OROMUMMAA:

Oromo Culture, Identity and Nationalism

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Asafa Jalata

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OROMUMMAA:
Oromo Culture, Identity and Nationalism

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Dedicated to all Oromo nationalists and supporters of the Oromo National Movement who have watered and flourished *Oromummaa* with their blood, tears, knowledge and other resources.

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Preface

This book is a collection of my nineteen selected speeches that I delivered to different Oromo and other communities, organizations, and scholarly conferences in North America between 2000 and 2007. Since these speeches were delivered at different times to different audiences, the reader observes some similar central patterns in some of the chapters. In order to maintain the originality of the speeches, I have decided not to change them. From outset I declare that I am an integral part of the process I am exploring and critiquing in this book as a member of the educated Oromo group who have been trained by and passed through alien institutions.

The central issue addressed in this book is the concept of *Oromummaa* as an Oromo cultural identity and oppressed nationalism looking at its impact on Oromo liberation and community organizations, the Oromo national movement, and political and societal unity. The book also identifies and explores the nature of Oromo political behavior and how *Oromummaa* affects Oromo politics, and why some Oromo elites in the diaspora engage in destructive behavior. Although the book demonstrates the unevenness of the development of Oromo nationalism as the result of several structural problems, the Oromo movement is currently in the process of confronting its obstacles and marching towards inevitable victory.

The book suggests some steps that Oromo individuals, communities, associations, religious institutions and political organizations must take to overcome major Oromo organizational and political problems in order to enable the Oromo nation to determine its future. It specifically suggests that developing national and global *Oromummaa* will enable the Oromo people to enhance Oromo national power by overcoming the politics of clienteles on the one hand, and the politics of exclusivist on the other. The main objective of the Oromo national struggle is to enable the Oromo people to become masters of their own fate by overcoming the oppressive power of Ethiopian colonial institutions and the Oromo collaborative class. In other words, the Oromo struggle attempts to overcome all oppressive systems that hinder the emergence of national self-determination and multinational democracy.

In addition, this book demonstrates that the Oromo national movement needs to change its approaches because of the changing condition of Oromo nationalism as well as the multiple enemies the Oromo people face on local, regional and global levels. The approaches of trial and error and common sense politics cannot take the Oromo national struggle to its desired goal. Therefore, this book specifically challenges the current Oromo political leadership to get out of their comfort zone and converse with constituents, supporters and sympathizers as a part of a process of developing public policy in a way that enables the Oromo people to become the owner

of their national movement. *Oromummaa*—Oromo national identity, culture, and nationalism—suggests that stimulating grass roots participatory activism is the only way that the entire Oromo people can be mobilized to overcome the destructive power of the Ethiopian colonial system and its Oromo collaborative class. Without building the Oromo movement on a foundation of Oromo culture, values, and traditions and without retrieving and rebuilding *Oromummaa*, it will be difficult to mobilize the nation to take a national political action. So I invite all concerned Oromos and friends of Oromos to read this book, analyze and apply the principles of Oromummaa, and further develop them through practical action.

I thank all my audiences who listened to my speeches, asked me questions, and provided insightful comments that later helped me improve my ideas on the issues of *Oromummaa* and the Oromo national movement. Without the support of my wife, Zeituna Kalil, and my children, Beka and Kulani, this project could not be completed. Hence, they deserve my heartfelt appreciation. Beka and Kulani also provided some editorial assistance. Furthermore, I owe a debt of gratitude to Harwood D. Schaffer who read several chapters of the book and provided helpful comments and meticulous editorial assistance. I also thank Daraaraa Maatii for his editorial assistance and his commitment to contribute immensely for the establishment Oromia Publishing Company. Finally, I appreciate Tura Adam who designed the beautiful cover of this book, and Ibsa Abdi who designed the layout of the book.

Asafa Jalata
Knoxville, 2007

Chapter 1

The Concept of *Oromummaa* and Identity Formation in Contemporary Oromo Society[1]

This paper examines the essence of *Oromummaa* (Oromo culture and nationalism),[2] Oromo identity, and human agency at the personal, interpersonal[3] and collective (national)[4] levels. It specifically explains the relationship between the uneven development of *Oromummaa* and Oromo organizational problems. This paper also suggests some steps that should be taken by Oromo nationalists and activists in order to overcome the problem of uneven development of Oromo nationalism and to build an effective national political leadership, increasing the organizational capacity of Oromo society so it will be able to achieve self-determination and human liberation.

