



Obang Talks About “The Obama Factor” **What Will an Obama Win Mean to Ethiopians?**

October, 26, 2008

Welcome to everybody! It is great to be back in Oakland. The last time I was here was almost two years ago. At the time, I was invited by the Oakland Kinijit chapter to talk about the human rights abuses in Ethiopia. That was also the premiere showing of the documentary film, produced by the Anuak Justice Council, the “Betrayal of Democracy.” It was also the time when the opposition leaders were in prison. A lot has changed since that time for the worse in Ethiopia.

Before I go on to the topic I am going to speak about, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Yilma Bekele who put this together. Without his work, this round table discussion would never have been possible. Mr. Bekele was also the first person to pick me up at the airport when I came here two years ago. He is one of the many Ethiopians I have met through this struggle who has become not only a friend, but someone who has enriched my life. As I have told Ethiopians many times, I got into this struggle because of the loved ones I have lost, but God has brought more people into my life as a result of this tragedy.

The second person I would like to thank is Elizabeth, who could not be here today because she is in Washington D.C. for her friend’s daughter’s wedding, but she was one of the people who helped Mr. Bekele put this event together. I also want to thank Mr. Agonifer who also contributed to make this event possible. Without these three great Ethiopian, it would have not have happened.

Above all, I would like to thank the owner of the Ethiopian Restaurant, for allowing us to use this place for our meeting. I would also like to thank everyone who took the opportunity to be here today. I am blessed and honored to be here with you. I hope to learn new things from you and I also hope you will learn something from me.

As I look around the table, I see everyone as humans first and as Ethiopians second. I see all of us as brothers and sisters and I want this dialogue to continue in this spirit where brothers and sisters can disagree but will always be there for one another. One thing I will not concentrate on and hope we will not pay attention to is blaming, accusing, attacking, insulting each other or attacking political leaders or political parties.

As we know, there is so much division among our people and we cannot afford more. I am here to represent all Ethiopians because I do not believe in one group, but in all groups having the right to represent their varying interests. This is because deep in my heart, I believe that the problems and challenges we have ahead of us are tremendous and that the only way they can be confronted and ultimately defeated is if we try to work together.

This is the theme I want to concentrate on today as I talk about “**The Obama Factor**”. As a preface to this, I would like to say a little bit about how I came into this struggle.

I came to Canada as a young man, finishing high school in Saskatoon and going on to the university there. After graduating, I traveled back home to Gambella and was shocked with the lack of progress during my years away. I was struck with how much could be possible if even small steps were taken to bring development to not just the Anuak, but to all of the people of Gambella.

The images of suffering and hardship of the people inspired visions and dreams of possibilities that continued to stir in me and led me and some close friends to start a development agency in order to do my part to bring a better life to the people of Gambella who were thirsting not just for clean water, but for development and the kinds of opportunity it might provide.

We began the Gambella Development Agency and tried to work with the current government in bringing development to Gambella for three years before I was forced out of it by the most horrible event of my life—the massacre of the Anuak. The government that was supposed to protect the Anuak and to aid in development had turned on them like a lion devours a weakened prey. The Anuak were defenseless.

Years of work—not only mine, but that of others also—was destroyed that December of 2003 and continued to be further destroyed for many months following. The already limited infrastructure—wells, schools, health clinics, granaries, crops and homes—were laid waste. Worse than that, some of the brightest and most committed Anuak leaders were killed and Anuak society devastated.

In desperation, I called many authorities for help. The US State Department was one of the first. The response I received was disinterest, “Africans are always killing other Africans.” I then called back and said, there were American citizens there and the response was totally different. United States troops were immediately sent to Gambella to rescue the Anuak American citizens caught in the slaughter.

Before I am done with this talk, you may realize why I am telling you these details related to speaking about “the Obama Factor.” For one, you will see that development work, without a government that values its people, can be destroyed in days. Secondly, investments in educating the people ultimately can jeopardize their very lives as these educated people know their rights and can challenge a corrupt and repressive government. Thirdly, we cannot depend on other governments to protect our people. Fourthly, development and improvements to the lives of Ethiopians will not be sustainable until we have a government in place that values its people.

