

EYONA: Fusion of cultural communities

By Ashao Tewolde

December 13, 2012

On public Holidays

On Thanks Giving Day, in a form of email, I asked several friends, relatives and my readers whether Ethiopians or Eritreans have a “*Thanks Giving Day*” or for that matter public holidays. I did this to find out whether there is a correlation between political unity and public holiday. The responses were alarming, the Eritreans gave me May 24, as a day for national holiday, and the Ethiopians gave me a mixed bag of holidays ranging from religious holiday to the battle of Adwa. Some Americans told me of July 4 as a public holiday.

But my question was about Civil Society’s Holiday which is by consent. I did not ask for State Holiday which is by coercion or the holiday Market which is by exchange.

These responses do indicate the complexity of Eritrean-Ethiopian-American communities’ status and position on culture and its impact on communities and societies.

Every era has its own utopian possibilities. EYONA movement has its chance to make lives more bearable if not comfortable through traditional culture and technology. There is no secret in that if one’s community or nation does not have public holiday, there is little hope for moving backward let alone forward. The EAtiopian community could benefit to learn and re-learn the lesson of cultural history.

The practice of **HC** History-Culture by both governments in Ethiopia and Eritrea do not reflect of the Civil Society neither of Eritrea nor of Ethiopia. Culturally speaking, the Abyssinian community has well recognized cultural values, heroes/ines, rituals and symbols. The real Eway Revolution was about prioritizing or reordering these concepts. We all remember the deceased Melese’s label of Ethiopian flag as a simple cloth.

The leaders of EPLF and TPLF seem to reject the cultural history of Eritrea and Ethiopia and appear to adopt revolutionary culture of the Chinese and some abstract theories from here and there. But no matter what their ideological leanings, it is no secret that they are in power due to their followers own culture of symbols of Arts. The Abyssinian culture of art, music, dance and food were behind their success stories. Their military success was neither due to Mao’s and Hoja’s ideologies nor due to military hardware but due to the traditional culture of Abyssinia i.e. Eritrea and Ethiopia. No one denies that the Abyssinian culture of food, music, dance and art is powerful. It is a take it or leave it situation...

Some of us do all remember, when the Military Junta of Menghistu Haile Mariam came to power, the first thing he was receiving some advice from the foreign educated elites of Ethiopia - was to disrespect Ethiopian culture. Due to the credit of EPRP leaders, their followers were not allowed to disrespect or change the culture of any Ethiopian community or society. They use to say, "Like language, culture is born, grow and die on its own accord without interference."

The current regimes of Eritrea and Ethiopia are daily displaying the cultural values of their people via TV and other media. Cultural values are not meant to be displayed unwontedly but to preserve or to export. It is not for sale in cash but is meant to inspire or impact. What is more, the Abyssinian culture could not be manipulated from the Board Room. The leaders of EPLF and TPLF should better grasp cultural value of Eritrea and Ethiopia - the sooner the better.

Ethiopian and Eritrean nationals in the Diaspora can choose which culture to adapt to whereas the people inside the respective countries do seem lost to track their own cultural choice. The current imposition of culture is not different from that of the Derg era. For forty years, cultural imposition did not work the same way that imposition of religion did not work in a thousand years. Diaspora communities have choices to negotiate the value of cultural change. Let the adult keep what is ours and let the youth embrace theirs and see which one is beneficial to US and ME.

That is the challenge of choice for all people in Diaspora communities whether in Europe, Australia, Asia, Middle East or Canada. Here in America, initiatives have begun.

Proposal for 2013

African American youth will have a chance to participate in the fusion of culture that will take place in March 2013 between Eritreans and Ethiopians. The Youth will be defined along the ages of eighteen and thirty four.

Why is that important to take place? Where is it going to happen? And how is it to be conducted? These and other important questions have been posed to me after I wrote the article on fusion of cultural communities.

The main rationale of cultural unity is that culture matters in any society let alone in America. The American youth has its own individualistic culture; the Eritrean youth has its family culture while the Ethiopian youth depend on its community value. These and other social and economic values need to be synchronized for the global associational values.

However, these global associations cannot take place in a vacuum. "My space", "face-book", "tweeting" and other social networks have helped the youth to be free and vulnerable at the same time. The time has come to help the vulnerable groups before they become dangerous to themselves, in the case of African-American, to their families in the case of Eritreans and communities in the case of Ethiopians.

EYONA will deliver service and history to these age groups in face-to-face format. The struggle by African American for Civil Rights, the liberation for Nazanet & Harnet by the Eritreans and the value of keeping Independence by the Ethiopians will be the basis for cultural fusion.

The pilot project is taking place in Washington DC.

Happy Birth days for all of us

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