

Africa - by SWS

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".

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teklu212003@yahoo.com