Oromummaa and Cultural Identity

Oromummaa is a complex and dynamic national and global project. As a national project and the master ideology of the Oromo national movement, *Oromummaa* enables Oromos to retrieve their cultural memories, assess the consequences of Ethiopian colonialism, give voice to their collective grievances, mobilize diverse cultural resources, interlink Oromo personal, interpersonal and collective (national) relationships, and assists in the development of Oromo-centric political strategies and tactics that can mobilize the nation for collective action empowering the people for liberation. As a global project, *Oromummaa* requires that the Oromo national movement be inclusive of all persons operating in a democratic fashion. This global *Oromummaa* enables the Oromo people to form alliances with all political forces and social movements that accept the principles of national self-determination and multinational democracy in promotion of a global humanity that is free of all forms oppression and exploitation. In other

1 Paper presented at the Mid-year Oromo Studies Association Meeting, Washington, DC, April 14, 2007. It is an integral part of the paper titled "Oromo National Political Leadership: Assessing the Past and Mapping the Future." We (Harwood Schaffer and I) published this paper in *the Journal of Oromo Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 2007.

2 *Oromummaa* as an ideology of human liberation includes the vision of an Oromo democratic state and the principles of multinational democracy in order to be emancipatory, revolutionary, democratic and inclusive.

3 In this paper the interpersonal relationship includes the range of relationships from two persons to close communities and beyond.

4 In this paper the concept of collective level is used to refer to Oromo consciousness at the national or peoplehood level and closely tied to the concept of *Oromummaa*.

words, global *Oromummaa* is based on the principles of mutual solidarity, social justice, and popular democracy.

Oromummaa as an element of culture, nationalism, and vision has the power to serve as a manifestation of the collective identity of the Oromo national movement. To date, the paltry, uneven development of *Oromummaa* is a reflection of the low level of political consciousness and the lack of political cohesiveness in contemporary Oromo society. Against this background, the basis of *Oromummaa* must be built on overarching principles that are embedded within Oromo traditions and culture and, at the same time, have universal relevance for all oppressed peoples. Oromummaa as an egalitarian, democratic vision must create mutual solidarity and cooperation among all people who accept the principles of self-determination and multinational democracy in order to remain congruent with its underlying values.

The main foundations of *Oromummaa* are individual and collective freedom, justice, popular democracy, and human liberation. These foundations are built on the concept of saffu (moral and ethical order) and are enshrined in *gada* principles. Although in recent years many Oromos have become adherents of Christianity and Islam, the concept of *Waqaa* (God) still lies at the heart of Oromo tradition and culture, which shapes the basis of *Oromumma*a. In Oromo tradition, *Waqaa* is the creator of the universe and the source of all life. The universe created by Waqaa contains within itself a sense of order and balance that is manifested in human society. Although *Oromummaa* emerges from Oromo cultural and historical foundations, it goes beyond culture and history in providing a liberative narrative for the future of the Oromo nation as well as the future of other oppressed peoples, particularly those who suffer under the Ethiopian Empire.

After Oromos were colonized and until *Oromummaa* emerged, the self-identity of individuals as being Oromo primarily remained on the personal and group levels since they were denied opportunities to form national institutions. Oromo identity was targeted for destruction and the colonial administrative regions that were established to suppress the Oromo people and exploit their resources were glorified and institutionalized. As a result, Oromo relational identities have been localized and not strongly connected to the collective identity of *Oromummaa*.

For more than a century, Oromos have been separated from one another and prevented from exchanging goods and information. They have been exposed to different cultures (i.e., languages, customs, values, etc.) and religions and adopted some of their elements. Consequently, today there are Oromo elites who have internalized these externally imposed regional or religious identities because of their low level of political consciousness or political opportunism and lack of clear understanding of *Oromummaa*. Oromo relational identities include extended families and clan families. Historically and culturally speaking, Oromo clans and clan families never had clear geopolitical boundaries among themselves. Consequently, there are clans in Oromo society that have the same name in southern, central, northern, western and eastern Oromia. For example, there are Jarso, Gida, Karayu, Galan, Nole and Jiru clans all over Oromia.

