

May 24, 2011 was Independence Day. A day full of excitement the weeks and days, which proceeded Independence Day, was historic. There were symposiums by different ministries and regional administrators that gave in-depth analysis of the achievements and the set goals of the plan. Carnivals, musical shows, bazaars, and art shows were some of the highlights of the festivities. My most favored part of the anniversary was the Asmara stadium show and UMOJA South Africa musical group. UMOJA's performance reminded me of my teenage political life where I took part in the demonstration in support of South African blacks against apartheid. The African National Congress (ANC) fought against apartheid while the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF) fought against Ethiopian colonialism. There were historical and political differences between the ANC and EPLF. Nevertheless, both fronts fought for Independence and Social Justice; Social Justice means that those who have been on the underside of history must see that there is a qualitative difference between repression and freedom. And for them, freedom translates into having a supply of clean water, having electricity on tap; being able to live in a decent home and having a good job; to be able to send your children to school and have accessible health care.

Naomi Klein in her book titled "The Shock Doctrine" states that, In South Africa, the largest economy on the African continent, it seemed that some people believed that freedom included the right to reclaim and redistribute their oppressor's ill-gotten gains. "The historic Kliptown gathering which brought out the Freedom Charter reads, "The People Shall Govern". The young radicals when they were asked what they were fighting against, they answered, "Apartheid and Racism"; asked what they were fighting for, many replied "The Freedom Charter" polices that exploded both inequality and crime to such degree that South Africa's divide is now closer to Beverly Hills and Baghdad. Politically people can vote majority rule is in place.

Yet economically, South Africa has surpassed Brazil as the most unequally society in the world. ANC negotiation on the economy and owner ship failed; whites when it came to safeguarding the wealth they had amassed under apartheid, they would not give up so easily. It portrayed key sector of economic decision-making – such as trade policy and the central bank –as "technical" or "administrative".

Then it used a wide new policy tools- international trade agreements, innovation in constitutional law and structural adjustment programs- to hand control of those power centers to supposedly impartial experts, economist and officials from the IMF, the World Bank, GATT and the National party. It was a strategy of balkanization, not of the country's geography but its economy. Make Democracy work failed the central bank and the treasury would be run by their old apartheid bosses, it meant "everything would be lost in terms of economic transformation" Since 1994 people living on less than a \$1.00 a day has doubled from 2 to 4 million in 2006. Unemployment has increased from 23% to 48%. 1 Million People have been evicted from farms, ¼ South Africans live in shantytown without running water and electricity.

Eritrea declared its independence in 1991. With gold and abundance of high valued natural resources swirling around, there was no shortage of "carpetbaggers" coming to call. The Eritrean government treated them with high degree of skepticism. As elsewhere in Africa, suited and booted conmen brandishing their credentials swarmed over the country like bees around

honey. Based on the Golden Principle of Political and Economic independent and self-reliant free from external support and dependency. Faced with a zero economy, no viable economic institutions, no sustainable infrastructure in education, health, social services and transportation system, the government and people started in building a holistic development and economic emancipation and prosper nation.

According to Dr. Georgis T/ Mariam minister of National Development in 1991 two hundred forty-five million (\$245,000,000.00) dollars was budgeted to re-start Eritrea's economy that was devastated by war. Food security has been the priority as diverse factors converge to affect the demand for food around the World. In Eritrea, there was scarcity of mechanization, transportation, storage and exportation. Hence, Agro-Macro policy was devised, irrigation based agriculture was introduced to increase output and create surplus in cereal crops, vegetables, fruits, and livestock. Dams, micro-dams and water diversion schemes were constructed. Since 1991 in Gash Barka region alone 67,754 hectares of land has been cultivated 35,500 hectares by irrigation, 20,980- splash irrigation 2,257 hectares uses spray irrigation and 1,100 hectares use drip irrigation. Agro-industries have also been put in place case in point; Aligidier cotton farm, Elabered agro-industry, Mersanni, Afhimbole, Gerset, the Fancos and Ad Omer agro-industry. The Red Sea coastline is rich in fish, lobster, shrimp, crab and anchovies. Annually 80,000 tons of fish and 50,000 tones of Anchovies and Sardines can be harvested for export. In-addition there is abundant of fresh water fish for domestic consumption. Poultry farm, honey farms and animal husbandry are new industry. The animal husbandry at Alebu is one set to export meat and hide. In the last 15 years, the Eritrean Agriculture has emerged from subsistence farming to a modern agro-business. The violent manner of Ethiopian colonialism in 1991 left Eritrea even more poorly equipped than most in terms of human capital to function as an independent country. Realizing the need and education being the fundamental right that all nationals are entitled to, the government built elementary, junior and secondary schools in even the most remote areas assuring access and equity as well as quality and relevance of education. Four hundred ninety five (495) early learning centers, nomadic educational center and boarding schools have been constructed with a very high price to gain balanced education system.

Seven colleges were constructed to provide higher education. Since 2004, 8,000 students have graduated from these colleges. Three thousand six hundred forty (3,640) students from Eritrean Institute of Technology, 1,946 from School of Business, 1136 from college of Agriculture, 561 from college of Marine Science, 532 schools of Arts, 207 School of Health and 32 from Medical School. Eritrea is certified amongst the first African countries for its endeavors on health management system. Skilful management system with well-equipped health care services is one from which Eritrea is best renowned. Health for all is the motto in Eritrea. The goal is to provide sustainable and excellent health care that is effective, efficient, accessible, acceptable and affordable to all citizens. Access to health care is available in an area of 10 kilometers radius. 75% of the population lives in an area of 5 kilometers from a health center. HIV/AIDS is the lowest in Sub-Sahara Africa 90% of children receive the necessary vaccination. Since Independence five referral hospitals, 28 hospitals, 56 health centers and 256 health stations have opened for services and established 259 drug outlets, 28 pharmacies, 28 drug shops and 203 drug vendors. This is an increase of 180% in health services since 1991. Furthermore, in 2003, Arotta School of Medicine and in 2005, College of Health science were inaugurated and

have since graduated 5,404 health professionals 40% percent of these professionals are women. Due to these health institutions Doctors and nurses to population ratio has increased by more than 100%. In 1991, Doctor to population ratio was 1: 50,500 in 2010 it is 1: 20,000.

In short Eritrea in the last 15 years have eradicated communicable and non-communicable diseases i.e. Malaria, Polio, Small pox and many other. Has lowered infant mortality rate and is providing good health services in all corners of the country. Eritrea has been prioritizing improved water sanitation in order to alleviate people's living standard water reservoirs, embankments have now reserved good amount of water, and 95% of the urban and 78% of the rural area now have clean water. Social services are based on rights and needs to assure social justice. Social welfare programs are available to orphans, disabled, parents and children of Martyrs and people with no means of survival. There are 28,000 licensed foster homes to care for 70,000 orphans. Over 500,000,000 Nakfa has been paid to Martyrs family. Since 1991, transportation coverage has reached 65% of the population. Every city has an inter-urban linkage for transport. Bus routes have increased to 215. There are 1,175 new buses to serve over 20 million passengers per year. Eritrea has become an international success story in terms of post conflict reconstruction and economic progress. Freedom should not be taken for granted, it is the demands and aspiration of present and future generation towards its promise of peace, justice and prosperity.