

CALL ME BY MY NAME: A commentary

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In 1986, a group of Ethiopian graduate students were enrolled at the University of Virginia Tech. On the first week of college day, we attended a conference on “Futuristic” seminars. The futurists explained at length on countries that would progress and regress. In the end they enumerated those countries without future. Ethiopia was listed as a futureless country. At that moment all my Ethiopian colleagues left the conference, as they were upset. I stayed not only until the question and answer session but also even after the conference has formally closed. I had to get a real explanation for their prediction. Having talked to some of them, I found out it was based on shallow reasoning and scientifically or statistically untenable.

On the 2nd week of our stay, someone in the cafeteria asked us from where we came. When we told him that we are from Ethiopia, he said that at least, here in America we have something to eat. Then I asked him and his friends how they came to know about Ethiopia. I explained to them that there were only five ways of knowing Ethiopia during those days. Because of

- Haile Sellasie I
- Abebe Bikila
- History Books
- The Bible and
- Famine

None of them seem to know the other four except the last one, which was the famine of 1984, the issue of the time upon which they based their conclusion.

On home coming day, all international flags were hoisted on the campus of VA TECH. The only flag that was not hoisted was the Ethiopian Flag. Mrs. Sally came to where we were sitting and asked us why one of us did not hoist the Ethiopian flag. Mrs. Sally is the lady who welcomes and looks after the international students. In her welcome address, she told the attendees that she wished that America had a history like that of Ethiopia. We had no explanation to tell Mrs. Sally that none of us take the initiative to hoist the flag. The Ethiopian flag was so sacred that no one touches unless he is some sort of an official of a government or a church was our last resort to tell the tale.

Where were our geography or history teachers? Who are our geographers? What were the sources of our history? Did we learn any sociology class? And who are our sociologists? Do we know the history of the flag? What is its significance? A lot of questions should be answered.

You be the judge. As for me, I have done my homework. Thanks to Debteraw's training manuals. Call me by my name. What is my name? READ, READ and READ.

Question: What is your name?

Answer: I have a nickname; I have a pen name; I use my father's name; my name is Hayes, AL, Jason, and Jolly etc. etc.

Question: Who are you?

Answer: Abyssinian, no I am an Eritrean, no I am an Oromo, oh no, I am an Amhara or I am a Tigre etc. etc.

No, No and No, I am an AETHIOPIAN. What a Mess!!! Call Me By My Name. What is my name?

What about now, at the dawn of the 2nd Millennium?

Do we know?

- Those who died since the beginning of the Revolution
- Those who are still in prison
- Those who are missed in action

According to our culture, the Birth, the Marriage and the Death (BMD) should be celebrated. The first two need no explanation. But the Death part needs elaboration. Do we celebrate like the Shanklas with pomp and joy or do we grief for life or do we honorable bury our dead? I do not know why, someone has to tell me.

In Debteraw's case, it is reported that an individual from Maichew reported that he has shot him in person. To misinform about the death of Debu was a deliberate attempt by TPLF officials to make us believe that he is dead so that there would be no political prisoner under their custody. But no one will believe them that Debteraw is not a political prisoner. And we all know that Debteraw refused to cooperate with TPLF officials. As it is clear to the outside world Debteraw is still alive and well. I personally meet him once in a while by an Econcept.

But as Debteraw's editorial rightly asked for the timely release of Debteraw. It is better for everybody if he is released without bond or signature. DEBTERAW abhors both of these. That is, to true to his nature, Debteraw is a true Ethiopian, no baggage, only Trust and Courage.

Finally, the message is clear, if TPLF have killed Debteraw, their teacher, our teacher, let us all bury him properly because as it is said, "the burial of the dead tells much about the future of any society." Ethiopia is no exception. **WILL ETHIOPIA WILL BE FUTURELESSS** as the futurists in VA TECH had predicted? Absolutely not provided **WE IMMORTALIZED DEBTERAW**.

For comments