Obama and his message is resonating with Ethiopians and I want to explore the pros and cons of this phenomenon for us as Ethiopians. **This is not a political rally for him** meant to persuade more people to vote for him. This meeting is for both Obama and McCain supporters.

In fact, before I focus on Obama, I want to also give credit to John McCain who has been one of those senators who has been an advocate for human rights and democracy when he was the Chairman of the International Republican Institute (IRI). The International Republican Institute was founded in 1983, after President Ronald Reagan's 1982 speech before the British Parliament in Westminster in which he proposed a broad objective of helping countries build the infrastructure of democracy. The IRI's stated mission is to expand what it interprets as freedom throughout the world. Its activities include teaching and assisting with political party and candidate development, good governance practices, civil society development, civic education, women's and youth leadership development, electoral reform and election monitoring, and political expression in closed societies. In June 2005, Senator McCain was one of the signers of a resolution on behalf of the Anuak. If Senator McCain wins, he could be an advocate for Ethiopia and we should be prepared to work with him.

Right now, though, many Ethiopians have rallied behind Obama. There are **Amharas for Obama, Anuak for Obama, Oromo for Obama, Tigrayans for Obama, Sidamo for Obama, Afar for Obama** and the list goes on. Record numbers of Ethiopian voters are expected. More Ethiopians are involved in Obama's campaign than we could have ever believed possible. These Ethiopians are not from one ethnic group, political group, religious group, region, educational background, economic level, gender and even include Meles supporters and those opposed to this regime. What accounts for this?

Yes, his father was an African from Kenya. This is a great story of a second-generation African success, whose American mother at times used food stamps, yet he has made it to this level of opportunity. It gives us renewed hope in the "American Dream!" It's an inspiration to all immigrants.

Yes, if elected, he would be the first African American to be President of the United States and the first African descendent in the Western Hemisphere to gain such an office. Was this the dream of Martin Luther King, Jr that he envisioned fifty years ago when he spoke to thousands in his, "I Have a Dream" speech during the movement for Civil Rights? I think even he might be astonished by Obama's run for President!

Yes, Obama is calling for change and we know that change is needed not only in the United States, but also between the US and Ethiopia, between the US and African as well as others. However, all of these things add up to more—something greater than the sum of the parts—and that is why I am calling it "the Obama factor." **If he stands for one thing it is hope and if there is anything we Ethiopians are lacking right now, it is such hope!**

No political figure has unified Ethiopians in America as much as Obama has done. This does not only apply to Ethiopian Americans, but to Ethiopians all over the world who have also shown an extraordinary excitement for Obama, watching this American election like none other. They are committing time, resources and financial support, but most of all, they are placing enormous hope in him for Ethiopia.

Prior to this "Obama excitement" **where were we as Ethiopians?**

1. **Disunity and divisions within all our groups**
2. **Cronyism by political group, ethnic group, etc.**
3. **Suspicion, lies, deceit, secretive dealings underneath the surface**
4. **Ethnic hatred, revenge, anger**
5. **Despair**

Why? Some of these have historical roots in parts of our culture that have been destructive, oppressive and traumatizing, but there are three major recent disappointments upon which I want to focus:

1. **Failed Ethiopian National Election of 2005**
2. **Division of Leaders**
3. **Disillusionment with all Ethiopian leaders and political organizations**

What have these recent disappointments led to?

1. **Cynicism and even greater suspicion**
2. **Apathy**
3. **Hostility towards politics**
4. **Giving up**
5. **Opportunism—“if you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em”(like many Ethiopians who used to be part of Kinijit who are now making business deals, buying land, etc)**
6. **Disconnection with all things Ethiopian except the superficial—marathon runners, the Ethiopian flag, New Years celebration, sports, music, food, etc.—all of which contribute greatly to the joy of “Ethiopianness,” but can cover over our real problem.**
7. **Diverted attention to where there is more hope—Obama—this is part of the reason the “our Obama factor”.**

In the last year, it has been nearly impossible to get Ethiopians committed to tackling the struggle within Ethiopia because of all of these reactions.

