

Nakfa: Finding Answers To Challenges

Written by Daniel S.

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Some places and some events have more significance in the history of nations. In Eritrea that place is Nakfa. Nakfa was, physically and symbolically, the core of the Eritrean struggle for liberation. It is the only town that never went back to the hands of enemy once liberated on March 23 1977. Just as was declared at that moment, the liberation of Nakfa was a revolutionary victory that determined the future of the struggle of the Eritrean people, both on the ground and in the hearts and minds of the people.

Nakfa is a place about which many has chanted; a legend that will always burn inside the heart of every Eritrean.

“Flmawit ade nay moral nay tesfa,
nay mebaeta awet fetsimu zey-halfa...”

Indeed Nakfa was the pioneer mother of morale and hope and the founding victory of our struggle for liberation. When we mention the history of our armed struggle, our people’s steadfastness, our brave fighters, and our front, the name that conspicuously forms their integral part is our own Nakfa. It is impossible to mention all that needs to be mentioned about Nakfa in this article. Indeed, it is not unusual to see even fighters who spent most of their younger days in the Nakfa trenches be continuously amazed by events that happened there. How, then, can we say enough about such a place. Instead, let’s just reiterate the oft-repeated words and speak more on the relevance and the need to remember the history of Nakfa, and the history of our country in general.

In a time of immense challenge, many often have sought for remedy from the past. Though there is quite enough to learn about the world today, it has been found wise that we should still look at history. To put it simply and plainly the knowing and study of history is essential for every person. Because the world is more complicated and diverse than words can ever tell and it needs practical wisdom to deal with it, which can only be fostered by being familiar with history. This wisdom is what’s called knowing oneself: knowing your potential, your resources, your advantages and disadvantages, knowing what you are capable of and all culminating in the above word, practical wisdom.

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And the only way to know our-selves is by knowing how we re-semble and how we differ from others. In other words, acquaint-ance with the past is the only way to such self-knowledge.

Without individual memory one literally loses his or her identity and would not know how to act when encountering others. Well, history is our collective memory, which is carefully codified and critically revised to make us social; its loss entails a similar consequence.

Memory, indeed, makes us hu-mans. And these shared ideas and ideals with others form all sorts of different human groups. The point here is that each such group acts as it does largely because of shared ideas and beliefs about the past and about what the past, as understood and interpreted by the group, tells about the present and the probable future. As such, it can both make us wiser and more sensible humans in all aspects of our lives.

All the above bookish and rather theoretical explanations are given to make one good point. As we are in the week of the celebration of a major historical event, the 35th an-iversary of the liberation of Na-kfa, its good to stop for a while and look back to our history and appre-ciate and strive to understand what we've been able to accomplish so far. We should make sense out of our history and have to get across the idea that we have to know who we were if we are to know who we are and where we are heading. Only when we see ourselves through this perspective can we be able to un-derstand and be better equipped to overcome any challenges. Look-ing at the history of Nakfa and en-counter powerful commitments to ideas and ideals, like devotion for what one believe in, sacrifices for one's people to mention few among many of our own people's history; puts our personal commit-ment to our own ideals into a new perspective.

We often hear about what the difficult and dangerous time we live in. And it is very difficult, very dan-gerous and very uncertain; it has al-ways been. And this nation of ours has been through darker times.

The history of Nakfa attests to this fact. But it also stands as a grand testimony that the values of Nakfa, namely devotion to your people, steadfastness in your prin-ciples, great fortitude and courage in the face of immense challenge, commitment to the national cause, clear vision, and camaraderie, can all prevail to any challenges ahead. In Nakfa, these values forge an al-liance with a cause that is just and the people of Eritrea made miracles and wonders.

Understanding and appreciating this history is the ultimate guaran-tee we have as people and nation; failing at that, we lose the answer to the present and future.

"Anyone who closes his eyes to the past is blind to the present." And as John Henerick Clarke put it, "History tells a people where they are and what they are, most importantly history tells the people where they still must go and what they still must be."

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Only an understanding with our entire history, and even the entire human adventure on earth, allows us to fully appreciate and make sense of the contemporary reality. Otherwise, surprises and frustrating failures are sure to be every day encounters.