

AFRICA, DON'T BLAME THE WHITES

By Mfonobong Nsehe

Published on August 25, 2008 in AmericanChronicle.com

Recently, as part of an academic assignment at school, I was engaged in an intellectual debate with a few colleagues. We were seeking answers to the roots of Africa's problems. It was an interesting discussion for me. Shockingly, the majority of my colleagues subscribed to the idea that the major cause of Africa's social-political and economic problems was the legacy left behind by the colonial masters. As far as they were concerned, the colonialists ruined Africa for good. For the records, they had some strong arguments to support their claims. I do not intend to go into that.

Africa is known as the problem continent. And indeed, the problems are legion- Poverty, diseases, famine, poor leadership, religious conflicts, ethnic clashes and corruption are a few of them. With each passing day, the problems increase. For long, the economic and social underdevelopment of the African nation has been blamed on white colonialists who exploited the land and left Africa bare. Up till now, the blame game continues.

Africans are usually quick to blame most of its problems on the evils of colonialism. We sometimes blame the violence on the borders colonialists created that ignored ethnicity. Many African nations have been independent for four decades. If colonial borders were a major problem, how come they haven't changed them?

Colonialism cannot explain Third World poverty. Some of today's richest countries are former colonies, such as the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Hong Kong. Some of today's poorest countries were never colonies, such as Ethiopia, Liberia, Tibet, Nepal and Bhutan. The colonialism argument is simply a cover-up for African dictators and people.

For as long as African keep bickering about the past without focusing on the future, the African people will continue to suffer. Pointing fingers at the colonial masters won't change the fact that the majority of people in Africa are living and dying in horrible conditions. The Europeans colonized Africa about 400 years ago. Right now, Africans are in trouble because they cannot

manage their own problems. Instead of brainstorming and finding solutions to its numerous social and economic problems, the people hold out a begging bowl to the west in one hand, while punishing the remaining white people in the land with the other. (Does Robert Mugabe, Zimbabwe and the Zimbabweans come to mind?)

We are responsible for our problems, but we prefer to blame others than to take a good look in the mirror. Fine, the colonialists were a bunch of greedy no-gooders, but if truths must be told, the self-interest of early colonialists pales in comparison to the personal greed of African leaders today. Those who blame Africa's problems on colonialism must not forget that the experience was not unique to Africa. Generally, the Asian countries that also experienced colonialism are doing fairly well. So what has Africa, or to be more precise, its leaders, been doing for the past 40 years?

What Africa needs is a lot of self-criticism. The fact that Africa breeds and worships figures like Mugabe, because of their own anti-white racism is disheartening. It's incredible that any white sends aid to Africa when Africans are anti-white racists.

You can't solve Africa's problems until the lies are all stripped away and you start comparing yourself to say Taiwan. Taiwan is not white, yet they have made amazing progress. They made this progress by managing their economy properly, and by working hard.

We need to strip away the black ideology that says that whites didn't do anything other than enslave blacks and are rich because of the exploitation of blacks. Taiwan didn't get rich because of that. So why do Africans think that that's how whites got rich?

And blacks enslaved blacks too; it's part of human history everywhere. So why isn't Africa rich due to the enslavement of themselves?

Were Africans better off under colonial administration than the despots who replaced them? Most African countries have had their independence for over three decades, yet, the report card our leaders have shown us are wars, famine and gross corruption. While it may be argued that

Britain and other European countries did us more harm than good in colonizing us, it is high time we faced reality and realized that we are the architects of our own destiny. We need to choose what is good and bad, what future we want, and whether colonialism took us closer to what we want.

It's time we as Africans took responsibility for our troubles and stopped trying to guilt-trip the West into accepting responsibility for our problems. Since time immemorial, there have been empires- even African. These empires have always left great damage in their wake, but such damage is rectified through rebuilding and hard work, but not by laying blames and casting aspersions. As long as we look back in history to blame our troubles on the colonial masters, Africa will continually be the backward continent the whole world believes we are. To turn around the fortunes of Africa, it will take work and vision. And so Africa, enough with the blame games. Let's shut up, re-examine ourselves, go back to the drawing board, rectify our mistakes and move on with our lives.