

Positive Revolution

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This speech was delivered on June 15, 2008 in Tigrigna language at the Party Candidates Conference held in Australia. This is the English translation of the speech. You can find the Tigrigna speech http://www.nharnet.com/June_2008/Haile_Gebru_Speech_June1708.pdf

Introduction

I see a new light lit up, and it seems no power of darkness will control or put out this new light. Moreover, I consider myself lucky to be part of this new sparkling light because there is nothing worse in societal life than to defend and preserve darkness.

ELF was first to lit up the torch of liberating Eritrea from the darkness of colonial power; it was the first to send the tremors of fear to the colonial system. At this time, ELF-RC has taken a bold initiative to conclude its own history, paving the way for a new party, and carrying out a new and peaceful democratic torch. Of course, the repressive government in Eritrea whose power is marked by violence and darkness will panic by this move, a move that will beacon peace and democracy in Eritrea.

Thanks to both ELF-RC leadership and its members for their relentless positive struggle and visionary thinking, the new and positive thinking has been sown. Such positive thinking and hope will play a role in changing Eritrea's political life, which has been dominated by decades of negative thinking, practices, and relationships. Undoubtedly, the result of this all will lay down the foundation of sustainable peace and democracy for our people.

Also, thanks to the members of the Joint Party Formation Commission and party candidates. History is on the making because of their unyielding efforts. Their contribution has made the process of the establishing the new party more active and successful. Soon, the mandate of the commission will end as the founding congress of the new party is approaching its dead line.

Today, my presentation focuses on ideas and views that began to develop during the course of our party formation process. And I hope my presentation will encourage discussions. My presentation does not constitute formulating policies of the new party that is in the process. Rather it only aims to generate ideas that would aid in developing the policies of the party. Yes, different views and ideas will continue to carry the same weight until the eve of the founding congress. However, the actual mandate of formulating party policy falls under the responsibility of the members of the founding congress of the new party. Now, allow me to begin on the subject of our discussions.

Why Positive Revolution

We need change. Nevertheless, the change we need is not the typical one. We say this because the political problem of our country is atypical one. Our problem cannot be fixed by amending few things or reforming other things; our problems are profound and deep-rooted. Therefore, the change we need entails, the one Dr. Gebremeskel, the commission vice chairperson, recently echoed, "*A fundamental change.*" This is because our negative form of thinking, thoughts, relationships, and practices necessitate a fundamental change; our negative and inactive state of politics requires a fundamental change. It is in this spirit that the name positive revolution seems appropriate and more fitting to our situation.

It is our dream that the party we are about to establish is poised for change, but positive change. We want to establish a party that frees itself from negative thinking and prepares itself for positive change. We need to establish a party capable of freeing our people from the negative thinking and prepare them

for positive change. It is our aim that the new party will play a role both in raising the dignity of our people and in mobilizing their resources in the fight against repression in our country.

1. Peaceful and Democratic Struggle

Our draft political program states that *"The objective of the party is to build a prosperous country that upholds the unity, integrity and sovereignty of the people and the nation where peace and justice prevail under a democratic constitution in a country that fully respects international treaties and agreement."* We must follow a peaceful and democratic resistance in order to achieve the preceding aims. We believe such aims cannot be achieved through violence and force. Hence, our aim for peaceful and democratic resistance emanates from such convictions.

The political environment of our country is rife with violence. We are not short of people who promote and teach such violence in our country. Thus, we do not want our party to become accessory to the school of violence, hatred, and grudge. This is not our choice. The party we are about to establish must craft a new path not only to promote the aims of peace and democratic culture but also to teach love and brotherhood over hatred and rancor; tolerance, respect, and positive over negative.