Does this mean that Ethiopians are unwilling to sacrifice, to work hard, to commit time, resources and financial capital?

Does it mean that Ethiopians are all opportunists, hopelessly divided, uncaring and uncompassionate people?

I answer you, “NO”, to all of the above!

I think the way Ethiopians have committed to helping, working and sacrificing for the Obama campaign has shown differently.

I think the unity Ethiopians have enjoyed in working with people from all different groups has shown that Ethiopians can work together regardless of diversity of background. The reason they could not do it before was greatly influenced by **“dirty politics!”**

This new-found activism shows how much Ethiopians care about their new country, America, but also how much they are working for or supporting Obama because they believe he can help **Ethiopia! I want to repeat this. Ethiopians are not forgetting about Ethiopia, but are supporting Obama because they are hoping that Obama can help Ethiopia!**

What this means to me is that **Ethiopians still care very deeply about Ethiopia!** Even Ethiopians throughout the world are hoping that Obama can help Ethiopia and also Africa!

Let me tell you something else I see. Ethiopians care about the starvation of their people. This hunger crisis, which is affecting people all over the country, is uniting us in ways we never could have predicted.

I regularly hear from Ethiopians who want to help the starving regardless of ethnicity, religion, culture or political preferences **because a starving child is a starving child and we Ethiopians care about them.** We have 58 groups of five, each now sending \$100 per month to help the poorest of the poor. We can have confidence that this money will get to the most needy of our people because we are sending it through our own trusted relatives and friends. This is bringing many new people together.

This Obama factor and our hunger crisis have brought out some of the best in Ethiopians and have brought us together in new ways. Ethiopians have risen to the challenge and learned something new about themselves and their people. **The best qualities of Ethiopians—strength, compassion, integrity and commitment—have surfaced under these challenging and difficult days and it gives me hope.**

Ethiopians may have been disillusioned with the state of Ethiopian politics, but that does not mean they do not care. **They want leaders who care about the people. They want leaders with integrity and vision. They want leaders who can bring about healing, reconciliation and change. They want leaders like Obama. Ethiopians want leaders who will see the poor as human beings worthy of opportunity rather than to be ashamed of or to steal from them because they are so weak.**

If we had leaders who cared about the people, Ethiopia might not be one of the most critically weak developing countries in the world as shown by a recent index on failing states.¹ Why does Ethiopia have the fifth lowest per capita income in the world--\$180 a year? Why is Ethiopia the absolute lowest out of 141 developing countries in terms of access to clean water? Why is the Horn one of the most failing, impoverished, conflict-ridden regions in the entire world despite all of the foreign aid? We know that the Ethiopian government has a huge responsibility in all of this.

Our country is in chaos, almost beyond repair leading to starvation, the lack of hope, tribal hatred, HIV, skyrocketing inflation, a deepening financial crisis and the collapse of institutions. **Due to the tightening of controls within Ethiopia, it is nearly impossible for those in the country to accomplish their objectives without strong support from outside of the country. That means all of us.**

In fact, it is potentially dangerous for them to be too closely associated (at least publicly) with groups in the Diaspora due to the increasing repression in the country; yet, the closure of doors to outside groups will make it all the harder to address the growing hunger and starvation problem, the horrific human rights abuses all over the country and many other problems affecting the country.

A new draft law, **Charities and Societies Proclamation** is a **serious threat to NGO's working within the country advancing human rights, the empowerment of women, children's rights, the rights of the disabled and conflict resolution.** What kind of government would enact such a law? This law prospectively would include any who receive more than 10% of their funding from foreign sources, which is of course, all non-Ethiopian groups as well as many Ethiopian groups. If this law is enacted, as most believe will happen with the Ethiopian Parliament being under the tight control of this government, violators could receive penalties of up to 15 years of imprisonment for such crimes as reporting on human rights violations.

