be done to preserve the history and pass those noble entities, values, lessons and norms to the next generation so that the next generation can learn, secure and be proud of its history. However, being proud of ancestors' history may not be enough although securing and defending that legacy is the responsibility of the young generation. The young generation can also make their own history without taking arms and armaments. We live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and 21<sup>st</sup> century needs 21<sup>st</sup> century thinking.

The history of Adwa is not solely history of the people of Adwa or history of the people of Tigray or even history of Ethiopia; it is history of the people of Africa and indeed it is the history of the black race across the globe. Therefore, this golden history of the battle of Adwa must be protected, safeguarded and passed to generations after generations to come. For that, a concrete and practical entity has to be established and not simply commemorating the event with simple theatrical, artistic and musical or dramatic performances and theoretical workshops and conferences with no concrete and practical results or outcomes. Every year, more often than not hollow promises are echoed from every angle but there has not yet been any solid entity to advance this golden history to the

current or the next generation. Therefore, it is now the right time, in fact, it is long overdue to do the right thing and doing the right thing is among others, to build **THE PAN-AFRICAN UNIVERSITY** within the place it deserves to be and there is no place on earth than Adwa where it should be, it is there where it belongs; therefore, it is time to build it there. The Pan Africanism can be said to have its origins in the struggles of the African people against enslavement and colonialism. Pan-Africanist ideals emerged in the late nineteenth century in response to European colonization and exploitation. "Pan Africanism is an ideology and movement that encourages the solidarity of Africans world wise. It is based on a belief that unity is vital to economic, social and political progress and aims to "unify and uplift" people of African descent". Historically, pan Africanism has often taken the shape of a political or cultural movement. In its narrowest political manifestation, pan Africanists envision a unified African nation where all people of the African Diaspora can live. The PAN AFRICAN UNIVERSITY that will be built in Adwa can, among others be equipped with a museum and with up to date library system filled with historical archives coded and updated by modern scientific information technology arrangements in order to preserve the history and to educate people within a healthy environment equipped with modern technology. It can also serve as a teaching and research center of excellence to serve and educate people from all corners with regard to the concept and practice of Pan-Africanism and the role of the Ethiopian people in the battle of Adwa in that regard. Further, the university can be a catalyst for creating educational and professional linkages between and among Governmental, Non-Governmental, and World Class University and Institution Centers of Excellence for Advanced Learning and Research, for Knowledge Exchange and Knowledge Transfer Purposes through Visiting and Guest Teaching Scholars

from across the globe and for conducting International Standard and Result Oriented Workshops, Conferences and the like. Further, the university can also create linkages between and among Governmental and non-governmental institutions such as the UN, the AU, the ECA, EU, IGAD, COMESSA etc. for mutual support. Further, the university can create a firm contact with the Africans in the Diaspora especially those with high level academic and professional background in the field of Pan-Africanism and other similar background in general and the Ethiopian Diaspora in particular in order to support and reinforce variety of educational and professional activities of the Pan-African university. It is apparent therefore, that Ethiopians in the Diaspora in general and those with specific educational background and professional as well as entrepreneurial skills in particular contribute to the development of the Pan-African university to be built in Adwa. Their business and development potential and areas of specialization can definitely be an asset to help build and develop the University within their country of origin.. Further, their contribution in turn can have potent influence on social cohesion and economic integration of Africa. In addition, Ethiopians in the Diaspora can be extremely vital to the development of the university provided that they are committed to use their knowledge, skill and expertise in helping their country of origin. For that to happen, it is imperative that a collaborative effort is made between the government and Ethiopians in the Diaspora in order to create a conducive and enabling environment for their participation and collaboration within the establishment of the Pan-African University. The government must therefore act like a facilitator to encourage the establishment of world standard educational and training institution such as the building of Pan-African University in Ethiopia. Diaspora Ethiopians must show their collaboration, dedication and commitment

to help their country of origin together putting their political differences aside. They should put the interest of their country and their people first and foremost. This will make them proud of contributing to development endeavors in their country of origin. One way of doing so is among others by focusing on the education sector and the building of the Pan-African University is part and parcel of it. Why on education? The answer is simple and clear; education is the most important investment of the nation. The Diaspora difference can have a significant outcome in that regard; Ethiopians in the Diaspora can also be an important factor in Ethiopia's relations with other countries and in building the good image of this country. They can also be good will ambassadors of the University. Ethiopian Diasporas can nurture the relationships of accountability embodying practices of obligation, respect, responsibility and affinity that underpin their connection to the developmental endeavor of the University thereby bringing about a rapid and positive change in their country of origin. Diaspora Ethiopians must show more collaboration, dedication and commitment to help build this unique university within their country of origin. This is a historic moment to demonstrate their commitment. Therefore, a mechanism should be developed in order to increase the interaction between the Diaspora and the envisaged university; THE PAN AFRICAN UNIVERSITY.

The university can also create linkages with the business community at home and abroad based on mutual benefits. Therefore, the university must clearly identify the role of Governmental, Non-Governmental, the Educational and Professional Institutions and the role of the Public at large both here at home and in the Diaspora in order to make the envisaged Pan-African University a center of Excellence. For that, fresh initiatives are required at many levels.

Now that we know the importance of creating, building and establishing the envisaged Pan-African University in a place where it truly belongs, the Mount Soloda is watching us from every corner with hope and jubilation. Mount Soloda was fed-up with numerous wishful promises and proposals with no concrete and tangible outcomes time and time again; however, it is now envisaging real hope and is starting to feel good this time around for the first time. As a result, It is starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Mount Soloda is hoping to see new, elegant and world class Pan-African University at its backyard for the first time to make the history of the battle of Adwa Live for generations to come. For that to happen, all stake holders must join hands put action behind their words in order to put in place this noble and significant project.