Our party will do its share in creating a peaceful and democratic sea change in our country. To be successful in this peaceful and democratic sea change, the party must be able to swim and ensure its own existence. Equally important is that in this peaceful and democratic sea change, competitors must be peaceful and capable of conducting peaceful competition. Yet, such peaceful struggle cannot succeed unless we shift our thinking, our way of doing things, and our style of leadership so that it fits and becomes conducive to the struggle. By teaching ourselves, we must teach our people how to swim in this peaceful and democratic sea change. In addition, the peaceful and democratic sea change must inspire and teach our youth who are the victim of hatred, rancor, and ideals of militarism imposed upon them by the repressive regime for the last seventeen years.

Yet, such type of struggle is not without price. There are alligators that can inflict harm in this peaceful and democratic sea change. Hence, we must defend ourselves and mitigate the danger by acquiring new skills and knowledge. Once we have acquired the necessary skills and knowledge to defend ourselves, we should also put ourselves on notice not to misuse those skills and slip into becoming alligators ourselves. Of course, we have to teach our people and youth the existence of alligators; we also have to teach them how to acquire the necessary skills to defend themselves. In addition, we must also be heedful of the danger of creating other small and large alligators. Moreover, we can also gain more knowledge on how to control alligators from the Australian alligator hunter, the late Steve Orwen.

The Womb that Has Become the History of Violent Dictators

Our history is a history of violence. For example, prior to the advent of colonial powers to our region, the region had witnessed powerful feudal systems that used violence as a means of achieving their goals. In a similar way, after Italy established its colony in Eritrea, it embarked on using Eritrean people for its violent aims and practices. For example, conscripting thousands of young Eritreans and using them to promote and sow its violent practices was the mark of the empire. The Italian empire perpetuated not only violent wars and actions for its imperial enterprises but also engaged in spreading practices that humiliated and degraded the people of Eritrea, Libya, and Ethiopia. The sad of all is that we have now a regime in Eritrea that follows the footsteps of Italian colonial culture and uses thousands of Eritrean youth in its campaign for blackmailing, hatred, and undermining its own patriots and neighbors.

Yes, Eritreans had a period of peaceful and democratic struggle following the defeat of Italian empire. This was the time when Eritrea saw a flourishing political parties and free press followed by the establishment of Eritrean parliament and constitution. However, the slowly developing democratic institutions and freedoms of Eritrean people were soon violently crushed by Ethiopia.

Having left with nothing Eritreans had no option but to use force and remove Ethiopian occupation from their country. We had to bleed ourselves in order to remove the bloodsucking tick from our backs. Hence, the birth of Eritrean armed struggle followed. It was a just cause to wage armed struggle against foreign occupation. As is known, our convictions to liberate Eritrea were conveyed by a combination of slogans and principles that called for violent actions against our occupiers. This, too, was just. However, trying to use them out of their historical context and value and particularly in post independence Eritrea, they can lead us to dangerous and violent behavior. For example, consider the following slogans that refer to violent actions and practices:

1. Peace is gained out of the barrel of a gun
2. War is the continuation and the highest form of politics and
3. Violence for violence and thorns for thorns...etc

Again, the preceding slogans, if taken out of their proper relative interpretation, they can lead us to dangerous behavior. They must be understood in the context within which they were used. What do these slogans and statement represent?

1. A barrel of a gun is a firearm with bullets that instantly kills human being as soon as it is discharged. Therefore, a barrel of a gun is not an instrument of peace. Attempting to promote peace through the sheer belief on guns can only push us to a bloodshed that we may never be able to stop or extricate ourselves from it.
2. Even viewing war exclusively as a continuation as well as the highest form of a political struggle does not refrain one from engaging in or using violent actions.
3. All the characteristics of violent actions: if violence for violence; thorns for thorns, and fire-by-fire perceived in their absolute meaning, we might wind up unable to discern what is violence and what is not violence.

For this reason, it is imperative we assess the shortcomings of those slogans used during the liberation era, so that they do not govern our present situation as a guiding principle.

