

We've met the enemy and he is us. By Yilma Bekele

'... he was feared far beyond his might and respected far beyond his support, both which in the end proved meager. ... would play one official off of another, promoting sons above their fathers, pitting the members of too-powerful families or clans or unions against one another for resources, splitting so many allies and creating so many feuds and petty rivalries that it was nearly impossible that any two ..... could come together to ask one another if there might be another way.'

Max Fisher, associate editor-*The Atlantic*.



Mr. Fisher's description fits most successful dictators. Admit it you thought he was talking about ours, didn't you? It is all right, no need to worry; he was actually talking about the late Colonel Gaddafi. The Leader got away with just doing that for over forty years. Libya lost a generation. That is what failed leaders do to a country. After they are gone they leave a mess behind.

The drawing above is by cartoonist Ali Ferzat of Syria. Mr. Assad and his associates did not look kindly at his work. According to Mr. Fisher "On August 25, the 60-year-old Syrian political cartoonist Ali Ferzat was driving home from his office in Damascus when a car with tinted windows blocked the road. Men dragged Ferzat from his car, stuffed him in a van, beat him severely and broke both his hands in what they called "[a warning](#)" and dumped him on the side of the road." Mr. Assad and his goons would like to kill Mr. Ferzat, thereby digging their grave. That is the logic of dictators.

Mr. Ferzat drew the above cartoon after his hands healed. What is going on in Syria is insanity, and that is putting it mildly. President Assad has witnessed the demise of Ben Ali, Mubarak, Gaddafi and Saleh but he is following the path that leads to the same dead end street. Why do you think? He is not stupid, and I doubt he is insane. May be a little insane ok? He probably thinks things are different in Syria. May be he believes he is more cunning and smarter than those buffoons. No matter what, he cannot stop this runaway train. He has no choice. It is a do or die situation. He is a prisoner of his own doing and the Syrian people are prisoners of their tolerance of evil for so long.

We Ethiopians are familiar with that state of affairs. We have been prisoners for a long time. It is true we have not been lucky with the leaders we seem to attract. Misfits and delusional describes them better. It is a good enough explanation for the debacle in our homeland. My question is how come the same dysfunctional behavior is replicated away from home?

It is fair to ask if we are running our affairs any better where ever we have settled. If our claim is that we have been cursed with bad leaders can we show any evidence that we are capable of building a harmonious society with out the interference of those we hold responsible for our failure? I believe it is a legitimate question that begs for answers from each one of us. I am interested in an answer not an

excuse. Excuse is for losers. My interest is in looking for an explanation so we can search for a solution to fix the problem not to go on a fishing expedition to avoid responsibility or share the blame.

Look around you. We are in the hundreds of thousands that have left their home to construct a new reality. There is no denying that we are good at survival no matter how dire the circumstances. From the Jungles of Uganda all the way to Southern Africa, from Beirut to the Gulf, From Tuscany Coast to the frigid waters of Scandinavia and the mighty Continent of North America we Ethiopians are thriving in our new environment. Any mother would be proud of us! Please don't get a big head now there is more.

That speaks about our individual achievements. My profound question to you my Diaspora cousin is how come we shine as individuals but fail as a community? Can you answer that for me? If you don't mind I said answer not make up an excuse that will remove 'you' from the equation and dump the sins onto others. That is not good enough. That is what is called avoidance. It is a little difficult to imagine how each one of you is a perfect saint while all those 'others' are the ones causing the problem. It does not work like that. Believe me it is not that way.

If we are going to share the glory I believe we should be willing to share the blame too. The problem with our country is that there are so many that take credit for the past while screwing the present. I don't mean to belittle the many achievements of the few. I am looking at the bigger picture. Voltaire wrote 'No snowflake in an avalanche ever feels responsible.' You see what I mean. There wouldn't be an avalanche without the individual snowflake.

Our anti social behavior is manifested in most aspects of our interactions. Be it Political, religious or simple Eder the slash and burn formula is our choice of resolving simple misunderstandings. Just check out your community if you are lucky or unlucky enough to live in a large size abesha population. There is a high possibility that the effort of individuals is spent in conflict and drama instead of cooperation and harmony. We are becoming very good in this use and discard philosophy. It used to be like that in the West before they became aware of the limitations of resources. Everything was manufactured to be used and thrown away.

You know how good we are at copying. Unfortunately we are not discriminating. Thus we picked up that concept and applied it to our country. Circumstances forced us to leave. Returning was not a safe option. That fact made the act of leaving something you love behind a normal situation. Now we have enhanced that to include organizations and associations. If we disagree we just create a small faction and leave. After spending so much time and resources in building a beautiful organization, Church etc. we have no qualms in leaving it behind hoping it would disintegrate and disappear. I have seen situations where the wreckers have no plans with what to replace it with. All available force goes into making sure nothing survives.

Why do you think that is so? I am not imaging this. I am sure we all love our country. We love each other. I know that because we seem to spend inordinate amount of time worrying about each other and our homeland. We have our own Churches and Mosques; we have our own restaurants, quick stores, coffee shops, our own on line community etc. For people that can't live without each other we definitely exhibit a strange way to show our love and concern.

This formidable force commonly called the Diaspora is a paper tiger. The Diaspora is all bark no bite. In

fact the Diaspora is such a negative and destructive force it needs to be overhauled. Such talk might offend you. You might be forced to get your guards up. That is the snowflake talking. It is like saying I see all this dysfunction around me but I am not responsible. Who me? I am the picture of love and tolerance. It is all those others that are the cause of all evil. Stop that now.

That is what Gaddafi said. Look what it got him. Denial is not a winning strategy. Self-reflection is what the situation demands. Admitting there is a problem is show of maturity. Holding oneself responsible and willing to change is one giant step forward. This total dysfunction is the sum total of the little things we do in our everyday interaction.

I believe we can start with respect for each other. Respect based not because of education, wealth or gosa but respect because we are each other's keepers. There is no need to demonize others, no value in demeaning fellow country people, not a good idea searching for motive in every utterance and no winner in war. If we take care of the little things, the big things will fall into place.

This habit of screaming bloody murderer about the hapless Woyane is not taking us anywhere. The crimes of our tyrannical leaders will be the cause of their downfall. The Ethiopian people will take care of that. They are working on it everyday. It is us I worry about. If we are not capable of forming a harmonious society out here where we really do not have conflicting interest what makes you think we could succeed over there? Shouldn't out here be the place where we learn this new concept of respect, tolerance, kindness and all other winning behavior?

That is the advantage of living in a free society. It gives individuals a choice. No one compels us to do this or that. We are free to choose. Thus when we split our Church, when we disrespect our leaders be it Community or Party we are making a choice. When we speak ill of each other and when we hurt each other with venomous language it is a choice we each make. When we invest in Woyane land, buy stolen property, turn our faces away when we see our people being abused we are making a choice. No need to look at your neighbor. You ladies and gentlemen have to answer for your own actions. What would it be soaring high like the eagle or scavenging like the vulture. The choice is yours but you must take full responsibility for it!

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