The Ethiopian colonial system and borrowed cultural and religious identities were imposed on Oromos creating regional and religious boundaries. Consequently, there were times when Christian Oromos identified themselves more with Habashas and Muslim Oromos more with Arabs, Adares, and Somalis than they were with other Oromos. Under these conditions, Oromo personal identities, such as religion replaced Oromoness, central Oromo values, and core

Oromo self-schemas. Colonial rulers saw Oromoness as a source of raw material that was ready to be transformed into other identities. In the colonial process, millions of Oromos lost their identities and became attached to other peoples. Consequently, the number of Amharas, Tigres, Adares, Gurages, and Somalis in Oromia has increased at the cost of the Oromo population. The Oromo self was attacked and distorted by Ethiopian colonial institutions.

While Oromos fighting against colonial institutions, the restoration and development of the Oromo self through cognitive liberation and Oromo-centric values must be the order of the day. The attack on Oromo selves at personal, interpersonal and collective-levels has undermined the self-confidence of some Oromo individuals by creating an inferiority complex within them. Without the emancipation of Oromo individuals from this inferiority complex and without overcoming the ignorance and the worldviews that their enemies imposed on them, Oromos cannot have the self-confidence necessary to facilitate individual liberation and Oromo emancipation.

The development of the Oromo self and relational self are critical to developing a collective-level Oromo identity. The collective-level Oromo identity involves complex social dynamics that are based on the organizational culture or on collective norms. Because of internal cultural crises and external oppressive institutions, Oromo collective norms or organizational culture is at rudimentary level at this historical moment. Consequently, some comrades in an Oromo organization do not see themselves as members of a team, and they engage in undermining members within their team through gossiping, spreading rumors, or promoting themselves while denigrating their comrades in his or her absence. Such individuals do not have a strong organizational culture or norm. Such individual Oromo activists or leaders could not develop a core of Oromo leadership that is required in building a strong liberation organization.

Unity, Diversity and Nationalism

While recognizing the unity of Oromo peoplehood, one must also realize the existence of diversity in Oromo society. The lack of open dialogue among Oromo nationalists, political leaders, activists, and ordinary citizens on the issue of religious differences and/or problems of colonial regional identities has provided opportunities for profiteers of the continued subjugation of the Oromo people. These profiteers have employed a divide and conquer strategy by exploiting religious and regional differences among the Oromo people. Since Turks, Arabs, Habashas and the Europeans imposed both Islam and Christianity on Oromos while at the same time suppressing indigenous Oromo religion in order to psychologically control and dominate them, Oromo nationalists must encourage an open dialogue among adherents of indigenous Oromo religion, Islam and Christianity. Through this approach, a common understanding of what it means to be an Oromo and the positive role religion and ethics can play in Oromo society could be reached. *Oromummaa* celebrates the positive elements of all religious beliefs among the Oromo.

Since Oromos are a diverse and heterogeneous people, the exploration of the concept of diversity is an essential element of *Oromummaa*. The concept of diversity applies to Oromo cultural, religious, political, professional, class, and gender divisions. As S.M. Buechler notes, "one critical intervening process which must occur to get from oppression to resistance is the social construction of a collective identity which unites a significant segment of the movement's

potential constituency."[5] Collective identities are not automatically given, but they are "essential outcomes of the mobilization process and crucial prerequisite to movement success."[6] Oromo nationalists can only reach a common understanding of Oromoness through open, critical, honest dialogue and debate. Fears, suspicions, misunderstandings and hopes or aspirations of Oromo individuals and groups should be discussed by invoking Oromo cultural memory and democratic principles.

Through such discussions, a single standard that respects the dignity and inalienable human rights of all persons with respect to political, social, and economic interaction should be established for all Oromos. Oromo personal and social identities can be fully released and mobilized for collective actions if Oromos recognize that they can freely start to shape their future aspirations or possibilities without discrimination. This is only possible through developing an Oromo identity on personal and collective levels that is broader and more inclusive than gender, class, clan, family, region, and religion. Basing this understanding on *Oromummaa* eliminates differences that may emerge because of religious plurality. Similarly, because colonial administrative regions were invented by the Ethiopian colonial structure, they do not correspond to Oromo group or regional identities. As a result the political diversity of Oromo society can and should transcend regional identities based on the boundaries of colonial regions.

