

Whose money is it anyway?

Professor Getachew Haile wrote a while back here, in his truthful and direct manner, “*Genzebo betefa ene neberku yemeteyekew / yemekotaw*”, translated simply “If money was squandered, I would be the first one to raise hell”.

However, just in case it has escaped the attention of the unknowing, here it is again the way we most know it, and my plea that we pull together and grow, not shatter and break.

Much is rumored, said and written about the misappropriation of money raised to support Freedom and Democracy in Ethiopia within the last two years. Why? Because we unwittingly allowed TPLF agents to hijack and destroy an organization we all hoped will bring freedom to our people. Occupied in our daily lives -- a balancing act of raising a family, work, supporting other family members left behind and supporting the movement for freedom at home. Our effort to focus was derailed by dishonest operatives with the objective to sow dissention and confusion among us. If we allow ourselves to grow distant, disorganized and ineffective against the authoritarian rule in Ethiopia, then the agents have won . . . we must make sure they have not, and we must carry on our fight, working for freedom and justice at home.

Fund raising and contribution for social or political cause has a history of more than thirty plus years in the Diaspora. Here is a quick review, along with thanks to those who have been on the forefront when it comes reaching deep into their pocket for many noble causes we support. We have thousands of remarkable and resilient groups of Ethiopians who have contributed repeatedly for years.

I am one of the many who joined in the middle of the course of contributing time, money and fund raising activities for the past twenty years. The fund raising activities include soliciting the help of our friends, family members including our wives and children to: set –up tables, clean-up, working the food and refreshment table, etc... . After all is said and done many times few individuals have to dig deep into their pocket many times to cover overhead expenses that is not met during the fund raising activities.

For the past twenty years, I had a good fortune of witnessing and working with dedicated selfless educators, political leaders, civic leaders, religious leaders and individuals who spent their personal resource and time organizing work shops and forums for a democratic Ethiopia. Through these exercise of going to multiple rallies we were able to build a strong network (learn names of leaders, compatriots, cities and new phone numbers and addresses).

In order to uphold and respect personal promises made to our people at home we had numerous gathering, rallies, and meetings. This activities entailed enduring long hours of flight, long drive, long walk and taking a day off from work and closing personal business to attend rallies in major cities of the United States and Canada.

These enduring demonstrations and rallies are held on an average of ten rallies a year in each of the major cities.

On each of these rallies, we had asked and obtained the participation of our elders, educators, religious leaders, party leaders and entertainers to come to our rallies at their own expense and they did with great pleasure and patriotism.

Professor Getachew Haile and his family is one among the many who gave their unlimited time and resources despite the challenge of certain physical limitation and the logistics that comes with it (for a wheel chair bound individual). Among the many there were those who gave what they could; there were many who gave a lot, and there were many in the past and present who gave every thing for freedom and democracy in Ethiopia including those of the June and November 2005 martyrs in the street of Addis Ababa and elsewhere in the country.

At present the Ethiopian Diaspora is being challenged by fast talking and self aggrandizing groups lead By Dr. Berhanu Nega who has the same blue print that was tested and proven many times over by his TPLF buddies used against innocent Ethiopians and other political opponents.

The hired goons who managed to infiltrate support groups in North America and CUD in Ethiopia are immoral and have betrayed our trust and that of 77 million Ethiopians. The malicious campaign unleashed by the

infiltrators to divide our community and organization has reached low point: again using the divisive formula of TPLF. This shameless group is further exploiting and dividing the Diaspora by categorizing of our community, by selectively appealing to their ethnicity, creating geographical boundaries: west of Awash River, north of Abaye, East of Genale. Home, association, marriage, business affiliation and categorizing into multiple groups according to Dr. Berhanu Negas classification (successful, productive, unproductive and useless) The preferred and calculated method was its cheap un-abated attack against CUD chairperson and people around him. The financial mishandling/misappropriation attack directed against the chair and people around him for sacrificing their personal resource and health to advance the struggle of the nation for peace and democracy is disgusting. This attack is spear headed by infiltrators whose history is replete for sleeping with the enemy, who do not have a history of contributing to the cause of Freedom and Democracy, and who made no effort to earn an honest living for a single day other than colluding with groups who are plundering the nation to its bone.

Dr. Berhanu Negas, in one his work / presentation has categorized and classified the Ethiopian Diaspora into Groups: Group- One with potential to invest in TPLF Ethiopia. Group-2 that needs mobilization by civilized cadres, Group-3 who lacks the know how and understanding, Group - Four labeled as useless for any thing.

All these groups for the past 35 years have sacrificed their own personal time to show their dedication for the betterment of the organization. Taking a day off from taxi driving, from their teaching job, from working in Seven-Eleven, working in the bank, construction work and closing their personal business to attend and contribute money ten to fifteen rallies a year for so many years. Albeit Berhanu Nega's stratification tools or analysis, the Ethiopian Diaspora has an impeccable record of contributing for good cause all these years. It is reasonable to conclude that individual contributions are directly proportional to the number of time one shows up to a rallies and demonstrations for the cause of Freedom and Democracy in Ethiopia. It is obvious then the dollar value will reflect that of the number of years and time one has contributed to the struggle for the Freedom of our People

Why, is then Dr. Berhanu Nega , Berhane Mewa, Andargachew Tisge and his collaborators who surfaced a mere two years ago to advance Melese Zenawi's TPLF agenda filling our ears with futile comments that are un proven and that have no merit with regards to the misappropriations of funds.

