

# Never Forget: Yekatit 12, 1929 (E.C.). The 80<sup>th</sup> Commemoration of the massacre thousands of Ethiopians by Rodolfo Graziani armies.

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As annual public event, The Ethiopian Community Mutual Assistance Association of New York and Global Alliance -the Ethiopia cause organized a Town Hall Meeting to pay tribute to victims of Rodolfo Graziani cowardly attack that claimed thousands of innocent Ethiopians lives on February 19, 1937 (G.C). The occasion also included to remember Ethiopian patriots who paid the ultimate sacrifice for our beloved country during the Italian aggression from 1935 -1941. The meeting was held on Sunday, March 5, 2017 at 220 Manhattan Ave NY, NY. The ceremony started as audience stood silently to perform few minutes moment of prayer remembering the dead.



Ambassador Imru Zelleke



The event’s program is reserved for special guest speakers: Dr. Girma Abebe, Mr. Howard Parker and also Ambassador Imru Zelleke joined by Skype. The speakers told the audience their vivid experiences, the atrocity that took place, and the role of Ethiopian patriots. The gallant Ethiopian people showed determination love of their country and pride to fight back the invader army. Why the Italians invaded Ethiopia? Some say Adwa was

avenged and some explained it as the grand scheme of scramble for Africa by Europeans Colonial powers for granary of source of raw material and free labor.

Given the Italians military supremacy, the guerilla patriots resisted the occupation with outdated rifles and without effective allies from outside world. The patriots strived under impossible condition during the battle. As diplomacy effort, Emperor Haile Selassie gave powerful speech demanding protection to free Ethiopia, on June 30, 1936 (G.C), before League of Nations and made statement “Today it is us, tomorrow it will be you”. The

plea failed and the Emperor continued to

Left Dr. Girma, Mr. Deneke , Mr. Haward

live in exile.

As we commemorate this day, we owe a debt of gratitude to many patriots sacrifice. To name the few: Ras Abebe Aregayi, Lt. General Jagama Kelo, Dejazmatch Geresu Duki, Dr. Melaku Beyan, Lij Haile Mariam Mamo, Dejazmatch Kebede Bizunesh the list goes on and so many forgotten heroes to mention here. Professor Mesfin Woldemariam concisely puts it in his writing “.....So many unsung and forgotten heroes unknown to Ethiopians and known only to God. I am so proud and deeply grateful to all of them!].”

In addition to the Speakers presentations, in memory of the dead, the story of activist Dr. Melaku Beyan article was distributed to the audience. The story was written by Dr. Girma Abebe. Last month, Dr. Melaku's story was posted on several Ethiopians websites. It is one of inspirational stories that make up the forgotten heroes families. According to the paper, Dr. Melaku was well educated person. He received his doctoral degree in US. He returned back home prior the Italian invasion. Soon after, the Italian invaded Ethiopia. He served in the battle field. Then he was pulled out from the battle field and sent to New York where the African American already showed a solidarity supporting for the Ethiopian people fight against Fascist invasion. Dr. Melaku led the awareness campaign about the Italian naked aggression. Dr. Melaku did monumental task in explaining the wholesale destruction of villages, churches and mass murder of innocent civilians by Italian army. He greatly contributed to the African Americans, Caribbean's to have a unified stand and unlimited support to Ethiopian cause. There is no doubt that his historic activism for just cause continue to stand tall for generation to come. Dr. Melaku died at age 40 in New York Rockland hospital. He is buried in Bronx, NY. Unfortunately, his death occurred a year earlier prior Ethiopia became free from the occupation.

The Italian fascist acts are much more. According to Professor Astair G. Mengesha's article entitled:

*"Cry Justice".*

*She interviewed several people and documented unfortunate stories of ordinary Ethiopians and infamous scene of Addis Ababa in her article. To cite one case from her writing: ".....Some of their experiences cannot be quantified but they can only be felt. Stories of Ethiopians of the fascist era may help us envisage the terror of the time.*

*Case: 5*

*The story of the following woman took place in the rural area in southwestern Ethiopia from where the Ethiopian freedom fighters, the "Black Lions" operated. It is a story of a wife of one of the fighters. When they could not find the husband, they took her to their post and tortured her for several days to extract information of his whereabouts. She did not know. Ultimately, a couple of soldiers came with a prisoner, her husband. The commander of the post was to go to Addis Ababa. So he took the prisoner with him on the plane. When the plane reached cruising height, he dropped her husband down from the sky. The woman was traumatized, lost her mind and became gravely ill. She could not care for her very young children. The youngest was six months old. She died a few months later leaving her boys as orphans.*

*Such sad stories were common in Ethiopia during the fascists' time. I have heard many similar horrible stories. Since I am professionally interested in issues of gender during times of war, I interviewed a number of people who have experience of live during the five years of the Italian occupation.*

*I thought you were coming thought the war was ending  
I have been calling and calling aren't you listening  
the children are crying  
when I saw you falling  
I thought you were coming  
it was only a dream, dreaming*

### *Cry Justice*

*.....Our ancestors were mocked. Our churches burned and desecrated. Our religion was ridiculed and our dignity was stolen. Our properties have been robbed. Ethiopia was raped. ....I cry for Justice.” (Read more click link (<http://www.globalallianceforethiopia.org/drastair.pdf> )*

80th years have passed since the Italian attack on February 19, 1937 and only few survivors are left to recall that tragic days. Our two speakers Dr. Girma Abebe and Ambassador Imru Zelleke are real survivors of those tragic days. The Speakers provided us eye witness account and personal experience as young boy during the Italian invasion. Ambassador Imru, now age 94. He might be the only POW at age thirteen still live and understand the trauma. Their message is eloquently delivered to bring out courage and bravery in all of us. The audience were moved by Speaker presentations, and shared their thoughts.

Looking at the past we learned our Patriots were how gallant, how brave they were to keep Ethiopia free from aggressor. We must continue to have the same courageous stand to combat foreign aggression and embrace our patriot's role, put value and appreciation of their sacrifice. One hope the young generation will keep the memory by paying tribute each year as a key historical significant event.

The Town Hall Meeting benefited to keep alive Ethiopian history and also to remind us our deep rooted history. Thanks is extended to the Speakers telling the story of courage and glory of Ethiopian people. Lastly, we commemorate Yekatit 12 to evoke the memory of the massacre and expression of sadness and at the same time to pledges in solidarity “Never Forget”.

Long live Ethiopia!!!