7. CONCLUSION

7.1 BUCHI EMECHETA AND BESSIE HEAD – A RADICAL APPROACH – NIGERIA AND BOTSWANA

“Love is so powerful, it’s like unseen flowers under your feet as you walk” (Head 1974:86). The writings of Head cover many aspects of her personal experiences as a racially mixed person, growing up without a family in South Africa. Her works deal with issues of discrimination, refugees, racism, African history, poverty, and interpersonal relationships. A hint of autobiography is present in much of Head’s writing, which often deals with poor and emotionally abused black women dealing with both racist and sexist discrimination. Head’s varieties of characters are young and old, male and female: this variety allows her to approach the same themes from different perspectives, but the focus is always on the struggles and hardships of life in postcolonial Africa. Head has also written on the effects of British colonialism in South Africa. While recognizing the lack of access to education for native Africans, Head claimed to be freed of such oppression by the missionaries who raised her. In their care, she was educated as a child and given access to large libraries. Head also claimed that despite its status as an ex-British Protectorate, South Africa retained its people and culture, which provided her with a sense of identity and security. Although she claimed to be vehemently non-political in her actions, Head’s writings dwell on injustice and oppression in the political arena in South Africa, and her hopes for social change and peace in the future.
It is impossible to guess how the revolution will come one day in South Africa. But in a world where all ordinary people are insisting on their rights, it is inevitable. It is hoped that great leaders will arise there who remember the suffering of racial hatred and out of it formulate a common language of love for all people. (Denbow 2006:68)

Bessie Head is a crusader for sexual and social justice for all men and women. Her favorite theme is the drama of interpersonal relationships, and their possibility for individual growth and regeneration. She explores not only social harmony, but also what is unique in each individual who contributes to it. In the realization of this task she employs an imaginative power and an original grasp of style which match her forceful moral vision. To Bessie Head, South Africa typifies power in its ugliest form, and the revulsion with which she views such a moral wasteland has aroused in her a special reverence for human life and dignity. Head's characters are refugees, exiles, victims, all of whom are involved in a personal and very private odyssey of the soul from which they finally emerge regenerated, as well as spiritually and psychologically enriched. Through them she explores the limitations of women's roles, their disadvantages, and their bruised self-image while celebrating their occasional successes. Head saw herself as the paradigm of the African woman struggling against entrenched social and sexual prejudices. As an exile in Botswana she has come to know the realities of alienation, racial prejudice, rejection, and victimization.

Her first novel, When Rain Clouds Gather deals with the search for roots from different perspectives and as it affects characters of different social backgrounds, with different personal problems. In this first novel three women emerge. They bring along the usual characteristics of Bessie Head's women, who normally fall into a pattern of social abuse, emotional trauma, suffering, and
finally growth in wisdom, peace, and partial happiness. Although a very important theme in this novel is Makhaya's search for peace and stability within a harmonious social order, his destiny is tightly controlled and eventually resolved by his association with the old woman, Mma Millepede and his future wife, Paulina Sebeso.

In *Maru*, Head becomes more autobiographical but manages with enough artistic distance to make the history of Margaret Cadmore, named after her British foster mother, a representative one. It portrays the intense racial prejudice and tribal politics which inform life in a Botswana village, and under which women too often become victims. The background story is that of Margaret Cadmore, a Masarwa - the Masarwa are a despised group among the Botswana people, who arrives in the village of Dilepe and becomes the centre of a controversy, not just in the school, but between two friends, both members of the royalty and both in love with her. Insults from children and adults alike fail to discomfit the heroine, since from childhood she has come to live with a feeling of being permanently unwanted by society. Eventually, the situation is resolved into her marriage to Maru rather than Moleka, whom she loves. She is therefore a passive agent in this drama of power. However, she never stops loving Moleka, to the eternal chagrin of her husband Maru.

