

## "AFRICA"

According to the dictionary of doom,  
Africa is a synonym  
For want, crisis and gloom.  
But, mother, we know  
You are endowed with plenty.

Your womb carries:  
The Nile, Congo, Niger, Zambezi, Senegal  
And many more life-giving great rivers;

A stupendous rain forest  
Is your navel's delightful sobriquet.  
The majestic Sahara graces your high forehead.

From deep within your gritty gut  
Are unearthed:

Precious bones that bear testimony  
To the beginnings of human time,  
To your ancient age and wisdom;

Aluminum, bauxite, chromium, cobalt, copper, diamond,  
gold, manganese, platinum, tantalum, uranium, zinc  
And other minerals with mind-dizzying names  
Without which modern technology is a fool's dream;

And abundant gas and oil fields,  
The life-blood of today's industry.

But, alas, terrifying single-word qualifiers  
Now one-sidedly negate your image:

Ethiopia,  
The land of the Blue Nile,  
Is equated with drought and famine;

Uganda,  
Once known as "the Pearl of Africa",  
With AIDS;

The Congo,  
A land of riches, beat and rhythm,  
With chaos and Ebola;

Libya,  
A land of proud people,  
With terrorism,

Vibrant Nigeria,  
The giant of Africa,  
Is reduced to a country of crooks;

And the list of the slanderous  
Diminution of Africa goes on.  
From such individual parts,  
Africa,  
Home to 800 million people,  
Is pictured as a totality  
Of living hell and misery.

Mother Africa,  
In your predicament  
As you struggle to heal  
From the brutal scars  
Of the slave trade,  
Old and new colonialism,  
Your old nemeses  
And your own scoundrels  
Mock you the way  
Flies mock a weakened lion.

What is the meaning of all this?  
The great doomsayers call you  
A savage;  
A dark continent,  
Unfit without re-colonization.

Is this the answer?  
One wonders  
How the land of sparkling sunshine,  
The sun's favorite continent,  
Becomes a land of darkness!

Isn't it also true you are  
An ancient bearer of the torch of civilization?

Africa,  
Let your pyramids,  
Those ageless wonders, speak for you  
In Egypt!

The magnificent historical relics  
In Ethiopia, The Sudan and Zimbabwe,  
Among others, speak with great eloquence  
How replete you are with history;  
They put to shame the phony scholars  
Who never tire of spewing wretched vilifications  
About the barrenness of your past.

On your western shores  
You suckled on your breasts

To prominence  
The empires of Mali and Songhay  
And the kingdoms of Congo and Benin.

Let Benin's splendid bronze sculptures  
Speak for you, mother Africa!

Let Timbuktu,  
The jewel of thriving trans-Saharan trade,  
That historical city of academic and religious learning  
Speak for you!

Better yet,  
Let your heroic freedom fighters,  
Among countless ones,  
In Ghana, Algeria, Kenya, Guinea Bissau and southern Africa  
Speak for you  
How they drove out  
The forces of colonial darkness!

To the weak-hearted and pessimists,  
Have confidence  
In the great youth of Africa!  
Who else are we going to rely on?  
What alternative do we have?  
Any other suggestion to the contrary  
Is the devil's trick to bind us to our woes forever.  
We say no, no, to any cruel deception  
To belittle the capacity of our youth.  
We believe in them today  
Just as we did yesterday  
When they carried the banners of independence  
In the face of prison torture, bayonets and live bullets.

Under their able guidance  
No doubt there will be a resurgent Africa.  
Now more than ever before  
There is an urgent need to call upon the African spirit  
Which traces its roots to the very dawn of humanity;  
It was the driving force  
Behind the original taming of nature  
And socialization of life with all its attendant attributes  
Without the benefit of any precedent civilization.\*  
We see it exemplified today  
In the vibrant music and dance forms of contemporary Africa;  
In soccer artistry at the continental or world stage;  
In the indefatigable tenacity in short or long distance running;  
In the creativity of story telling;  
In the unsung honest heroes in Africa's technical and administrative world

And in the sheer will and resilience of the African peasant and worker  
Who refuse to break in the face of great odds  
As they struggle to keep Africa going.

An invisible force is gathering in the African air and landscape  
Presaging a dawn of wonder.\*\*

Our youth are the embodiment of this African spirit.  
Trust they will be inspired to carry Africa's future  
On their shoulders from one generation to another.  
Yes, there will be mistakes and even grave setbacks along the way.  
But it will at last blossom  
Like the bright Ethiopian  
Highland flowers in September  
After the big rains.

There will come lasting prosperous times;  
There will also be songs to celebrate the good times  
And dances to accompany  
Africa's soul-stirring rhythmic music.

Africa's good name will be reclaimed;  
Africa will find once again  
Its prideful place  
In the family of thriving civilizations!

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Footnotes:

\*The idea of "lack of precedent" for the rise of early African civilization was taken from "The African Genius" by Basil Davidson.

\*\* The line "Presage a dawn of wonder" was taken from Pushkin's poem, "To Chaadayev".