

LET'S THINK BEYOND OUR POLITICAL DIFFERENCES

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I heard a very mind-boggling story on the Chicago Public Radio on the Ethiopian Third Millennium. Two Ethiopians, with doctorate degree to their names, naively argued over the validity of the millennium. Their ignorance hit the rock bottom when they interpreted the meaning of the word millennium as “minem yellem” in Amharic to mean “there is nothing” in English. At that point, I asked myself, “What went wrong with these allegedly educated people that made them stand against their country’s proud history, and a once in a lifetime celebration—the millennium?”

The answer to my question can be found in the resumes of the aforementioned individuals. The two men—one Executive Director of the Chicago Ethiopian Community Association, and the other an economics professor at Harper College in Chicago-- have a long history of dividing the community by spreading innuendoes about the Ethiopian government. At the very least, one would expect that an organization that receives federal assistance in the name of all members in the community to exercise fairness and neutrality in its political discourse. The Ethiopian Community in Chicago, however, has been hijacked, and run for too long by a handful of politicians who could not see beyond their nose. As a result, the organization has become a propaganda tool for the Opposition in the Diaspora.

Joel Osteen, in his #1 New York Times bestseller book entitled, “Your Best Life Now”, verbosely wrote on the importance of positive thinking in changing one’s life for the better. He advises his readers to get rid of old negative mind-sets that hold them back.

Sadly, “positive thinking” is a rare commodity in the Diaspora Opposition camps. The opposition groups have made it clear that they will continue tarnishing the image of our country as long as the EPRDF government is in power. To them, celebrating the dawn of the new Millennium is a waste of time; inaugurating new universities throughout the country is simply dirty politics; achieving a double-digit economic growth is not palpable; the constitution that guaranteed freedom for all citizens is a nightmare; and the EPRDF is their number one enemy.

An old adage asserts that one’s attitude determines one’s altitude. Needless to say, the Opposition’s bad attitude is widely to blame for the dissolution of the many short lived political parties such as CUD and others in Ethiopia. The main fallacy of these political parties’ philosophy is that they demand recognition from a government the legitimacy of which they don’t bother to acknowledge in the first place. Sound political dialogue requires a two-way street where political parties engage themselves in a “give and take” undertaking for the good of their country.

In summary, the Third Millennium is here to stay for our life time and beyond. It is our responsibility to effectively use our knowledge, energy and other resources for the betterment of our country. Let’s think beyond our political differences, and be partners in the fight against poverty, disease, and backwardness that are rampant in our country. Let’s keep the momentum of positive change in our country advancing forward.

Happy New Year and New Millennium!