Political diversity exists in Oromo society to the extent that individuals and national political organizations have serious ideological, political, and strategic differences. And, it is the acceptance of this diversity that provides the basis for the establishment of a truly democratic, egalitarian Oromo society. At present, the various Oromo liberation organizations are not separated by clear ideological, political and strategic differences. The (1) lack of political experience; (2) borrowed cultures, religions, and political practices; (3) the abandonment of the Oromo democratic heritage of consensus building; (4) the low level of *Oromummaa*; (5) the existence of political opportunism; and (6) a lack of open dialogue and conversation have all contributed to political fragmentation in a context that does not value ideological, political and strategic differences, viewing alternative ideas as a threat to unity rather than a resource that reflects strength.

Oromo political problems have emerged primarily from attitudes, behavior and perceptions that have been shaped by a culture that valued domination and exploitation and have seen diversity and equality as threats to the colonial institutions most Oromos passed through. These problems still play a significant role in undermining *Oromummaa* and the organizational capacity of the Oromo national movement. The behavior and political practices of Oromo elites and leaders of Oromo institutions in the diaspora, such as churches and mosques, associations, and political and community organizations, demonstrate that the impact of the ideology of domination and control that was imparted by Ethiopian colonial and neo-colonial institutions and organizations is far-reaching. Despite the fact that Oromos are proud of their democratic tradition, their behavior and practices in politics, religion, and community affairs indicate that they have learned more from Habashas and Oromo chiefs than from the *gada* system of democracy.

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5 S. M. Buechler, "Beyond Resource Mobilization? Emerging Trends in Social Movement Theory," *The Sociological Quarterly*, 34/2, 1993, pp. 228.

6 *Ibid*.

While the social and cultural construction of the Oromo collective identity is an ongoing process, this process cannot be completed without the recognition that Oromo society is composed of a set of diverse and heterogeneous individuals and groups with a wide variety of cultural and economic experiences. Hence, Oromo nationalists need to recognize and value the diversity and unity of the Oromo people because "people who participate in collective action do so only when such action resonates with both an individual and a collective identity that makes such action meaningful."[7]

In every society, personal and social identities are flexible. Similarly, Oromo self-identity exists at the personal, interpersonal, and collective levels with this confederation of identity being continuously shaped by Oromo historical and cultural memory, current conditions and hopes and aspirations for the future. According to Robert G. Lord and Douglas J. Brown, the self "is believed to be a system or a confederation of self-schemas that are derived from past experience.... In essence, the self is a collection of small, relatively independent processing units that are elicited in different contexts and each of which has specific cognitive, emotional, motivational, and behavioral consequences."[8]

Every Oromo has an internally focused self and an externally focused social self. Lord and Brown define the self as "an overarching knowledge structure that organizes memory and behavior. This structure includes many trait-like schemas that organize social and self-perceptions in specific relations. It also includes script-like structures that help translate contextual cues into self-consistent goals and behaviors."[9] The Oromo social self emerges from the interplay between intimate personal relations and less personal relations. The former comprise the interpersonal or relational identity and the latter are a collective identity. The relational-level identity is based on perceptions or views of others about an individual. Thus, individual Oromos have knowledge of themselves from their personal viewpoints as well as knowledge from the perspective of significant others and larger social groups. The concept of individual self emerges from complex conditions that reflect past and present experiences and future possibilities.

Some Oromos are more familiar with their personal and relational selves than they are with their Oromo collective self, because their level of *Oromummaa* is rudimentary. These Oromo individuals have intimate relations with their family members, friends, and local communities. These interpersonal and close relations foster helping, nurturing, and caring relationships. Without developing these micro-relationships into the macro-relationship of Oromummaa, the building of Oromo national organizational capacity is illusive. Organizing Oromos requires learning about the multiplicity and flexibility of Oromo identities and fashioning from them a collective identity that encompasses the vast majority of the Oromo populace. This process can be facilitated by an Oromo political leadership that is willing to develop an understanding of the breadth of the diversity of Oromo society by looking for those personal and relational identities that can be used to construct an Oromo collective identity based on expanded *Oromummaa*.