As stated in the preceding pages, it was a just cause to wage an armed struggle. However, the violence used to overcome the colonial aggression went beyond its intended objectives. It affected our attitude. We have become different. With guns at our possession, we gained strength. The strength of the armed struggle raised the morale of our people and terrorized our enemy. On the other hand, we also used the arms and forces we commanded not only against our enemy but also against our people. We intimidated, disrespected, and violated the rights of our people. In addition, the arms we carried not only undermined the pride and dignity of our people but also employed in needless civil wars that claimed the lives of many innocent Eritrean patriots and freedom fighters.

Even now, the negative mindset we created during the armed struggle is still with us; we have not adequately addressed it. Once we exposed ourselves to arms and use of force, it became hard to shift our thinking away from or to get out of it. Starting from our leadership style to the style of organizing to the process of doing things are nothing but reflection of militaristic behaviors and practices. We have not changed the culture that views guns as the panacea for all our political problems. Even those who have not had the opportunity to carry guns seem to be imbued by the spirit of guns. As a result, we now have locked-in ourselves in a culture prone to distortion, inflexibility, violence, and uncompromising, which undermines the power of democratic and persuasive discourse in our present interactions. At times, it seems very hard to hold a simple conversation among ourselves. Our entire public discourse seems to follow the rule of war: we attack, we defend, we ambush, we retreat – and then we regroup and set out again to defend the same old agenda.

We hardly step back, look upon ourselves, and conduct self-assessment. Nor do we question our mistakes and our uncompromising standpoints. We disregard change and renewal in our politics. Largely, we stick to our deep-seated old habits, thinking, practices, and relationships without knowing where those old habits are leading us. As a result, the way we carry out our works and actions for the most part suffer creativity and imaginative ideas: all the same and monotonous. Our relationship has become so narrow that it began to lose its public character. In short, our politics is headed down hill; and to continue on this same direction represents a political suicide. Therefore, we must free ourselves from this unhealthy situation and aim at bringing new life into our politics by taking bold steps. However, prior to working on the new initiatives and steps, it is imperative that we assertively assess both our armed struggle experience and our current state of affairs.

Nevertheless, while we assess our past, we should not rush into condemning, undermining, and placing harsh judgment on our history. Nor do we have to dismiss it as if it is completely unworthy. Condemnation and judgment blinds us from seeing the facts as they are clearly. The purpose of assessing our experience is to recognize understand, learn, and study our shortcomings on one hand and under which circumstance they had occurred on the other. After all, whether it is bad or good, if it were not for our history, we would not be here now. So, let us not condemn our history. Let us consider our history, as a history that enabled us to climb to the top of the mountain. Once on the top of the mountain, let us also trace back the route we just had taken to climb the mountain. It is possible to see a better route that we could have taken to climb the mountain. And let us assume that we just found out that there was indeed a better route to the mountain. Still we should not undermine the significance of the first route that had landed us on the top of the mountain. The point is the ultimate purpose of evaluating our history and experience is not to condemn or pass judgment on it but to learn from it and prevent the same mistake and history from repeating itself.

Now, following the above illustrations and after looking into our past, we find rigid and uncompromising policy that developed after we armed ourselves with guns; and that policy states "Eritrean field cannot accommodate more than one organization." Such policy may have come into existence based on two accounts:

1. One was the concern or fear over having many armed organizations and the likelihood of civil war and bloodshed occurring.
2. The second was exclusive control of Eritrean field by one organization over the objection and fear of diversity of opinions and ideas.

Without delving into the details, the policy of 'exclusive control by one organization' at the time may have seemed sound. However, the policy was soon put to test after the split occurred. The policy that advocated for 'exclusive control of Eritrean field by one organization' one hand, and having separate forces armed with guns on the other, created a perfect mix for violence. The policy that we had just put in place seemingly to avoid violence and civil war turned out to be an instrument for violence. Having many groups armed with guns changed the whole dynamics of peace and reconciliation in the Eritrean field; we became prone to violence and hostile behavior. To understand this, consider how negotiations and unity efforts were handled and viewed by different factions in our history: and that is every time we called for unity, it would not work. The reason is this: unity and negotiations were devoid of consensus and compromising. We framed the principle of unity to fit one-sided proposals, interpretations, and solutions. For example, when unity negotiations did not fit the interpretations of one side or one group, it would fall apart. When some factions or groups disagreed, they would soon be accused of working against unity or negotiation. We went through a lot of condemnations and justifications.