It is an indication of how repressive this government has become. It is all the crazier because it **also is a threat to much of the work being done by Ethiopia's biggest donors—the US, the UK, the EU, individual European countries** and the UN as well as such groups as CARE, the International Red Cross and others. It comes as criticism from such donors as the UK, threaten to pull back its aid to the millions of starving Ethiopian citizens because they believe the Ethiopian government is actively covering the extent of the starvation and blocking humanitarian efforts to reach the people who most greatly need the aid. Some humanitarian groups have been kicked out of the country for reporting human rights abuses and others have left the country due to bureaucratic obstacles like arbitrary detentions and bureaucratic obstacles.

The only way for us to have a future is for **Ethiopians to create their own movement like Americans are doing today.** Ethiopians must create alternatives based on a grand strategy of how to deal with all of these things. We need a change from the kind of leaders who have taken advantage of us over the years and Obama has begun to signify that kind of leader and Ethiopians have gotten behind him.

Ethiopians have shown we can rise up and contribute to a better America. Ethiopians have shown that they will work at all costs for American leaders who they believe can help Ethiopia. Ethiopians Americans have shown they want change, not only in America, but also in Ethiopia.

When we called for groups to form to support starving Ethiopians, Ethiopians have shown they are people of heart and generosity. They have shown unity and freedom from prejudice. This is the Ethiopia I envision for the future. This is the Ethiopia for which I have a dream!

This unity and commitment we are achieving is amazing. It is showing something about Ethiopians that I am thrilled about, but my question is, can this energy, new life and sacrifice be harnessed for the good of Ethiopia so we can redirect this momentum towards deep and sustainable change in our own country?

Amidst all of this, we must carefully assess how we might join and capitalize on this rising wave of change so we are not unprepared should Obama win and so we are not set back if McCain wins. We must be ready to work with either administration, yet, I want to focus on this “Obama factor,” because **many Ethiopians have elevated him to a position that may be beyond what any human being is capable of fulfilling and if he does not fulfill our expectations in the way and as soon as we had hoped, what will happen to us?** We must be prepared and soberly ask ourselves some questions.

Can Obama possibly meet all of our expectations? Are our expectations realistic? What are the dangers if they are not?

Let us review our last few years to better understand where we have come from and how to best prepare ourselves for the future if Obama does indeed win. **If Obama does win, he will be President of the United States, not Prime Minister of Ethiopia.** The US has huge challenges right now with the financial crisis plaguing the economy, the war in Iraq, the deteriorating infra-structure of US roads, bridges and transportation systems, with unemployment, health care and security threats in the world.

Where does Ethiopia fit in and when? Will it come up the first day in office, the second or the hundredth day in office or even in the third years?

What does this all mean? How can we be prepared so we do not set ourselves up for disappointment by setting our expectation too high or by failing to understand how we might be preparing ahead?

One Ethiopian last night in Yilma’s house said Obama was our only hope and another Ethiopian said, no we are! How would you respond?

What will Obama expect from us? Do we expect him to improve everything in Ethiopia by simply replacing Meles?

Remember, Ethiopia is a sovereign country, which we want it to remain, even though we know the biggest donor country to Ethiopia—the US—may influence what happens through many non-invasive, non-violent actions like foreign aid for starters.

However, **Obama might ask** what our goal is—in other words, he might ask us, **“With what or with whom should I replace Meles?” Do we have a reasonable, realistic and better alternative ready for him? Right now, the US State Department and others in the international community have made it known that the most important issue to them in Ethiopia is its stability, taking precedence over human rights violations, the repression of the media, the lack of political space and the mounting numbers of starving Ethiopians because the current authoritarian Ethiopian regime is preferable to what they most fear—chaos and a failed state like Somalia—meaning, it is better to not awaken a sleeping giant unless they can offer something better.**

In other words, until Ethiopians can create a larger and stabilizing solidarity movement of Ethiopians, united across ethnic, religious, political and regional lines and able to work together for the advancement of freedom, the respect of human rights, justice, the rule of law, equality and prosperity for all, Ethiopians cannot expect the US and others to take as active of an intervention role regarding human rights abuses, oppression, repression of freedoms and humanitarian crises.