It is the same proven cheap political maneuvering used by Melese Zenawi to get rid of his political opponents and ex-friends. Mlese Zenawi uses Ethiopian Television and his Parliament to accuse his friends. Dr. Berhanu Nega and his associates are using Ethiopian/ Eriterian Review, Abebe Belew's radio and other media out lets to tarnish the name of decent individuals for performing honest and respectable work to facilitate the cause of freedom in Ethiopia.

It is outrageous and insulting to our community how Berhanu Nega, Berhane Mewa, Andargacew Tisge a former personal secretary and brother –in-law of Tefera Walwa who are the trusted confidant and colleagues of TPLF top dogs to tell us how our money is misappropriated . One has to be extremely cold and cruel to lead a group who is willing to heap a despicable act of accusation against honest individuals even if it is in the nature of that of a mercenary. This virulent attack and defiling of a character of a decent man and his associates must stop.

As for the rest of us who are ready, to continue with our long struggle to achieve the aspiration of the 77 million Ethiopians we have to ignore the well thought distraction by the enemy. It is obvious the three BBBS have no moral authority to question any one of us when it comes on how to disburse our resource for a just cause; it is a mere proven tactical diversion from the real issue.

If any one along with the three BBS feels that some of their money is mixed up in the pot with in the last two years of the struggle, few others and myself are more than happy to reimburse their share of contribution if they can produce credible evidence. Nothing will be asked of them except the place and time of their contribution and their mailing address with it. We have done it before in the case of the Switzerland Embassy when it tried to influence and control the work Ethiopian Human Rights Counsel, its founders and Prof. Mesfin

Woldemariam from their intended mission and independence.

We still have the resilience to do it again. As we prepare our people, our leaders for the long struggle against TPLF and their hired gun, we must keep in mind a larger picture of our struggle for Freedom that keeps our many-committed compatriot engaged in the struggle. We must redirect our focus to pass HR 2003, challenge biased, insulting Senator of Oklahoma State. Support the thousands of prisoners who are still in jail, aid those who cannot pay their rent, farmers who cannot buy seeds to farm, and displaced CUD members and others all over the country.

In addition, we have to remember those who gave every thing and left behind their loved ones without a mother, father, husband, wife, sister, brother, insurance, pension, and their safety net. I have heard many radio interviews with a sinking heart because it failed to highlight the plight of the millions but used to score a political point. We must challenge the many lies, misleading information and dishonest statement by Dr Hailu Araya (a senior citizen) and his friends in their VOA regarding the formation of an ad-hoc committee to form NGO in order to have a continuous income to help people who lost their loved ones in June September 2005. Their spirit will convict us all if we do not tell the truth; the more we expose the lies and pretension by this group the more we are fulfilling our goal to focus on issues.

It is in the nature of mercenaries and turncoats and their right to talk about the magnanimity of TPLF and their institution. Trying to make peace with the enemy behind their back without telling the truth to their survivors and sympathizers is the mother of all betrayals. It is beyond any one to believe TPLF will allow the opening and operation of NGO to benefit those helpless family members it intentionally killed

Vilifying CUD chairperson and his colleagues who come to their aid and share with what they have is low. It was cheap ploy and lies to hide one of the main philosophical causes of split between CUD chairperson and his detractors. It was also an effort by a group to hide its dismal failure of commitment and courage to stand by the people who elected them, died defending them, and went to prison with them.

At the same time it is an effort to belittle the humane act and effort made by engineer Hailu Shawel and his associates for reaching into their pocket to reach others who are really in need.

The challenge, especially for an old god fearing personality like Dr.Hailu Araya and the three BBBS will be to do the right thing by reaching those who lost their loved ones and their only means of security. The challenge is to reach the displaced because they are CUD members in Addis Ababa and other towns. The challenge is, with the money collected recently on behalf of the dead and the money your clique and agents mugged from Kinigit North America is to address the needs of the thousands you conveniently want to forget. The hungry, the displaced, those who need hospitalization, shelter, and other needs have heard your VOA comments, your successful mission in North America. It is with this high hope and expectation that they are waiting your return eagerly. Their need is urgent and calls for immediate attention, they do not have the luxury to linger around while the five star delegates is being entertained in five star hotels and restaurants and at the same time wheel and deal at the expense 77 million people.

You can take a good lesson and do the right thing from Ethiopian Diaspora Pal-Talk Room, Assimba Pal Talk Room and many others. Many thanks to Ezana, your associates and others who are performing a commendable work to reach out former Kalit Prisoners and others who need our support

For mutual understanding and satisfaction, I find myself in Group-# 3/ 4, of Ethiopian Diaspora classification by Berhanu Nega , as such, I am privileged to address you and your associate in a language we all understand: the misappropriation of money is a smoke screen to smear the name of decent people and entrap some gullible supporters to your deceptive camp . What a dirt bag.

The commotion we hear is nothing but a wicked game plan to hide your sinister motive to engage the few who mushroomed in recent months and marshal to TPLF camp and agenda. To be clear it is our money and you have no business crying as if the money is gotten from your family fund or from your kid's piggy bank and you should please shut up !(yemetadu Eyale yenkebu tentata). To reach out and carry on the multitude projects we have envisioned we need the money raised in Washington DC two years ago in support of CUD that you

pocketed, dolled out to your friends back home, and here to certain gullible stage personnel and amateur journalist to spew your malicious propaganda.

We need that money to supplement other resources that are on hand to advance our cause of Freedom and Democracy in Ethiopia. Most of us “Faras” / Chutzpa” believe our money has always been in good hands in the past, present, and is presently used to advance the cause of Freedom and Democracy of future Ethiopia. In addition, we are comfortable and trust whom we have entrusted in managing our resources for the last two decades or more. For the majority of us, the struggle did not start on May 2005 and will not end when the Civilized Politicians join their pals Kedetu and TPLF.

T. Bedelu