More badly, those who chose to form their own splinter groups had known very well the consequences that would follow if they were to violate the policy that states, "Eritrean field cannot accommodate more than one organization." In fact, some of them were signatories of the policy. The fact they decided to split was a sign of their readiness for an armed hostility. In addition, acquiring better weapons in addition

to securing reliable economic assistance may have hardened the determination of some of the breakaway factions to use force. Hence, the chance of bringing peaceful and democratic negotiation between the forces had soon become remote. This was further complicated by the lack of positive thinking and good leadership. In short, the prevailing circumstances then in the field were not conducive for unity, peace, and negotiation. The principle of unity found no real expression in the vocabulary of the various groups.

Our history is full of surprises. For example, those who had advocated earlier for one organization overtime shifted their position and recognized the existence of multiple organizations in Eritrea. On the other hand, those who had opposed the 'exclusive control of Eritrean field by one organization' reversed their position and supported one organization in Eritrea. They supported not only one organization but also soon used every opportunity to maximize their dominations across the Eritrean political spectrum. It is also ironic to see others who for a long time preached and stood against breakaways and splits reversed their positions and became the masterminds of splinters and breakaways. As a result, we are now faced with a sad situation where our politics are headed in the wrong directions. Overtime, the misguided policies and mistakes followed by our leaders for decades threw our people into confusion and disappointments. Everything seemed bleak; Eritrean people could not see determinable differences between all members of Eritrean organizations. Eritrean people could not find hope. Nor did they find an exclusive reason to support one organization over another: the attitude is they are all the same.

Overall, the political problems we have in post independence Eritrea are all manifestations of the violent mindset and ill-defined political ideology carried over from the armed struggle. In fact, those who had followed the internal political struggle of Eritrea, they would not have mistaken to predict the type of regime we have now. Therefore, the rise of the present dictatorship to power in Eritrea is the result of the violent and negative mindset we nurtured throughout our armed struggle.

It is impossible for our party to achieve new thing without assessing and critising the violent concept upon which the ill-defined negative political ideology is based. It is impossible to introduce democratic culture before our party conclusively brings to rest the negative armed struggle experiences in our thinking, the negative qualities in our leadership, the intolerable relationship we have to one another as well as the negative actions and practices we inherited. Hence, this is the most important thing that we should not compromise. If we failed to introduce new democratic culture, it would mean we would expose our new initiative to danger.

Nowadays, our politics is fixated on Isayas and Isayas is taking advantage of it. However, it is important to realize that Isays is the result of one particular political era in our history. Hence, our preoccupation with Isayas and the belief that his removal would end Eritrea's problem is a grave mistake to say the least. Additionally, taking such belief to the heart is also to underestimate the deeper problem of both our people and our country.

Again, the prevailing understanding does not suggest that removing Isayas from power might bring another Isayas in our country. Our party should not entertain such flawed understanding. Our party should aim at removing not only Isayas but also at the political womb that gave birth to Isayas. We have to start with firm belief that the removal of Isayas does not lead to the rising of another Isayas. We have to make this clear in the minds of Eritrean people. In other words, the dictatorial political thinking and its institutions, its organizational structure and the style of its command and operation, and the style of its leadership and relationships are all our party must uproot. Unless our party addresses such questions courageously, one cannot say that our party is poised to bring new political thinking to Eritrea. To make it clear: unless our party adequately analyzes and exposes all those questions mentioned, it would be hard to fight the conditions that create the political and organizational system of dictatorships. In other words, failing to tackle these problems would mean creating favorable ground for future dictatorship.