Head assesses the Botswana woman's worth by the degree of inner strength, individuality, and drive with which she is able to rise above the brutalizing and restrictive role assigned her by an unimaginative society. The degree of humility and sincerity with which she adapts herself to a strange people and society contributes to the harmonious co-existence of all in her environment. In exploring their day-to-day activities Head does not fail to point out that quite often these women perpetuate their own problems through mental conditioning, and their acceptance of social norms and taboos and also because of unfounded inter-personal jealousies. For all, their lives are a constant struggle and movement
towards self-discovery. If there is one fact about Bessie Head that stands out in all her novels, it is her love for the Botswana people, the land of Botswana, and humanity in general. Bessie Head’s largely autobiographical novel. *A Question of Power* describes Elizabeth’s psychological derangement resulting from her abuse, neglect, and exile as a half-black, half-white woman in apartheid South Africa. The novel examines the human cost of oppressive power systems, but more important, Elizabeth’s ability to extricate herself and live affirmatively. The yawning chasm of evil that had engulfed her is negated as she finds a cooperative living situation characterized by simple human acts of compassion, acceptance, and selflessness that powerfully nurture her.

Even more significant are Elizabeth’s painstaking internal realizations regarding the psychic scaffolding required to overcome exploitation and pursue a “fuller humanity”. In *A Question of Power* Elizabeth, the protagonist embodies this principle, for her struggle against injustice is universalized. Elizabeth journeys from alienation and insanity to the realization of the insights necessary to counteract oppression and forge a remarkable victory over the powerful forces that undermine her, or anyone who suffers from oppression. Though Bessie Head’s life might be seen as somber and traumatic, her works present love and light alongside the pictures of hardship and isolation that she paints. Head uses intense imagery and vividly describes the beauty found in both human and environmental nature. She praises good as she condemns evil, and expresses her hope for peace and change with her criticism of the current political system. Head wrote that she viewed her activity as a writer as a kind of participation in the thought of the whole world. The old man at the border of South Africa called Botswana the worst tribal country in the world. Gilbert refers to Botswana as Utopia, while Dinorego calls Botswana God’s country.

Makhaya, while traveling further into the county, admits, as far as the eye could see it was only a vast expanse of sand and scrub but somehow bewitchingly
beautiful. The landscape of Botswana challenged Makhaya; it gave him a point of contrast and an attachment to the land so that he learned to treasure every green shoot that sprung up in this dry place.

Geographically, Golema Mmidi is located in the eastern part of Botswana. The eastern watershed was the most heavily overstocked and overgrazed and overpopulated part of the country. The population of 400 people scraped out their existence through subsistence farming. The novel is almost entirely set in Golema Mmidi, a village clearly a unique place in terms of other Botswana villages. The village is introduced through the residents and their occupations, by their character and their personal histories. The name of the village literally means to grow crops. There is also a fantasy element introduced with Golema Mmidi, that of Gilbert’s Utopia. This is truly bizarre belief held by Gilbert, as in reality, the village is also a poor, barren and isolated settlement with a tyrannical chief.

The idea that Makhaya could make this place his home is quickly established in the way Head describes the village. She states that Golema Mmidi consisted of individuals who had fled there to escape the tragedies of life. Makhaya settling here is further reinforced by the statement that it was one of the few areas in the country where people were permanently settled on the land. Makhaya, a refugee, has stumbled into a village full of refugees and outsiders. In this, Head reinforces her ideas about identity and community. Even those individuals who cannot live in their home country are able to feel a sense of belonging and community. Botswana, a country two years shy of independence from Britain, is supposed to offer solace to the now displaced Bessie Head on a self-imposed exile from her native South Africa. The solace is supposed to provide a new beginning for the budding writer. However, Head's departure in March of 1964 for what would later become her adoptive country was, sadly enough, an ambiguous adventure at best. On the one hand, it offers her the basis for renewed hope in humanity for which she is grateful to her adoptive country. But, on the
other hand, it ironically brings her yet again face to face with the old, recalcitrant
demons of prejudice, an encounter far more unsettling in its stark horridness of
entrance because of which the players are victims and perpetrators. At least so she
thinks. Head puts it agonizingly this way:

Botswana was a traumatic experience to me and I found the people,
initially, extremely brutal and harsh, only in the sense that I had
never encountered human ambition and greed before in a black
form, Racialism. With all my South African experience I longed to
write an enduring novel on the hideousness of racial prejudice. But I
also wanted the book to be so beautiful and so magical that I, as the
writer, would long to read and re-read it. I achieved this ambition in
an astonishing way in my second novel, Maru.... I knew the language
of racial hatred but it was an evil exclusively practiced by white
people. (Ikenna 2007:14)

Finally, Head intimates that change in Botswana will come by way of
fundamental dismantling of the apparatuses of prejudice and exclusivist, a
dismantling of a mind-set inimical to a segment of the Botswana population. It
will manifest a three stage process birth, death, and rebirth. The birth is that of the
prejudice lodged in the hearts of men, women and children. The death implies that
for a new life, a new society to emerge, this prejudicial culture has to die. The
future of Africa is a nightmare. Among the most important female authors to
emerge from postcolonial Africa, Nigerian-born Buchi Emecheta is distinguished
for her vivid descriptions of female subordination and conflicting cultural values
in modern Africa. Her best-known novels, including Second-Class Citizen, The
*Bride Price*, and *The Joys of Motherhood* expose the injustice of traditional, male-oriented African social customs that relegate women to a life of child-bearing, servitude, and victimization. Often regarded as a feminist writer, Emecheta illustrates the value of education and self-determination for aspiring young women who struggle against sexual discrimination, racism, and unhappy marital arrangements to achieve individuality and independence. While critical of patriarchal tribal culture, Emecheta's fiction evinces an abiding reverence for African heritage and folklore that reflects the divided loyalties of Africans torn between the competing claims of tradition and modernization.

Noted for her realistic characters, conversational prose style, and sociological interest, Emecheta is highly regarded for introducing an authentic female perspective into contemporary African literature. Widely recognized as a leading female voice in contemporary African literature, Emecheta has attracted international attention for her compelling depiction of the female experience in African society and, in particular, her native Nigeria. Emecheta is credited with establishing an important female presence in the previously male-dominated literature of modern Africa. Commenting of Emecheta's contribution, Eustace Palmer states that scarcely any other African novelist has succeeded in probing the female mind and displaying the female personality with such precision. Emecheta differentiates her own Afro-centric perspective from that of her Western counterparts by describing herself as “an African feminist with a small f.”

Her novel *The Joys of Motherhood* is the story of Nnu Ego whose inability to give birth to a child after her first marriage leads to the various conflicts in the novel. The story is not only that of Nnu Ego but by extension that of the problems all women encounter when they encounter delays in giving birth to children, experiencing the real joys of motherhood. When this happens, the African man is quick to involve himself in the practice of polygamy in his bid to procreate and
prove to the world that he is a man. This is where the problems of women begin. In *The Joys of Motherhood* Emecheta articulates the positive sides of African tradition as it reflects what feminism should be as far as she is concerned, a feminism that cherishes the invaluable contributions of both men and women in upholding the family as the nucleus of the larger society. Her own feminism does not see men as enemies. For her, a woman should not only submit to the wishes of a man as a father, she owes the obligation to do so to him as a husband. Buchi Emecheta wrote *The Joys of Motherhood* in 1977, by which time Nigerian independence was already seventeen years old, but the vision of progress and cooperation was a distant memory.