7*Ibid*, P. 328.

8 Robert G. Lord and Douglas Brown, *Leadership Processes and Followers Self-Identity*, (Mahwal, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associate, Inc., 2004), p. 8.

9 *Ibid*. p. 14.

Political Leadership and Nationalism

Activist political leaders must be teachers and effective communicators imbued with an egalitarian spirit. In addition, they must be effective listeners and students. Only such a leadership can stimulate the development of Oromo identity at the personal, interpersonal and collective levels simultaneously.

Change starts with individuals who are both leaders and followers. Culture, collective grievances, and visions connect leaders and followers in oppressed society like the Oromo. Consequently, to be effective, the Oromo political leadership must be guided by Oromo-centric cardinal values and principles that reflect honesty, fairness, single standard, equality and democracy to develop *Oromummaa*. According to Robert G. Lord and Douglas Brown, "a critical task for leaders may be to construct group identities for followers that are both appealing and consistent with a leader's goals. Indeed, this is a critical aspect of political leadership. Effective political leaders do not simply take context and identity as given, but actively construct both in a way that reconfigures the social world."[10]

The political leadership of Oromo society needs to understand the concept and essence of the changing selves of Oromos. These self-concepts include cognitive, psychological and behavioral activities of Oromo individuals. Several scholars define leadership in terms of activities, relationships, and strategic choices that are packaged into policies to mobilize and organize a category of people to achieve defined objectives. Leadership as an activity involves intellectual directives and organizing activities. As intellectuals, political leaders develop theoretical, ideological and organizing visions to identify and solve political and social problems. Leadership is an ongoing conversation involving all persons along the leadership-followership continuum. Through this dialogical relationship, speakers become listeners, and listeners become speakers in a transformative way. In this process, effective leaders balance their "leading" and "led" selves through interactive and conversational relations. Through this dialogue, some followers may emerge as leaders or take on some leadership roles.

A constructive dialogue creates mutual understanding and agreement within and between leaders and followers within an organization or a movement. An effective conversation among leaders and followers can help in the process of developing strategic innovations from diverse perspectives and experiences and in finding new solutions for existing problems. Plans of actions that emerge from participants' specific knowledge and experiences have more chances to be successful than plans imposed by leaders. The creativity of leadership/followership depends upon the openness and willingness of those in their relative leadership/followership roles to learn new skills to help them gain the expertise necessary for developing new political visions, policies, and strategies.

This expertise can then be used to build and maintain political cohesion, to take actions contingent on time and place, and to continually renew political institutions or organizations. In effective organizations and movements, leadership is practiced at all levels and locations by formally designated leaders and informal networks of leaders who involve in backroom strategy political work; "Leadership teams with higher strategic capacity are more diversely networked,

10 Lord and Brown, *ibid*, p. 24.

and conduct regular, open and authoritative deliberations with varied constituencies, in which they root their accountability."[11]

Responsibilities of leaders are guiding the constituent community in the struggle for organizational survival, policy achievement, and the acquisition of power by building expertise, developing internal cohesion, and by securing aid from supporters, sympathizers and others. Effective political leaders are social technicians who can develop activity-patterns to find practical solutions for identified problems by proposing appropriate forms of action in a specific time frame. Creative and influential leaders understand the importance of the division and the specialization of labor, the delegation of tasks to experts or specialists, and how those activities increase efficiency and productivity within the organization.[12] Visionary, pragmatic and democratic political leaders create new possibilities in history by acting as agents of social change.

Leaders with cognitive and/or behavioral deficiencies cannot develop effective ideologies, build networks, develop intermediate leadership or "bridge leaders", and are afraid of delegating authority to specialized bodies or individuals.[13] Self-centered or autocratic leaders prevent the development of competent and confident teams of leadership that are interconnected through bridge leaders both vertically and horizontally. Instead, such leaders would like to surround themselves with sycophants and the avoidance of reliable or accurate feedback on their activities.

Just as the introduction of new ideas and innovations invigorates an organization, maintaining stability prevents the organization from facing chaos and disorder. The performance of leaders is determined by human agency as well as objective factors. The characteristics of individual leaders and their followers, such as understanding complex reality, persuasive capacity, the ability to build effective team players, and the determination and courage to take well thought out actions are elements of a human agency. However, individual leaders and their teams cannot accomplish everything they want since objective factors may limit their actions.