Primarily, dictatorship and violence are ideas. And we must admit that we have a culture and history that glorifies violence as well as feeds the womb of dictatorship. Nothing will succeed unless our party struggles to render the womb of dictatorship as unproductive as a barren of land. It does not really count

much singing and chanting democracy. What matters most is to defeat the ideas and thinking that feed dictatorship, and all institutions that support it. In order to do this, our party must first free itself from all practices and ideas of dictatorship.

The Eritrean Dictatorship Regime is the Main Obstacle in achieving our Aims/Goals

To reiterate one more time, our draft political program states, *"The objective of the party is to build a prosperous country that upholds the unity, integrity and sovereignty of the people and the nation where peace and justice prevail under a democratic constitution in a country that fully respects international treaties and agreements."* First, to achieve these aims, we must follow peaceful and democratic means of struggle.

At this time, the main obstacle that stands in the way of achieving our aims is the current repressive and violent regime in Eritrea. Without removing the regime, we cannot achieve our aims. But the fact the regime is violent should not force us to change from the course of peaceful and democratic form of struggle we follow. Therefore, we will use peaceful and democratic means to remove the violent and obstacle regime in our country. Yet, while waging peaceful and democratic form of struggle, the regime might sometimes engage us in a violent conflict that is not our choice. If situation like this happens, we might engage in actions purely aimed at defending ourselves. Again, such action is nothing but temporary and isolated circumstance that does not have any bearing on the fundamental principle of the struggle we follow.

Furthermore, we must not fall to the wrong understanding or assumption and conclude that violence is fought and defeated by violence. Deciding to use violent means is simply fighting against the single most powerful institution of the regime: the army. No doubt, in such violent war those who die would not be the few elite who make up the dictatorial regime, but our forcibly conscripted Eritrean youth. We must recognize that the interest of Eritrean youth is not in the violent wars of the dictatorship regime but in the change and peaceful struggle that we strive to bring.

Nevertheless, choosing nonviolent means must clearly state the following essential characteristics: the meaning of the concept and idea, how it works and achieves its goals, how we understand the struggle it involves. Additionally, we must make it clear that choosing nonviolent method is not a concept that carries the definition or the condition of submission or surrender. The aim is clear. Nor do we believe that the dictatorial regime will voluntarily choose to give up its power or remove its institutions that support it. We must defeat the regime and its institutions. What are the steps and strategies we employ to defeat it?

Positive Revolution and Popular Uprising

Positive revolution is not a state of wasting time and pointing fingers at the weaknesses of the dictatorial regime. It is rather to expose the weaknesses of the regime and at the same time demonstrate that you are better than the regime by producing concrete and practical outcomes. In addition, Positive revolution focuses and defeats not only the dictatorial regime but also envisions how to build future Eritrea. Positive revolution does not put building future Eritrea at the back burner until after the removal of the dictatorship. Instead, it engages our people both in building the nation and in intensifying the progress of civil disobedience against the regime simultaneously. Similarly, building a nation requires developing positive ideas and concepts in our society, which would help our people to participate in building their future country. Among other things, our party should involve Eritrean experts and scholars to undertake vast researches and studies on how to develop new approaches and ideas that would help the process of building the nation.

Yes, we believe the present regime is the greatest obstacle to nation building. Still, centering our strategy on the mere removal of the regime without considering the rest of the obstacles we have in our society is not reassuring for the future nation building. Hence, the meaning of positive revolution involves more than destroying the present regime. It includes removing the negative relationship, unworkable political practices, and wrong attitudes we hold against one another in addition to getting rid of the wrong

thinking and practices... etc we developed over the years. These are the other obstacles in addition to the present regime itself. The idea; then, is we cannot decisively fight the present regime unless we first challenge our own weaknesses. Nor can we be resolute enough to change the regime before we change ourselves. Below are some strategies on how to fight the dictatorial regime. This list is by no means complete or definitive. The party will have a well-researched and detailed strategy as events unfold and circumstances change.