As Allison Drew notes: “the independence period has seen the increasing marginalization of women from economic opportunity and political participation. For instance, despite making up thirty-eight percent of the work force, only five percent of women in sub-Saharan Africa were involved in industry in the 1980s” (Drew 1995:24). This exclusion may be attributed to the ideology of early nationalist leaders. As Christopher Miller explains that in the days of colonialism and anticolonialism, it was thought that certain forms of liberation had to precede others: first racial liberation, then, eventually, perhaps, gender liberation. As the years passed, it became increasingly clear that the nature of African politics had begun to revolve around the consolidation of personal power and not the tackling of social problems while validating the importance and dignity of traditional culture, Emecheta does not paint an unproblematic picture of pre-colonial society.

Her novel illustrates the need for a new, truly postcolonial approach to the social problems facing Nigeria and Africa as a whole. Her emphasis on the exceptional challenges faced by women serves as a challenge to nationalist leaders to address the needs of women as part of the project of building a new nation. This is evident in Nnu Ego's continued poverty while her sons establish their own
independent lives. Her joy was to know that she had brought up her children who might rub shoulders one day with the great men of Nigeria. Thus, the men's advancement comes at the expense of the female characters both in the novel and society. In *The Joys of Motherhood*, Emecheta examines the traditional and colonial roots of gender inequality in African society. Colonial rule worked to reinforce pre-colonial patriarchal norms while introducing new forms of sexism and gender inequality. The colonial period saw the increasing marginalization of women from political involvement and economic autonomy, and this trend only continued in the period following independence. Emecheta's powerful novel illustrates the way in which the hybrid society that emerged as a result of the colonial encounter and colonial rule worked to the disadvantage of women.

Her narrative is also a nationalist text that emphasizes issues of gender inequality that were not addressed in the postcolonial period. Although Nigeria was the creation of European ambitions and rivalries, its peoples had their cherished history of freedom and independence before the arrival of the British. This newly created country contained a multiplicity of diverse ethnic groups which had evolved complex systems of government. The British tried to weld together these groups and territories, with such diversity of cultures and at different stages of development, into a nation.

*The Joys of Motherhood* has been called Buchi Emecheta’s most outstanding novel. Beyond exhibiting the power of characterization, manipulation of point of view and narrative method, the novel offers a sustained exploration of the African woman’s experience, a much-needed theme in current African literary discourse. Nnu Ego, the novel’s protagonist, is seen as the quintessential African woman. Her experiences and responses to her world are thus perceived as ideal representations of African women’s existence and as an indictment of a culture in which women have little control over their lives. The novel opens with a powerful
but disturbing description of its heroine, Nnu Ego. The reader is presented with
the image of a woman in despair, suffering both mental and physical agony at the
death of her first child but a second marriage. Convinced of her failure as a
mother, she decides to kill herself:

Nun Ego backed out of the room, her eyes unfocused and glazed,
looking into Vacancy.... she ran as if she would never stop. Her
baby.... her baby! Nnu Ego’s arms involuntarily went to hold her
aching breasts, more for assurance of her Motherhood than to ease
their weight. She felt the milk trickling out, wetting her bubu blouse;
and the other choking pain got heavier, nearing her throat, as if
determined to squeeze the very life out of her there and then. But,
unlike the milk, this pain could not come out, though it urged her on,
and she was running, running away from it. Yet it was inside of her.
There was only one way to rid her or it. For how would she be able
to face the world after what had happened? No, it was better not to
try. It was best to end it all this way, the only good way. (Emecheta
1979:7)

With such a portrait of Nnu Ego, her vulnerability and emotional instability
clearly evident through her physical demeanor and her mental process. Emecheta
both foregrounds her narrative and initiates the reader into interrogating the
principles that motivate her protagonist’s action.
Emcheta through her characters raises three issues in relation to the status of the woman her novel *The Slave Girl*. These three issues are: Slavery, Marriage and Possession. Slavery is Emcheta’s paramount concern in *The Slave Girl*. Her reason for exploring the theme of slavery so faithfully in this novel is to stress the point that the African woman is being treated like a slave. In other words, she is subjugated by her own people and after marriage, by her husband. Emcheta’s heroine, Ogbanje Ojebeta, is sold by her brother, Okolie, because he needs money for his coming-of-age dance. Important issues like responsibility, family ties and trust were not his worry; instead; his desire to satisfy his needs was the driving force. By implication, Emcheta is saying that the society permits Okolie to exchange his sister for money because she is a woman.

