

## FIRST THINGS FIRST: CHANGE THE PERSON IN THE MIRROR

By Mezgebe Gebrekiristos

An old adage has it “One can’t see the forest for the trees.” This saying suggests that someone can be focused on small details, and fail to understand the bigger picture. At face value, being detail-oriented may not seem that bad. But, if one completely fails to see the whole in lieu of the small details, no significant job can be accomplished in its proper time. This is more so when one is running a country as large as Ethiopia. In the Ethiopian context, the notion of minutia is pervasive and it is dragging us all--backwards. It has become the norm of political opposition to sabotage the interests of the country as a whole for any personal reason. A case in point is the current negative campaign about the upcoming millennium by certain groups in the Diaspora.

Tina Turner, in her 1993 song ([http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z\\_ujfZBiduw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z_ujfZBiduw)) entitled “What’s Love Got to Do with It,” wondered how to reconcile her love for a man and with that of her broken heart. We equally ponder the hypothesized relationship between the Ethiopian millennium and opposing the EPRDF. One thing is clear, however, the Ethiopian government has invited all Ethiopian citizens and others of Ethiopian origin to come to Ethiopia Millennium celebration and use it as a stepping stone to promote the image of the country—thereby to eradicate the abject poverty once and for all. This should come as good news to everybody who champions the cause of the poor farmers and other segments of the society. However, such good news is proven hard to come by, mainly, from the Diaspora opposition.

One can not help but ask the obvious question, what do these so-called opposition groups want and wish for Ethiopia? Isolation and destitution? The latter may sound an outlandish question, but based on the evidence on the ground, the answer is unequivocally yes. For the purpose of a smoke screen, they would shower us with numerous “feel good” answers in response to the former but their actions tell us otherwise. For instance, they warned us that if we dare go to Ethiopia for the Millennium celebration, the Ethiopian-ness in us will—somehow-- diminish to a record low. But they offer no credible explanation for the high possibility of bad credit report that might come as result of visiting our country, Ethiopia. They don’t have one!

Furthermore, they have been lobbying in the United States Congress to pass a bill that would literally suspend any assistance our country might get from the US to fight its number one enemy: poverty. And, they wonder why Ethiopia is registering astonishing economic growth—not once but many years in a row—despite their efforts to bring the opposite. Of course, they tried to dismiss the fact as part and parcel of their face saving saga and called it an “economy without the beef.” For most ordinary Ethiopians, however, the beef is palpable and they do not need an approval from disingenuous individuals who abandoned them for a better life in the Western Countries in the first place. Luckily, Ethiopians can discern the differences between a wolf in a sheep’s skin and a genuine one.

Again, these confused individuals may portray their misguided philosophy—you cut the throat of the country and all of a sudden you are on your way to the *Arat killo* palace—under the disguise of spreading democracy. One thing is crystal clear here: they will never leave a single stone

unturned until they are reinstated into their throne. According to their ideology, the end always justifies the means.

As I chronicled in my previous articles, criticizing one's government is a very crucial right of responsible citizens but should not be mistaken for opposing one's country. Unfortunately for Ethiopia, most opposition groups tend to oppose their country's welfare in order to achieve their political goal. Their simplistic philosophy sees, "Destroying the image of Ethiopia is tantamount to defeating the ruling party," and they put emphasis on the former for the latter to be materialized. As absurd it may sound, it is hailed as a noble and just cause by certain people in the Diaspora. Needless to say, our affairs –good or bad ones--are directly tied to the very existence of our country. In the absence of a forest, one can not talk about trees, and vice versa.

In the end, the problem of the Diaspora seems to have emanated from the lack of self-evaluation. These Diaspora elements spend so much time to change others but they miserably fail to align themselves with the reality on the ground. I say to these individuals, it is high time for them to look at the person in the mirror and ask what he/she has been doing all along and start a self-reconciliation right there on the spot. They should take care of first things first. May be then, they will have a say on others. They should examine themselves before they point their fingers at others, and refrain at least from becoming an impediment in the development of our country. After all, though not by design, when one points one's finger at others, the rest of the fingers point at oneself.

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