1. Our weak state of practices, thinking, relationships, and leadership qualities has allowed the dictatorship regime to prolong its stay in power. Taking steps to untangle ourselves from such weaknesses not only makes the opposition more effective but also brings new hopes to our people. In addition, working on confronting our weaknesses is important because it restores our people's trust and hope on one hand and presents an alternative to our people on the other. One of the biggest obstacles following mistrust and suspicion is restoring the trust. We must restore the trust of our people.
2. Political organizations that have the same programs and believe on peaceful and democratic struggle must work towards the highest form of unity – merge into one organization. Achieving unity of organizations that have the same programs can eliminate duplication of programs, which often creates political confusion in our people's understanding of the various political groups. Hence, unity of organizations clearly provides our people a chance to see the differences that exist amongst various programs.
3. Organizations that believe on peaceful and democratic struggle but hold different programs must work effectively on those agreeable items.
4. Develop strong relationship with neighboring countries that believe on peace and democracy.
5. Establish strong relationship with international forces that believe on peace and democracy.
6. Mobilize and wage open campaign inside Eritrea, aiming at both the public and the Eritrean defense forces. Yet, the party should allow clandestine membership for those who wish to conceal their identity. We believe the interest of both Eritrean people and Eritrean defense forces is in the removal of the dictatorial regime; hence, the party should focus on how to bring change by delegitimizing the rule of the dictatorship and eroding the source of its support, particularly the loyalty of the Eritrean defense forces.
7. Mobilize Eritreans in the Diaspora to stand up against the regime; and allow open recruitment and clandestine membership in our party.

In sum, the peaceful resistance must infiltrate and at the same time employ covert actions to make the institutional pillars of the regime ineffective and nonfunctional. Using such method overtime develops public confidence and readiness for waging a decisive popular uprising against the dictator. To follow such method might seem a long journey. It is not. Unlike the strategy that depends on using arms, which leads to a protracted war and destruction, the preceding strategy entirely draws its source of support from the people. Importantly, this strategy enables the dictator's own institutions to stand against it; it paves the way for the majority of people under repression to mobilize and struggle for change. The truth is the majority of people have a lot of stake and interest in defeating the repressive regime. This method is not passive. Nor is it submissive. It is active method but it requires deep commitment and steadfast faith.

Again, positive revolution is primarily to struggle and overcome your weaknesses while struggling to use all resources to expose the weaknesses of dictatorial regimes. Positive revolution is a struggle for peace while exposing the violent nature of dictators. It is to infuse peaceful and clandestine operations into the system and turn the main pillars of dictators to stand for peace and change. Overall, positive revolution is

a process that transforms the struggle of peaceful and democratic struggle to popular uprising by undertaking a series of civil disobedience.

2. Which Ideology is better to follow?

A political party is an association of people that strives to promote certain political programs and practices on basis of specific ideology. As this is true with any political party, our party is no different. It is no accident then many people are asking us to articulate our ideology clearly. However, for a long time now, we have operated within an atmosphere of negative political domination that never allows constructive and civilized political debate. Our inability to deal with and address issues is attributable to the destructive old habits and agendas. Such state of politics primarily made us to fixate and subscribe to ideologies we have known for so long on the one hand, and have prevented us from engaging in a constructive and progressive political discourse on the other. Even, the ideological crisis that the world is engaged in escaped our notice. In addition, it is not easy to set free ourselves if attracted to dark thoughts that do not allow seeing the light of reason. For example, there are people who expect us to subscribe to certain ideologies even though such ideologies are widely proven impractical. Evidently, this shows we have not given up our old habits, ideas, and views. Again, this further demonstrates our failure to get out of the old boxes and develop new ones. Certainly, our continued blind commitment to old ideologies will lead us nowhere. It is time for us to look past unworkable politics and ideologies and put the special circumstances of our country into consideration. Yet, if we continue to legitimize the old ways of doing things, the road to the development of better alternatives and ideas will suffer greatly. The way forward is to understand the realistic situation of our society as a foundation in contrast to the prevailing ideologies in our contemporary world. Studying the prevailing ideologies of our world would enable us to use the positive side of it on one hand and help us to learn from the negative aspect of it on the other. This course of action in addition to thinking out of the box would put us in a position to develop new ideas that could benefit both our people and our nation.