Without challenging anarchism and passivism among the Oromo populace and the exclusivist political tendency of the leadership, the Oromo nationalist movement cannot search "for combinations of forms of organization and leadership which are practically compatible with larger struggles for popular self-emancipation."[14] The brutality of the Ethiopian state, the clandestine aspect of the Oromo liberation struggle, and the vanguard mentality of the leadership, have arrested the continued development of an open, democratic, and consultative leadership rooted in the *gada* system. This condition has allowed the existence of the exclusivist leadership approach on one side and the fragmentation and multiplication of the leadership on the other. The centralizing and decentralizing tendencies of the leadership in the Oromo national movement demonstrate these contradictory processes.

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11 Colin Barker, Alan Johnson and Michael Lavalette, "Leadership Matters: An Introduction," *Leadership and Social Movements*, edited by Colin Barker, Alan Johnson and Michael Lavalette, (Manchester: Manchester University press, 2001), p. 19.

12 Morris P. Fiorina and Kenneth A. Shepsle, "Formal Theories of Leadership: Agents, Agenda Setters, and Entrepreneurs," *Leadership & Politics*, edited by Bryan D. Jones, (Lawrence, Knsasas: University Press of Kansas, 1989), pp. 18-19.

13 Colin Barker, Alan Johnson and Michael Lavalette, *ibid*, p. 5.

14 Colin Barker, "Robert Michels and the 'Cruel Game,'" *Leadership and Social Movemnts*, *ibid*, p. 43.

Oromo nationalists need to speak up and struggle to develop leadership for self-emancipation through facilitating the integration of "leading" and "led" selves of the Oromo political leadership. Without (1) changing the wholesale adoption of non-Oromo ideologies and approaches, (2) building internal cohesion by developing *Oromummaa* on the individual, relational and collective levels, and (3) fully mobilizing Oromo human and economic resources, the Oromo political leadership will continue to face more crises and may eventually become a political liability. An Oromo national political leadership that moves from an initial reliance on a narrow political circle and borrowed political ideologies and practices and embraces Oromo-centric democratic values will be able to develop different forms of leadership in Oromo society that make the dynamic connection between the values of Oromo society and its organizational structure.

The Oromo political leadership should be pressured to speak with the Oromo people and listen as well, allowing the Oromo community at-large to engage in the process of self-emancipation by participating in and owning their national movement. According to Alan Johnson, "Self-emancipation is a political process in which the oppressed [groups] author their own liberation through popular struggles which are educational, producing a cognitive liberation... [facilitating] the defeat of their oppressors."[15] The process of self-emancipation is only possible by building *Oromummaa* and organizational capacity as means of mobilizing all Oromos to establish self-confidence, consciousness, self-organization, and self-emancipation.

The Oromo National Movement and its Organizational Capacity

Collective grievances, the Oromo language and history, the historical memory of the *gada* system and other forms of Oromo culture, and the hope for liberation have helped in maintaining fragmented connections among various Oromo groups. The emergence of Oromo nationalism from underground to the public sphere in the 1990s allowed some Oromos to openly declare their *Oromummaa* without clearly realizing the connection among the personal and interpersonal selves and the Oromo collectivity. This articulation occurred without strong national institutions and organizational capacity that can cultivate and develop *Oromummaa* through transcending the political and religious barriers that undermine the collective identity of the Oromo people.

Oromo nationalists cannot build effective national institutions and organizations without taking Oromo personal, interpersonal and collective-level Oromo selves to a new level. The Oromo collective self develops through relations with one another. Good interpersonal relations and good treatment of one another create a sense of security, confidence, openness, belonging, strong and effective bonds, willingness to admit and deal with mistakes and increase commitment to political objectives and organizations. The individuality of an Oromo can be observed and examined in relation to the concept of self which is linked to psychological processes and outcomes, such as motivation, affection, self-management, information processing, interpersonal relations, commitment, dignity and self-respect, self-preservation and so forth.