The only real antidote to our dilemma must come out of a unified collective effort that includes and respects all Ethiopians. **The goal of this collective effort must be carefully guarded by God-given principle of truth, justice, human rights, freedom and civility not by certain leaders or people so that it prepares the way for genuine political expression.** This movement is not to run the government but to prepare the soil for good government.

This is the Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia that I have been talking about. It started as early as when I spoke before Congress in March 2006, speaking not only for the Anuak, but also for others oppressed and suffering in Ethiopia. Later I talked about the virus of disunity and tribalism that was infecting Ethiopia. This is not a **solidarity movement for a certain pre-set government or political group, but a grass roots movement of the people based on core values all emanating from the most important—human beings come first and no one will be free until we all are free. People can join or not join based on whether or not they agree with these principles.**

Some may ask me why I did not wait for their input, but this vision is not new. I have been calling on leaders to unite, but most have not come forward to do it so I and some other committed Ethiopians who share this vision are taking the initiative because we can wait no longer.

When Kinijit divided, I called for mediation and for coming together under a larger umbrella that could promote peace, justice, prosperity and human rights so we could achieve a stronger voice, but there was no response.

On November 17, 2007, I called for leaders from diverse groups from Ethiopia to form a **Solidarity Movement for New Ethiopia**, but hardly anyone came. In May of 2008 we called a World Wide March and most of the leaders did not show up, but the average Ethiopians responded to the call in many cities and countries throughout the world and we thank those who participated.

On June 21 we wrote an article saying, “Meles will Ultimately Fail, Are We Ready?” Again we reminded people that the only way we can be ready is through solidarity.

On August 30, we called all Ethiopian civic organizations to a meeting to join in solidarity, but again, many of them did not show up. We continued anyway.

One of Obama’s statements that has touched so many people is when he has said, **“There is no blue America, no red America, no liberal America, no conservative America, but only the United States of America.”** In the same vein, he would not support an Ethiopia that was only for one group rather than as part of the united peoples of Ethiopia.

When Obama campaigns, you don’t hear him talk about freeing the black people, but instead he campaigns for an America where all are free. **Meles’s language cannot be understood by Obama.** Whose language will shape Ethiopia, Obama’s or Meles’s?

When Obama disagrees with Hillary Clinton or John McCain or if Fox News is pro-McCain and criticizes him, he has maintained his focus in what he believes. For Ethiopians, we should do the same as it is the only way for us to move ahead. **If Ethiopians want Obama to help, the backward way we have been doing things must change.**

The goal of the **Solidarity Movement** is to educate Ethiopians to value humanity and to be the voice of the people of Ethiopia who have been screaming in silence. They are the ones being killed and arrested, not us here in the free world. They should be our focus. In the meantime, joining the Solidarity Movement does not have to stop people from continuing their agenda in their political party.

If you don't like this idea of a larger, non-political solidarity movement, that is fine; however, if you believe in it, join and contribute in any way you can. This is why I have come Oakland and is the reason for this campaign. **We have to learn to sit together and bring our groups together.**

We have already started with a few committed people who see and believe in this larger vision. We tried to bring people together so everyone could agree, but we cannot wait until everyone agrees so we are moving ahead. **Injera can be made by one person and eaten by hundreds. If this movement starts with only a few, it may later be enjoyed by many. This is our dream.**

Moreover, even though Obama inspires me, he is not the one to lead Ethiopia to freedom, we Ethiopians have to do it for ourselves. If we expect a foreigner to cook Dora Wat, it won't be Ethiopian Dora Wat that we get!

This means we must capitalize on the momentum and excitement of this American election in order to be prepared to offer a genuine alternative and that alternative is us, but only if we are guided by these God-given principles including coming with humility and in the spirit of reconciliation, building laws and institutions that set up accountability, transparency and protection for ourselves and against ourselves because God also knows how often we have failed to live rightly.

If we place all of our hope in Obama and don't discover the core of our problem, Obama cannot help us. If this man does not reach out as we expected, we may again be so disappointed, that Ethiopians will close down in greater despair. To avoid this, we must create our own movement, not the movement of Obama, but our own Ethiopian movement so he can see the people doing something truly remarkable and see himself able to step in and add his part.

