

ERITREANS IN THEIR STRUGGLE FOR UNITY AND INTEGRITY

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Unity is defined as “the state of being at one with someone.” It is “the state of joining together as a whole.” While *integrity* is defined as “the state of being whole and undivided.” It is “the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles.” It has been observed that we, Eritreans, seem to be quick to disagree before we even put an effort to agree. We seem to like to talk before we attempt to listen. We seem to make a hasty judgement or conclusion before we give a little time to collect and have the necessary or adequate information about a case in question. It is unfortunate that we cannot conduct a decent debate about the Eritrean politics among ourselves because we do not make or entertain self-criticism and we do not accept or tolerate legitimate criticisms from others. We seem to be quick to quarrel, squabble, scold, or even insult each other in a hostile argument instead of giving a chance to a decent dialogue or discussion. Some of us seem to be self-centered, attention seekers who suffer from personal egos and personality complex. With such kind of immature attitudes and undesirable behaviors as manifested in YouTube, Facebook, and in other social medias, it has become a serious problem for Eritreans in Diasporas in creating the state of togetherness and oneness among ourselves. We need to realize that unity is neither a privilege nor a luxury. It is a commitment and a dedication to bring ourselves together in unity and integrity so that we can work together for a common and just cause. Unity is a powerful weapon for the oppressed people in their struggle for justice and peace. It enables people to cultivate and solidify their strength in order to respect each other and to work together in unity and integrity for the same common objective. We need to understand that unity is always strength. The reverse side of **አብረን ነፃነት** is **ከሌላው**. It means that we always benefit from unity.

The importance and significance of unity and integrity in bringing people to work together for a certain purpose or goal is illustrated by the following five examples. (1) The unity and integrity of many leaves clustered together in a tree, unlike a single leaf, can create a cool and comfortable shade under which humans and animals protect themselves from the fierce heat of the sun. (2) The single web from one spider is weak and feeble. However, the unity and integrity of spider webs from thousands of spiders putting together can hinder or limit the mobility of an angry tiger. The many spider webs bound together can even snare a tiger tight and as strong as the iron chain. (3) The unity and integrity of our five fingers can do many miracles together in our daily lives. For example, one of their important functions is that the five fingers joined together in unity and integrity can form a fist and together with the arm can be used for self-defense or protection against a potential enemy much better and stronger than a single finger. (4) According to the

African indigenous wisdom about the values of unity and integrity, it explains: if you want to go fast, run alone. But you do not go far, and you do not get any help from anybody in case of need. However, if you want to go far, run with other people, like friends or relatives, then you can go far, and you can even have support from each other. It is always natural that one hand washes the other hand. (5) According to the sacred script in relation to unity and integrity, the Holy Bible illustrates: “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, the one will lift his fellow up; but woe to him who is alone when he falls and doesn’t have another to lift him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have warmth; but how can one keep warm alone?”(Ecclesiastes 4:10-11). If we stick to our moral principles and uprightness, our prayers and petitions are answered, and the divine support from the Almighty God. is always delivered at the right time and place.

In addition, the victory and success of the people of Israel in the formation of the government of Israel in their homeland was a typical example of the miracle of unity and integrity of people. Israel as a nation did not appear by accident. The declaration of independence of Israel from the British colonial rule and the subsequent formation of an Israeli government in 1948 was not an easy journey; it was a hard and challenging struggle for many years. It is evident that most of the people of Israel came from outside their homeland Israel. They came from various countries of Europe, North and South America, the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and Australia. They came with varied traditional values, cultural backgrounds, languages, and political ideologies, but the only and most common factor that brought them together in unity and integrity was the creation of a nation called Israel. Although they had varied national identities and irrespective of their numerous other differences, Israel is deeply rooted inside the hearts and minds of the people of Israel. Israel is the symbol of their national identity whether they live inside or outside their homeland Israel Likewise, the existence and survival of Eritrea as a nation must be the symbol and pride of all Eritreans.

The most promising outcome of the true application and full implementation of unity and integrity was witnessed in the successful armed struggle against the colonial rule in Eritrea. At that time, the Eritrean scholars and professionals, members of the Eritrean communities, members of the Eritrean religious institutions, and all Eritreans from all ages, gender, region, and all walks of life unanimously joined together in unity and integrity to support the victorious struggle for national independence of Eritrea. The Ethiopian colonial occupation of Eritrea was the common issue that brought the Eritrean people together in unity and integrity to win the colonial war of aggression. However, At the present time, the objective reality among all Eritreans in Diasporas is quite different from the past. The behavioral characteristics of Eritreans in Diasporas have been distorted or

diverted significantly away from the true sense or meaning of unity and integrity. Currently, there are numerous Eritrean political opposition organizations which seem to be separated from each other by few and simple disagreements and misunderstandings. The Eritrean communities are dysfunctional and fragmented beyond any aspiration for restoration. One of our major Eritrean religious institutions, the Eritrean Orthodox Christian church, is divided into two to three functions and the so-called Holy Synodos in Eritrea does not seem to be morally prepared to resolve the problem soon. The great majority of the Eritrean scholars and professionals are hiding in hibernation and silence out of fear of losing their real estate property in Eritrea, fear of character assassination and other petty excuses. Our ordinary Eritrean citizens from all walks of life are in disarray, dispersed, and confused by the current unpleasant situations in Eritrea and neighboring Ethiopia. Thus, the general deplorable and heart-breaking situations in Eritrea must be the common issue for all Eritreans in Diasporas who must be very much concerned about the security of the Eritrean sovereignty and the welfare of the Eritrean people. Thus, bringing ourselves together in unity and integrity is not only important, it is necessary in the emancipation of the Eritrean people from all sorts of outright human rights violations prevailing in Eritrea.