According to some writers, *"political ideology is defined as a collective ideas, principles, core beliefs and ethics, of social movements, institutions, classes or large groups, which defines how society operates on basis of some political and cultural blue print in a given societal organization. The biggest concern of political ideology is how to allocate power and to what purpose it should be used."*

As the preceding statements demonstrate, there are different ideologies in society. It is also true that there are ideological struggles if there are different ideologies. It is within this context that questions such as what differentiates one party from another party deserves an answer. The questions are partially answered in the foregoing quote in that the differentiation is based on the *political and cultural blue print* parties develop and follow to organize a given society. The blue print not only identifies and measures their beliefs but also show how they *allocate power* and whose interest they advocate and defend. Yet, program alone does not tell us much about the type of ideologies political parties follow; there are other additional attributes by which political parties differentiate and identify themselves: for example, slogans, symbols, internal practices, culture... etc are crucial distinctions between political parties. If these characteristics and distinctions were adequately studied, it would not be hard to understand why one political party's ideology is different from another political party.

With the above general explanation, now let us have a quick glance at our history. Prior to the arrival of Italian empire in Eritrea, our region was under feudal political systems that run by powerful monarchs and aristocrats. Feudal system was based on a socio-political religion that gave enormous authority to aristocrats over the people. For example, emperor *Yohannes* of Ethiopia and *Mahddists* of Sudan had exploited religion to expand and sustain their feudal rule. However, all this changed to some degree with arrival of Italian empire in Eritrea, in which liberal views began to take roots on one hand and the decline of political religion on the other. Such development of liberal views created religious tolerance among different segments of our society. Even, after Italian empire ended in Eritrea, Eritreans continued to exercise free political movements, albeit mixed with various political views. On one hand, we had liberal political views and on the other politics influenced by religion.

In the same way, the lack of a well-defined ideology was also evident at the beginning of Eritrean armed struggle. Such ill-defined ideology was also responsible for the crisis that ensued in the early stages of our armed struggle. However, in later years of the armed struggle, the social ideology that had already taken root in places such as Sudan, Asmara University, and Addis Ababa University began to influence our armed struggle. Broadly speaking, the social ideology introduced not only brought a change in our political thinking but also led to the creation of clandestine political parties inside the armed struggle, namely within ELF and EPLF. However, soon the nature of the armed struggle prevented the prospect of spreading the social ideology by promoting non-transparency instead of transparency and arrogance instead of flexibility. In other words, the ideology we borrowed with the hope of helping us towards accomplishing our cause became a roadblock, making us unable to realize our goals. This is not to say it was not helpful.

Now, when we think of what ideology should we follow, we need to put two systems into considerations.

1. Capitalist system, which advocates free market economy, has achieved significant success. However, the gap between the poor and rich remain unresolved. The gap is so huge that some amasses millions worth of wealth while others do not have food for a day.
2. Socialist system, which emerged to solve the problem created by capitalism and to promote equality and prosperity in society, did not succeed. It failed because it favored planned/command economy over free market economy.

Thus, market economy is a system that undoubtedly advances the development of nations. Yet, free market economy causes unregulated wealth distribution, which in most cases lead to inequalities in society, exposing majority of people to poverty. In addition, free market allows a small group of people to amass huge wealth. Having seen both economic systems, it is incumbent upon us to formulate political and economic policies that address the inequalities that occur in free market economy. Yet, if neither the free market nor the socialist economic system achieves the economic goals of our society adequately, we must draw a new policy that benefits from the experiences of both systems and at the same time focuses on the interest and positive values of our society.

Thus, it is better for our party to pursue an open political ideology. Yet, our ideology must be tested and measured for its applicability and impact on the society. The bottom line is whatever ideas we advance; they must be accepted or rejected based on objective evaluation. We must promote transparency on our policies. If our ideas are proven unworkable, they must be studied and reanalyzed. This is an innovative way of working that frees us from arrogance and domineering. Overall, our party should function in a manner that our ideas and principles do not become obstacles themselves.