Thus, the point Emcheta is making is that the African woman is, in the hands of her family, an object for sale. After paying eight pounds for Ojebeta, Okolie now hands over his sister to Ma Palagada and she becomes Ma Palagada’s property or chattel. Objebeta on the other hand now has a new master who can use her just like any property. On account of money having been paid for her, Objebeta loses not only her identity, but also her individuality and sense of belonging. “Chiago looked helplessly at the little girl who was doing her utmost to cling on to her individuality. She did not yet know that no slave retained any identity. Whatever Identity they had was forfeited the day money was paid for them” (Emcheta 1977:74).

*The Slave Girl* is a novel that makes the suggestion that marriage as an institution is another form of enslavement. In African societies in particular, and the world over in general, marriage is considered as the crown of womanhood. For this reason, a woman without a husband is simply despised and disrespected in society. However, marriage is far from bringing about happiness. Freedom or liberation for the African Woman simply becomes a method through which the
African woman departs from one master and comes under the control of another. This is Emecheta’s concern in the novel. By and large, in portraying the condition of the African woman in this novel, Emecheta talks about slavery and relates it to the status of the woman in Africa. She makes the point that the African woman is just like a slave because she must have a master and be treated like a mere property. The suggestion is also made that the institutions of marriage is another form of enslavement. This explains why our heroine, Ojebeta, passes from Ma Palagada to a new master, Jacob. Whether as a slave or as a housewife, the African woman is subjected to the same conditions under different masters.

In *Second Class Citizen*, Buchi Emecheta talks about the identity problem of her characters after their migration to England. Like other post-colonial novels, Emecheta’s works are rooted in the contrasting senses of place and displacement. Her characters in her novel are concerned with their own personal development, or they deal with the recovery of an effective relationship. Emecheta’s characters are caught up between two worlds, to neither of which they fully belong and in the novels their sense of self has been challenged by dislocation which is the result of their migration.

Buchi Emecheta in the *Second Class Citizen* talks about her main character’s desire to go to England from Nigeria to live a better life and to secure her children’s future. In her novel, she focuses on people’s point of view about England before and after going to England. She aims at showing her readers the problems of immigrants after leaving their home-countries, and the racial prejudice they face. People, who leave their home-country and migrate to England, go through the stages of rejection, acceptance, mimicking, adaptation, integration and finally assimilation. But for the first- generation of immigrant’s assimilation does not come easily since it is quite difficult to grow out of their cultural baggage. In her novel, Emecheta reveals her characters’ adaptation problems.
7.2 A Democratic Developmental state in Africa?

The history of the post-independent African state is that of monumental democratic and developmental failures. After decades of independence, most countries on the continent are characterized by underdevelopment. The evidence for this state of underdevelopment can be found in any social and economic indicators one cares to examine. At the economic level, Africa has been marked by the dominance of the primary sector agriculture, oil and minerals, partly as a result of the inability of the African state to foster an environment for high value added economic activities, low domestic capital formation and declining direct foreign investment, foreign aid dependence, heavy indebtedness, high unemployment and the informalisation of the economies where the majority of its people live in poverty.