As one Ethiopian from Australia recently told me, this is the message not only for **Ethiopians in California**, but it is a message for all of us to hear. I will be bringing this same message to **Minnesota** on November 16 and in London, UK on November 23. It is a message Ethiopians should pass on to others from every different group and faction. We must create an alternative to what we have so Obama or McCain can hitch on to the momentum we have created for our own change in Ethiopia. **Neither Obama nor McCain can do it without us.**

Look at what we need to address. **There is disarray all over in the Ethiopian community. How can Obama step in to help people in ten different parties who do not talk to each other? Who should he talk to who represents the collective interests of the Ethiopian people?**

Our expectations of Obama are so high that I ask you, how can they ever succeed unless we capitalize on this newly found unity and momentum in order to create our own movement—a movement that can be clearly seen by those in the West that Ethiopians are ready for change, just like so many Americans, who are coming out to vote for the first time.

Ethiopians must do it in order for Obama and others to see and say, “Ethiopians ready for change!” Look at the response Obama has received when 100,000 people show up at a rally like what is happening in the US. Why do people throughout the world stay up to watch this guy or 200,000 people show up in Berlin?

We must do the same for Ethiopia! Others will see it and they will have NO choice but to support it. Therefore, it comes to us. We have to do the job.

Deep inside, Ethiopians are showing by their participation that they still care. So many problems of Ethiopia could improve if a mass movement of enough people pushed for sustainable change and the right leaders who would have to operate under such standards of accountability. If we had such a movement, it could provide answers to starvation, human rights abuses, lack of access to clean water, insecurity, corruption and our failing agricultural system.

If one hundred thousand showed up for a rally in Washington DC, flooding the streets, Washington would be overwhelmed! What if 50,000 or more did the same in the UK, in Brussels or in Ottawa, Canada? The West will not ignore such an outpouring. This is the **Solidarity Movement** we need to create now.

If Obama is elected, we will show him we are capable of doing it in our own way like Americans are capable of doing it in their own way. It will scare Meles to death like the rally of 2005 when nearly two million Ethiopians came out in Addis Ababa. Those two million Ethiopians who came out are still there. The reason they are not coming out is not because things are better, because they are worse, but because there is no leader or organization that can really guide them, especially in that repressive environment! This is why the strength of the movement in the Diaspora is critical to supporting the efforts back home.

If we can do this, then opportunists Ethiopian will know their days are numbered and join us.

We do not need to beg for our freedom. We do not have to beg Western countries to do this for us. We Ethiopians must free ourselves and no longer will we beg others for our freedom!

It all comes back to us Ethiopians creating a broad-based and genuine movement

- with true leaders who are fighting for all Ethiopians
- where no one is excluded—
- where human rights are for all of the people—
- where we can cooperate even if we don’t agree,
- where principles take precedence over politics and
- where all opposition parties are invited to be part.

As I said, and I repeat, if Obama is elected, his administration cannot be expected to simply tell Meles to leave because Ethiopia is a sovereign country. If we hope for this, we are failing, putting our whole hope in leaders, this time, an American leader, instead of taking our own action.

Be reminded Ethiopians, if Obama is elected,

1. **He is elected for his own country—the United States.**
2. **Don’t expect change to happen in Ethiopia overnight!**
3. **His priority must be placed in his country—the US.**
4. **If Ethiopia gains his attention, there must be proven readiness on part of Ethiopians that they are ready for democracy.**

5. **Ethiopian cannot assume that Obama is the solution to our Ethiopian problem or we are creating false expectations that can never be fulfilled and we will end up being crushed with disappointment like what happened to us before.**
6. **What happens in Ethiopia is ultimately in the hands of Ethiopians!**

It is good that Obama has inspired us, but now, Ethiopians must use this unifying factor—the Obama factor—where they have learned how to work in unity of purpose.