Now, how would our party be inclusive and participatory? Who would be a member? Would someone be excluded from our party because of their political views? I would say no. Our party should allow liberals, religious and others to join our party as long as they accept the fundamental objectives of the party, which is "peaceful and democratic form of struggle." The fact is religious people can teach us love and peace; liberals can teach us free market economy; and socialists can help us how to tackle poverty. Everyone will have their roles and contributions recognized in our party. The only thing we should abhor is arrogance, which I believe is a manifestation of condescension and contempt. To reiterate, we are striving to establish an inclusive party that draws up short and long-term objectives; and it will allow people with different history, beliefs, tendencies, and experiences to join it and play their roles and realize the party's fundamental objectives.

Yet, some are bewildering over our ideas; they wonder how we go about translating them into practice. However, such attitude we believe is the function of our negative culture that we all have come to know over the many years. For so long we have been exposed to choosing between black and white, avoiding anything in the middle ground. We even embraced conflict as a prerequisite or as a mother of all developments, which was never the case in our history. Such beliefs and attitudes overtime hardened our

ideas and made us intolerable and uncompromising in our political discourse. This culture characterized by conflict not only presented obstacles in terms of finding an alternative path different from the old establishment but also in its highest form gave rise to a permanent state of conflict and persistent disharmony in our body of politics. We believe that if we stop resisting change, we would be in a position to come up with ideas and new alternatives that benefit our people.

It has been our experience not to exercise civility or tolerance whenever new ideas are presented or debated. We nurtured a culture characterized by tit for tat, retaliation, and getting even. We always hope conflicts will present us some sort of development. Well, we pursued this culture in our politics and it became a blind fate. As a rule, whenever new or positive ideas are presented, we should seek the truth and validity of the subject matter instead of opposing it. The least we should do is take the good part of it and connect it with other ideas and put into practice. But if the new ideas are proven practical, then we continue using them. On the other hand, if the ideas became impractical and unsuccessful, then we should reexamine them. The point I am driving here is that positive development is the result of extensive studies and knowledge and not the product of conflict or naïve assumptions. From this perspective, the most important culture in our party will be freedom of expression and ideas. In addition, ideas or freedoms will not be curtailed. Our party will adopt and follow a democratic system of rules of engagement for debating, expressing ideas, and developing new ideas.

The reason for open ideology is primarily to recognize the values and respect of people before identifying them as belonging to certain classes and social groupings. This is to emphasize that any ideology that does not set out with this premise cannot pass the test; it will fail. For example, if an advocate of workers wishes the demise of wealthy part of our society, if someone who favors wealthy people wishes the suffering of workers, and if someone who speaks on behalf of religion preaches hatred and grudge, then such disposition to destruction will not have a place in our party. The reason is simple: our fundamental belief is that the value of human being or the quality of being human carries more weight than anything else we believe. Our party will hold this dearly. We believe if someone feels differently, then our party might not be the right place for them. The issue of value and respect of people is inherently tied to human rights that cannot be denied by any party or individual. We believe various political views, biases, and tendencies are welcome in our party. We even welcome constructive ideas from non-members but support our cause. In fact, our party must even receive and accommodate inputs and ideas from its opponents. The point boils down to one thing: get rid of arrogance and egos from our vocabulary; recognize the values and respect of human being; and believe the right of people to voice their opinions, and allow them to be heard and be considered in the process.

Conclusion

The ever-growing ray of light is gaining momentum. We are marching forward out of the darkness by pointing to the light. No doubt, the light will win. From the negatively dominated political discourse, we see unstoppable positive idea emerging. We will march forward by focusing on our positive objective. No doubt, positive will win over negative. With this understanding, we are determined to engage in positive revolution to achieve and bring a fundamental change. Our party will remain a staunch advocate of positive revolution.

Let peace and democracy flourish

Let fundamental change succeeds

Let Eritrean people win