The Oromo self-concept as an extensive knowledge structure contains all pieces of information on self that an individual Oromo internalizes in his or her value systems. Every

15 Alan Johnson, "Self-emancipation and Leadership: The Case of Martin Luther King," *Leadership and Social Movements*, *ibid*, p. 96.

Oromo has a self-schema or a cognitive schema that organizes both perceptional and behavioral information. An individual's self-schema can be easily captured by accessible knowledge that comes to mind quickly to evaluate information on any issue. The Oromo self is the central point at which personality, cognitive schema and social psychology meet. The Oromo self consists both personal or individual and social identities. The former is based on an individual's comparison of oneself to other individuals and reveals one's own uniqueness and the latter are based on self-definition in relation to others or through group membership.

Without recognizing and confronting these issues and problems at all levels, the Oromo movement cannot build its organizational capacity. The social experiment of exploring and understanding the internal selves at individual, relational and collective selves must start with Oromo elites who aspire to organize and lead the Oromo people. Since the ideological and organizational tools that Oromo elites have borrowed from other cultures have reached their maximum limit of capacities and cannot move the Oromo movement forward in the quest for achieving self-determination and human liberation, Oromo nationalists must develop their approaches based on *Oromummaa* and *gada* democratic heritage. Oromo elites have passed through schools that were designed to domesticate or "civilize" them and to mold them into intermediaries between the Oromo people and those who dominated and exploited them. They have been disconnected from their history, culture, language, and worldviews, and have been trained by foreign educational and religious institutions that glorified the culture, history, language and religion of others. Consequently, most Oromo elites do not adequately understand Oromo history, culture and worldview.

When Oromo nationalists first emerged they rejected the worldviews and institutions of the colonizers turning instead to Marxism-Leninism in their fight against the Ethiopian colonial system. In conjunction with other liberation forces they participated in the overthrow of the Haile Selassie regime only to be excluded from participation in the government by the military regime that ruled Ethiopia from 1974 to 1991. Under the military strongman Mengistu Haile Mariam, the domination and suppression of the Oromos continued. In the end, Marxism-Leninism did not provide a liberative base for the Oromo people.

Although the Oromo movement achieved many important things in the past, the organizational and ideological tools that it has used did not provide an effective basis for organizing the Oromo people and enabling them to defend themselves from their enemies. At present, Oromo human and material resources remain scattered, and are used by their enemies who are committing hidden genocide on them. It is in this context that Oromo leaders turned to Oromo traditions and culture to seek the basis of a discourse that could bring full liberation to the Oromo people.

The main goal of Oromo nationalism is to facilitate the creation of state that will defend the interests of Oromos on individual, group and national levels. Oromos can achieve sovereignty by themselves or with other peoples. Without establishing the Oromo political unity from within, Oromos cannot reestablish their sovereignty from without. When most Oromos internalize *Oromummaa*, they will be able to unite and speak with one voice and take collective action both in Oromia and worldwide. As a result, the global community will be forced to pay attention to their demands for self-determination and democracy. While establishing internal political unity among the Oromo people, it is also necessary to critically address the question of *Oromummaa* in relation to the global context. Global *Oromummaa* is not an exclusivist concept for Oromos only, but is based on the principles of fairness, justice, mutual benefit, and

multinational democracy for all people everywhere. According to Edward Said "to testify to a history of oppression is necessary, but it is not sufficient unless history is redirected into an intellectual process and universalized to include all sufferers."[16]

The failure of Oromo nationalists and political leaders to frame issues and formulate policies that promote actions based on *Oromummaa* has given ample opportunity for free-riders, political opportunists, enemy agents, and confused individuals and groups to claim that they are nationalists and leaders who represent their localities, religious groups, or nominal organizations. While using Oromo slogans, such individuals or groups attack and attempt to discredit those individuals and organizations that have accomplished many things for the Oromo cause. Oromo national institutions and organizational capacity will develop when true nationalists, intellectuals and political leaders start to fully embrace *Oromummaa* and work openly and courageously through formulating practical domestic and foreign policies that can be implemented by a broad-based Oromo movement.

