



**AFRICA UNITED, RENEWED AND RESURGENT:
AN URGENT PROJECT AND PROMISE**

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African Renaissance, as an urgent project and promise, has, from the beginning, always envisioned and involved four fundamental interrelated aspects: liberation, unity, development and Africa's self-conscious resumption of its rightful role as an essential contributor to the unfolding history and consciously-constructed future of humankind. This concept of self-conscious renewal and resurgence evolves, on one hand, in the deep-rooted resistance to domination and attempted historical negation by Europe. But it also emerges from thoughtful respect for African historical achievement and the models of human excellence it offers. And, of course, this conception and the commitment which accompanies it is grounded in a profound belief in African people, i.e., in their status as bearers of dignity and divinity, and their capacity to conceive and carve out of the hard rock of their daily realities varied and constantly expanding spaces of freedom, justice, development and flourishing for themselves and coming generations.

The recent symposium held in Dakar, Senegal on "The United States of Africa and the Role and Place of Africa in Global Governance" reflected and reaffirmed these essential elements with a special emphasis on unity, i.e., creating a United States of Africa. Organized by the Senegalese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the University of Cheikh Anta Diop, the 4-day symposium from 27-30 July brought together 300 intellectuals from the Continent and the Diaspora. (I was one of those invited but unfortunately was unable to attend due to problems of scheduling.) It is a continuation of "post-liberation" forums dedicated to assessing the causes of the aborted promises of the liberation struggles and dealing with issues of development and defense against exploitation and oppression of

Africa and its people by internal and external forces.

Initiative for this symposium for intellectuals throughout the world African community on the subject of African unity belongs to President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal who has been active in both pushing for African unity and stressing the role and responsibility of Continental and Diasporan intellectuals and professionals in this. At the Dakar symposium in his opening address Pres. Wade again called on intellectuals to play a central role in establishing the intellectual and practical base for a United States of Africa and in advising "leaders on how to move the Continental forward".

He called for courage and realism and said that various possible forms of integration of the Continent should be considered, "from the most direct, radical and complete or 'maximalist' form to the orderly and gradual progress or primary federations". Here he was trying to include both Osagyefo Kwame Nkrumah's stress on the urgent need to unite and Mwalimu Julius Nyerere's more incremental and cautious approach to Continental unity. Also, he stressed the need for unity not only for development, but also "to protect (Africa's) sovereign independence and be heard in the international political order".

Professor Molefi Kete Asante of Temple University, a respected scholar and pan-Africanist throughout the Continent and the world African community and a leader of the Diasporan delegation, delivered one of the most engaging and well-received interventions. His focus was creating a basis for a "continental civic commitment to African nationhood and national spirit" which will facilitate and give foundation to Continental integration. Asante posed seven

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elements essential to the cultivation and creation of “a continental civil society”, i.e., a United States of Africa.

The first requirement is “an active and genuine promotion of African culture”. He stated that “a promotion of African culture from the simplest institutions to the most complex must be our objective every day of our lives”. Asante is concerned here with cultivating an expansive African identity rooted in the best ideas and practices, “values and virtues” of our various African cultures to create an overarching unity in diversity. His intention is to create a framework and foundation for an African Renaissance rooted in the values, vision and concrete daily realities of African people.

Secondly, Asante argues for the essentiality of a profound “attachment to the subject-place of Africans”. By this he means understanding and approaching Africans as the subject and center of their own history and culture, and rejecting any attempts to place them “on the periphery of world history”. It also means creating educational institutions and enterprises “where the central narrative from the past to the future is Africa”.

Thirdly, a continental civic society requires “an active defense of African cultural elements as historically valid” in the varied disciplines of human knowledge and practice. Here Asante stresses a *sankofan* approach to the past of remembering and reaching back to retrieve and “interrogate the most ancient documents as well as epics, myths and narratives of Africa to discover the wisdom we have inherited” and using it as a resource for building a renewed and resurgent Africa.

Also he called for “an uncompromising commitment to lexical refinement that eliminates pejoratives about Africans”. This means a thrust “to reshape language so that all

negativity gathered for five hundred years against Africa and Africans is destroyed”, i.e., hut, jungle, primitive, etc. Here Kawaïda’s stress on a language and logic of liberation finds root and relevance.

Furthermore, Asante poses the need for “a powerful imperative from innovative research sources to revise the collective text of African people”. It will be, he suggests, a text that reveals the strength, adaptive vitality, durability and ethical grounding of African people. In addition, “There must be a massive acceptance of Africa as “the nation that embraces diversity”. This means for Asante, “that there should be respect for the historic ancestors of every ethnic and language group that defines itself as African...and no superior or inferior ethnic communities in Africa” or the Diaspora. Moreover, “every person in a continental African state must have his or her dignity protected; this should be the fundamental core of the political and juridical system”.

Finally, Prof. Asante argues that “There must be an openness to include all the achievements and contributions of African people as the collective gift of Africa to humanity”. This means that “the African nation in its continental dimension is simply the core of a much larger African world”. And thus, those of us outside the Continent must see ourselves and be seen and engaged as an integral part of and full participant in the history and unfolding project and promise of Africa for itself and the world. Asante closes with a compelling call reminiscent of Marcus and Amy Garvey and those who have dared take African history and our future in their own hands, saying “we are on the road to resurrect Africa in the image (and interest) of Africa. Hurry! Onward! Upward!”

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