Consequently, at the beginning of the 21st century, Africa is unable to compete in the global economy. In fact, its marginalization has been reinforced, particularly since the 1980s. In the same vein, the majority of African countries lack basic social and physical infrastructure. As a result, most people on the continent have no access to basic services such as potable water, electricity, good sanitation, roads and healthcare. All of this is coupled with a high illiteracy rate, especially among women. The lack of access to basic medical care occurs against a backdrop of ravaging diseases; a situation which has become exacerbated with the advent of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The continent accounts for about 70% of all HIV-infected persons and AIDS-related deaths in the world. All of this is against the backdrop of the absence of a social safety net to cushion the effects of the harsh socioeconomic realities experienced by most Africans. The state of underdevelopment has been reinforced by authoritarianism, political instability, ethnic and religious conflicts and civil wars. Along the years, Africa has grown in population and decreased in wealth. Firstly, the population is expected to reach
1,320 million in 2030. This huge growth should increase political instability, ethnic strife’s and anarchy in towns. Secondly, a slowdown of oil prices is expected between 2015 and 2030. Thirdly, we have now to take in account a new driver: The Islamic surge which could affect West and Eastern Africa with the emergence of a terrorist tank. The white farmers are driven from land they have tilled for decades and their farms are divided into small plots with low productivity. Since attaining their independence, most African countries have been plagued by some form of political conflict. This has included the civil wars in Nigeria in the 1960s, Liberia in the 1990s, the Ivory Coast in the 2000s, and Angola for most of its post-independence period, the crisis in the horn of Africa including the current civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the genocide in Rwanda. The list is endless.

When the HIV epidemic began, many leaders did not recognize the plague saying that it was only a white man disease. This opinion was based on magic medicine. As a result pandemic grew up on an exponential scale. Right now, many chiefs of State worship black magic to protect themselves from opponents and misfortunes. This shadow power often implies human sacrifices. The magic background jeopardizes all the education process. Take an actual child and imagine that instead of reading and calculating, you force him to learn every day some stupid beliefs. When he is twenty years old, his intellectual capacity has waned completely. Therefore, it is not amazing that so little progress appears in Africa. This magic background has painful consequences on the economic and political field’s. In Africa, as people are constantly migrating inside their massive continent, each territory is a patchwork of ethnic groups. Instead of favouring mixed marriages, the magic background introduces taboos and separation among people living on the same territory. Unfortunately, due to the magic background, Africa today is certainly the continent where the racist’s behaviours are the most extended and it largely explains the ethnic wars and the present situation of Africa.
Slavery had existed in early times. War tribe’s prisoners were turned to slavery just like in Europe during the Roman Empire. With the Muslim conquest, a real slave trade began and never stopped. Zanzibar was the main slave market in eastern Africa. Merchants bought slaves 30$ on the coast and sold them 150$ in Zanzibar before shipping to Arabic peninsula. On the market, slaves endured flagellation to test their physical strength. The slave trade between Africa and America has been an appalling tragedy quite unique in the entire history. We can really use the word of genocide. However, Africans were deprived of political freedom even if they had never before enjoyed it. Although the colonization emancipated them from slavery, they too often supported racism, forced labor, and humiliation linked to the colonial statute.

What is more, Africans endured heavy human losses during the two world wars even if it is fair to say that they were very often volunteers and happy to fight for the mother country. Many little white expressed racism against African and behaved like thugs notably in German and Belgium colonies and in all places where Europeans farmers settled. Even the generous people could be racist. Economic development began but was oriented to satisfy the needs of the colonial power rather than those of local populations. What is more, the Europeans brought to Africa their own complicated regulations and this administrative network was going to impede the future development of these countries.

The worst legacy was the State borders inherited of the Congress of Berlin. The great powers established artificial frontiers with no respect of any linguistic, ethnic, historical and even geographical division. Borders were just traced according to the advances of each European army inside the country. This division has impeded until now the future of the region. Just imagine what should be our situation if a part of France had been put with a part of Germany in one national State and another part of France with a part of Spain in another one. It means that the frontiers inherited from Berlin were not fitted to any national construction. In
summary, colonization calls for a balanced judgment. Peace and security was its main asset but some failures were going to handicap heavily the future independence. Independently of the congress of Berlin, one of the worst failures has been the insufficient preparation to independence. The Marxist influence spoiled the education of the young African leaders.

