
The People Who Lost Their Way: Looking at the Consequences of “Going it Alone”

By Maru Gubena

The problems facing Ethiopia and its people are too many and too complex to count or describe, but they all have been created and cultivated by the people themselves, as it is the group, the community and the society which are responsible for molding and shaping our lives, cultures and habits – bringing up and socializing its children. Even those who show cruel, inhuman and destructive behaviours, such the former dictator, Mengistu Hailemariam, or the current leader of the TPLF, Meles Zenawi, belong to and are an inseparable part and product of Ethiopian society. It would not be wrong to state that that since most of us have not been tested, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to vigorously argue that we, the Ethiopians at home and abroad who are restlessly, relentlessly and sleeplessly demanding basic rights and freedoms for individual members of Ethiopian society, including a dramatic improvement in living conditions, could not behave in similar ways, just as inhuman and destructive as those two individuals, had we been given the opportunity to rule. Our own destructive actions and behaviours throughout the fall of 2005 and to the present day clearly suggest that we might not be so very different from those who have inhumanely committed the most horrifying, atrocious crimes against our families, friends, classmates, colleagues, neighbours and our most talented Ethiopian compatriots, whom most Ethiopians had seen as the future assets of the country and its people. Yes, I actually continue to wonder, often anxiously, whether we ourselves, who appear to have lost our way yet try to appear to be the guardians and defenders of human rights, are well equipped for these roles, and whether we would prove to be better, more responsible thinkers and relatively honest policy makers, policy executors and educators.

Imagine now just for a while, just for a moment, that we, the entire community of the Ethiopian Diaspora, had lived through the remarkable and testing four-year period, from winter 2005 to early 2009, a period marked by an irremovable black stain on the minds of the Ethiopian Diaspora community, on our own island. I will call it Zaldonia. We are there with no rules and laws of our own, just as we are living now. It should not be at all difficult for any member of our community with a healthy common sense who walked the rough paths of those high, treacherous mountains with us throughout those four remarkably tragic years to predict or guess what would have happened to some, or even most of us. Yes, the past few years have put the long-held grudges and deep-seated resentments many of us hold against each and every one of our own compatriots in a bright light. In fact, the past three and half decades, but especially this brief four-year period, have shown us unmistakably that we have completely lost our direction with respect to finding a path to togetherness and unity.

Yes, it is certainly true that each of us is talking through our own personal websites, newspapers, radios, paltalk rooms and other means of communication about Ethiopia and the unity of its people, including discussions of our country’s territorial integrity, but in actual terms those talks are just a means to an end, a ladder that can be used to climb to desired socio-political and economic positions or to help those related to us to achieve a degree of political power over others. Yes, it is true that all of us are talking and writing - but we are not changing ourselves, our behaviours and mindsets; we are just trying to influence and change others, so that we can share (or if possible remove) their political power and the economic positions at their disposal. Yes, all of us are also writing, talking and complaining about opposition groups and those who love to “go it alone,” and we want them to establish a united force and work together, but we ourselves, as website and radio owners and paltalk talkers don’t like and don’t want to hear about working jointly with other radios, websites or owners of other communications media. We, all of us who have been molded by exactly the same culture, love to go it alone so that we can continue to enjoy doing what pleases us to without being bothered

by others, without the slightest feelings of shared responsibility or accountability, within our own lonely and fruitless circles of freedom – going our own way on our own timetable.

Let me just share something with you, something which sometimes even scares me. But I hope I am terribly wrong. Yes, I sometimes think, imagine and get even so scared to death that if, just if, Ethiopia, our country, one day becomes very lucky and finds herself to be young and beautiful, exactly in the same way as some of our exceptionally elegant, beautiful Ethiopian girls, and much to her disbelief and shock, she meets someone, a kind prince. They fall in love and marry. She, our country, looks set to live happily ever after, becoming not just prosperous, a disease and prison-free land, but also kicking out all of those who have been and still are oppressing and repressing her children, taking their positions as President, PM and Information/Disinformation or whatever ministerial positions they may have held, becoming very democratic and commencing a joyful life with all of her eighty million children.

What do you think what would happen next? I really don't know, but I am sometimes so scared that some, if not most, Ethiopian Diaspora talk shows and political groupings might possibly not give up their talking, unless their demands or the demands of those they support and with which they have been engaged and busy for so long are incorporated into the lifestyle of the newly born Ethiopia and its newly crafted socio-political and economic policies. They might not even want to attend her wedding. This is not just based on my wildest dreams or fantasies; it comes from my observations, for example when I have witnessed that many helpful ideas and visions presented to us by some open-minded thinkers who are free from family and group orientations, which have not been allowed to grow in our minds and hearts, or in our home country. Instead they were simply buried deep in the ground and forgotten, simply because such ideas and visions did not make a place for the political programmes of our current, ineffective political organizations and the plans and desires of privately owned business and media outlets.

In conclusion, I would dare to say that, although “going it alone” – ignoring the direction that most social animals of the world community follow, living in respect and love with each other – may have benefited a limited number of our compatriots, perhaps in economic terms or/and self-satisfaction, for the majority of us the direct and indirect consequences of losing our way and going it alone have been and are huge and may be difficult, if not impossible, to repair. The limited social and cultural fabric of the Ethiopian Diaspora community that existed previously has been shattered by those who are incurably addicted to going it alone and by those whose mindsets are firmly glued to a family and group orientation.

Why are we then talking and shouting, sometimes very emotionally and sometimes in an exceptionally concerned manner, saying that we are talking about the current problems and future direction of our country and its people, instead of simply admitting that what we are saying is on behalf of ourselves?

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