It is a practical fact that both unity and integrity are the life-saving blood or oxygen in the struggle for democracy, justice and peace. We are weak and lose when we are divided, but we are strong and win when we are united. We are smart and wise when we are united because we can acquire knowledge and wisdom from each other. We are determined and committed to do things of great importance when we are united because we can learn and adapt confidence and integrity from each other. We are victorious and successful in our people's movement when we have a united front because we can accumulate strength from each other. If we are united, our voice is loud and powerful, and we can be heard everywhere. But if we are divided, we are ignored and despised anywhere, and we are heard nowhere. If we are united, we are guaranteed for success. But if we are divided, we are doomed to failure. We need to adjust the direction of our life by appreciating the values of unity and integrity of people. We can achieve unity and integrity when we respect each other. It is human nature and dignity to show respect to all humans but grovel to none. The first test of maturity is to respect ourselves by respecting others. There is a mutual interdependence between respecting others and respecting ourselves. If we do not respect our own people, we have no respect for ourselves. If we have no respect of ourselves, it is evident that nobody will respect us. If nobody respects us, we are considered as nobody and even the other animal species (the donkey, monkey and others) cannot take us as members of their species. Thus, one of the sincerest forms of respect among matured people is listening to each other with great respect. We can always learn plenty of knowledge and wisdom from each other, and we can use these attributes to narrow down our differences to the

minimum level. If we cannot bring ourselves together in unity and integrity, we cannot defend and safeguard the sovereignty of our country against our adversaries.

It is a fact of life that we are not all born from the same immediate parents; we did not all come from the same region (awraja); we do not all belong to the same ethnic nationality; we do not all worship the same religious belief; we do not all have the same political orientation or view; we do not all have the same level of educational background; we do not all have the same personality, emotional traits, psychological make ups, and behavioral characteristics; and we do not all have the same life experience or upbringings. It is observed that those Eritreans who worship the same religious belief and those Eritreans who came from certain regions of the highland of Eritrea, closely stick together, irrespective of their other differences. Nevertheless, We, Eritreans like any other people, are all different from each other. But we can still be friends and relatives and closely connected with each other as responsible Eritreans, irrespective of our differences. The virtue of our diversity is the legacy of our differences. We need to recognize and honor our differences and we need to adorn and appreciate our diversity because people tend to think and work together better when a diverse group of people can come together and respect the uniqueness of each other. We are fortunate that we, all Eritreans located in Eritrea and in Diasporas, belong to Eritrea and the country Eritrea belongs to all Eritreans. The sense of belongingness of Eritrea to its people is what we have in common among all Eritreans. To this effect, it must be our common goal and national obligation and responsibility to defend and safeguard the sovereignty of the state of Eritrea and to advocate for the welfare of the Eritrean people.

It is evident that bringing ourselves together in unity and integrity does not happen by accident nor do we receive it as a gift on a silver plate from the Heavenly Father. We need to work for it to bring ourselves together in unity and integrity with all our courage, commitment and dedication, if we really want unity and integrity to happen and prevail among ourselves. We must realize that perfect unity of people in any society never happen under any circumstance, situation or condition. There are always disagreements, misunderstandings, or conflicts among people in any society because people have different educational orientation, traditional values, and cultural backgrounds, and follow different political ideology. People always differ from each other in their choices, desires, priorities, aspirations, ambitions, and perceptions. It has been commonly observed that social, political regional, ethnic, and religious differences play a significant role in disrupting, distorting and neutralizing the application of unity and integrity of people. However, we can still bring ourselves together in unity and integrity by recognizing or identifying a common purpose, or a common ground for all of us that can bind us in one with one another. The Eritrean scholars and professionals, the Eritrean

religious institutions, the Eritrean communities, and the Eritrean civic associations and professional organizations have the moral obligation and national responsibility to put their differences aside and to dump their negative attitudes in a dumpster, and then become the front-runners and pioneers in bringing the Eritreans in Diasporas together in unity and integrity to support the Eritrean youth in their Yeakel movement for the rule of law, democracy, justice, and peace in Eritrea. The Yeakel movement which is propelled by the Eritrean youth desperately needs the support of the global unity and integrity of all Eritreans at the local, national, regional, and international levels. As we are all aware that for many years Eritrea was lost under colonial rule. After 30 years of fierce armed struggle for national independence, Eritrea was found. Now, it must be quite clear to all Eritreans, friends of Eritrea and foes alike that we are not going to lose it again to any kind of colonial occupation, conspiracy, or any type of hidden agreement outside the will and desire of the Eritrean people. On this independence day, May 24, let this article appeal to all Eritreans residing inside and outside Eritrea to bring ourselves together in unity and integrity with the clarity of our minds and the purity of our hearts to uphold and firmly secure the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of Eritrea as a nation forever and ever.