Consequently, they implemented wrong economic policies and political dictatorships. The worst legacy of the Marxist influence relies on the idea that Dictatorship is essential in order to achieve development. Our global history module shows that the economic growth of the West was preceded by the surge of individual freedom and creativity. Of course, representative governments and universal suffrage have often been implemented in the 20th century but the freedom of consciousness appeared by the end of the 18th and was the cause of technical progress and growth. Unfortunately, most of the African governments have failed to implement the basic policies: Human rights, democratic governance, large education, property rights and free market. It means that the African under development is mainly a political problem.

Soon after independence, democracy gave way to the one party state and military rules. Since the political power meant also the cultural and economic power, each tribe only favoured its members and the conquest of power became a question of life or death. The discovery of oil boosted ethnic and religious rivalries. Young leaders just coming after independence were educated but they often established fierce dictatorships. The Marxist and progressive label covered some of the worst dictatorships such as Sekou Toure or Mengistu. On the other hand, the military officers who often took the power were poorly educated and heavily addicted to magic and secret societies. In fact, they just tried to enrich their clan through corruption and military predation. Under their rule, human rights abuses took a major importance. As a result, in some countries, one third of the
population was often forced to migrate. Collapse of communism in 1989 was a
great hope for the populations and a great threat for the dictators.

Unfortunately, the democratic process engaged through national
conferences failed in many countries. Since 1990, democracy has extended in the
world but right now Africa only counts about 7 or 8 true democracies among 47
countries. Many states use the facade of democratic elections but they do not
respect individual rights, freedom of press and so on. This trend can be observed
in Kenya, Zimbabwe and Ivory Coast. The long range cause is the slave trade. It
has stopped the development of the continent and resulted in the perpetuation of
the magic background and the bad ethics and social practices. The second cause is
the congress of Berlin with its division into artificial borders. The third cause is
the Marxist influence: It includes bad external advices, wrong theories, and human
right abuses, lack of democracy, inhumane behaviours, and corrupt practices and
so on.

About the Responsibilities, and regarding the slave trade, Europe and
America must provide Africa with compensation. We bear also a responsibility in
the Congress of Berlin. As for the Marxist influence, it came mainly from the
European universities and scholars. It means that the cure must come from the
great powers. In doing so, Europe will also act in its own interest since the present
African situation represents a threat. When a man suffers with an infested wound,
the good Doctor begins to clean the wound before giving any drugs. In our case,
we have to clean up the African wound in eliminating all the corrupted and
repressive networks that we have supported for so long. But behind all the
scenarios and the entire search for a solution, behind the pain and the anguish, is
the paramount question, are we facing birth pangs or death pangs in the present
crisis? Are we witnessing the real forces of decolonization, as the colonial
structures are decaying or collapsing? Is the colonial state being washed clean
with the blood of victims, villains and martyrs? Are the refugee’s victims of a
dying order, or are they traumatized witnesses to an epoch making rebirth?

African societies, with their strong recognition of cultural traditions, face
the deep problems that characterize a modern society, most of which are neither of
their making nor even of their wishing. African societies and their cultures have
undergone continual change as far back as history and prehistory can illumine,
and their experience of several centuries of the overwhelming economic, military,
social, and cultural power of colonial overrule has led to both changes and
stagnation. Postcolonial development strategies, well-intentioned or not, have in
many respects continued the effects of colonialism, through economic exploitation
and financial indebtedness. In addition, Africa has been used by outside powers,
especially during the cold war, as a surrogate battleground between these powers.

Most post colonial economic development has failed, owing to its been
controlled by experts who have assumed that African societies are the same as
those of industrialized nations and who are ignorant of the minute details of
African cultures, social organization, and problems of local identity and purpose
that lie below the level of nation-state. Sadly little progress has been made since
the end of colonialism toward any real improvement in the lives of the ordinary
people, instead change has been at the level of elites, who have taken charge of
modernization and benefitted from it. Nevertheless, African cultural traditions
remain strong, and they are still capable of absorbing external influences and
transforming them into a pure Democratic Republic Country.