When an American Ethiopian passes you in his car, you might see an Obama sticker. It might be on the bumper of an Anuak car, an Amhara car, a Tigrayan car, an Oromo car—you name it! Go by region of Ethiopia and it will be the same—an Afar for Obama, a Southern Nations for Obama, a Benishangul-Gumuz for Obama, a Harere for Obama, and so on. This is a great visualization of what we have been saying—**humanity before ethnicity and no one is free until we all are free!** This is what we mean. This is what can mobilize Ethiopians. This is what must now take place for Ethiopia!

Ethiopians are great people. A huge reason why they are so cynical is because they have not had a good government and any opportunity for many years. This is why so many continue to risk their lives to come to a free country and this has been going on for the last thirty years. Why? It is to run away from destruction, oppression, lack of opportunity and poverty. If they had had a good government, they would never have left. Ethiopians here would go back with knowledge and skills, but cannot return to this kind of repressive environment.

The reason so many Ethiopians don't want to focus on Ethiopia is because they are so upset with politics and politicians. We need to demand more from our politicians and choose who we support like we might choose a pilot to fly the plane we get on. You would not get in a plane with a pilot who does not know how to fly or he may be killed and so will you. Choose leaders with vision, integrity, wisdom and a heart for the people.

When the November election is over, the Obama campaign will end. Let that end be the beginning of the movement of Ethiopians for Ethiopia. Let Ethiopians rise up from wherever they are, let them do something their children and grandchildren will be proud of—let them be something more meaningful and bigger than themselves. Let them be part of something the world remembers and something that could help unshackle the slavery and misery going on in Africa for centuries.

Ethiopians should consider themselves like responsible farmers who know the rain is coming and that they must start preparing the ground so when the rain comes, they are ready.

When November 4th is over, it should be the beginning. It is time for Ethiopians to inspire Obama or McCain so our new president says when he sees our unified action, **“Wow, I have never seen anything like this!”**

It can be done. Pray for God's help and do what is right. Now is our time!

Here is one last image. Imagine the mall in front of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC where Martin Luther King, Jr spoke. Now imagine what it would look like if one million Ethiopians from all over the Diaspora came out in solidarity that they flooded the mall with a sea of Ethiopians.

Imagine seeing all the diversity of the beautiful **garden of Ethiopia there, all calling for a new and better Ethiopia—one with freedom, with justice, with the rule of law, with the respect for human rights, with equality, with transparency, with civility and with opportunity!**

No one will ignore such a strong and massive outpouring! It would be a shock, but immensely inspiring to the whole world! This can be done and all that is needed is for Ethiopians to believe it is doable and to come together in solidarity around God-given principles.

If we Ethiopians can do this, the whole world will know that there is no justice in Ethiopia. The whole world will know there is no freedom in Ethiopia. The whole world will know there is no peace in Ethiopia. The whole world will know that Ethiopians are ready for change! The whole world will know that God has not forgotten about Ethiopians—that is, if Ethiopians remember that God is in charge of the nations, their coming and going and that God created and knows every human being and hears their individual cries for His intervention.

May God be in charge of bringing about a changed nation of changed people who know that God made them each of them to be not partially human but fully human and valuable.

Everyone will then know that, yes, Ethiopians are hungry and thirsty for that kind of Ethiopia, a revived Ethiopia that can bring life and blessings to its people and to others in the Horn, in Africa and beyond.

This alone is something that Meles will not ignore. He may even come to his knees.

This alone could bring back dignity to our country and replace the image of Ethiopia from a begging, starving nation to a nation of people, ready to take a courageous stand for righteousness.

Would not every Ethiopian alive today want to be part of this, including those taking opportunity to go back and invest, including TPLF supporters who would know they are only investing in short-term pleasure? All you need to do now is to spread the word and to get down to work.

May we follow God and seek His help and mercy. May Ethiopians bring honor to His name throughout the world.

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“ If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” (II Chronicles 7:14)

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ⁱ Index of State Weakness in the Developing World, by Susan Rice and Stewart Patrick, published by Brookings Global Economy and Development.
http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/reports/2008/02_weak_states_index/02_weak_states_index.pdf