Although Oromos can learn a lot from other forms of leadership, without developing the style of leadership that is Oromo-centric, Oromo nationalists will be unable to build enduring national institutions and organizations. The building of the Oromo national organizational capacity is only possible when *Oromummaa* is fully developed and can be packaged into a generally accepted vision that energizes the entire Oromo nation into well-organized and coordinated collective action at the personal, interpersonal and national levels. The full development of Oromummaa facilitates the mobilization of Oromo individuals and diverse groups enabling them to overcome political confusion and take the necessary concrete cultural and political actions essential for liberation from psychological dehumanization and colonial oppression.

Conclusion

Without critically and deeply understanding *Oromummaa*, Oromos cannot build strong Oromo social and political institutions and organizations that are needed to take the Oromo nation to a "promised land." It is only if the Oromo people and leaders adequately understand the concept of *Oromummaa* and engage in fully deploying Oromo cultural and political institutions both in the Diaspora and at home through a centralized and organized channel, that the Oromo people will be able to challenge Ethiopian colonial institutions in Oromia and gain international recognition and support for the Oromo cause.

The major problem facing Oromo society at this historical juncture is the lack of organizational capacity that has the ability to mobilize all Oromo human and material resources under one national leadership to confront both the internal and external enemies of the Oromo nation. The first step in dealing with this major challenge is to develop and unleash the power of Oromo individuals on both the personal and collective levels by clearly understanding the concepts of *Oromummaa* and diversity. By openly and honestly addressing in the political arena the issues that Oromos discuss in informal settings like the issues of religious plurality and/or regional difference, and nature of Oromia once it achieves national self-determination, Oromos will transform *Oromummaa* from an intellectual concept to a uniting force for liberation and justice. This discussion should be based on a single standard for all Oromos and all people, and

16 Edward Said, "The Politics of Knowledge," in *Race, Identity and Representation in Education*, edited by Cameron McCarthy and Warren Crichlow, (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 313.

should include the principles of *saffu* (ethical and moral order), human decency, and the rule of law.

If Oromos honestly and courageously recognize their strengths and weaknesses as individuals, groups, organizations, and society and build upon their strengths while reducing or eliminating their weaknesses, they can emerge victorious from the destructive alien cultural, ideological, and political nightmares they have faced in the past. The Oromo leadership needs to recognize the inadequacies of existing organizations, visions, and strategies and need to plan and develop new strategies and approaches that will unleash the potential of an Oromo society based on *Oromummaa*. Oromos cannot liberate themselves without overcoming the organizational deficiencies and leadership problems that emerged prior to and after the colonization of their people. While recognizing the negative legacy of portions of historical Oromo political systems, the Oromo political leadership should practically incorporate the positive aspects of *gada* into their organizational norms and culture.

Oromo organizational culture and norms cannot be changed without transforming Oromo self-concepts at the individual, interpersonal and collective levels. The Oromo political leadership as well as the population as a whole must adopt these changes. Members of the Oromo political leadership need to be effective political leaders who can engage in the processes of cognitive liberation and self-emancipation; they must struggle to develop in themselves and their followers' personal leadership skills, such as self-control, discipline, ability to communicate, and a deep sense of social obligation or commitment. Effective leaders have the capacity to understand that the oppressed are capable of self-change through educational and popular participation in struggle. They believe in a democratic conversation and they recognize that both leaders and followers possess both "leading" and "led" selves.

The combination of the processes of cognitive liberation and self-emancipation along with liberation knowledge or expertise, technological capability or skills, modern organizational rules and codes, and courage and determination are needed to build an effective and strong political leadership. The Oromo leadership cannot find all these qualities from a few individuals. Therefore, the leadership needs to blend the experiences of political leadership and public intellectuals with the knowledge and commitment of the general populace to develop a liberative society based on *Oromummaa* principles. Leadership networks and chains should engage in a conversation with the Oromo people to develop a new organizational culture that facilitates the institutionalization of Oromo democratic experiences in ways that are compatible with contemporary technological and political conditions. Oromo nationalists, public intellectuals, and the Oromo people as a whole must challenge the tendency of exclusivist leadership and political anarchism and fragmentation and reinvent the Oromo national political leadership that is anchored in *Oromummaa* and *gada*.

Chapter 2

The Need for a Paradigm Shift in the Oromo Movement:

Research, Policy and Conscious Political Choice[17]

Both external and internal factors have facilitated the existence of a wide gap between our aspirations, as Oromo people, for national self-determination and democracy and what we have achieved in our national struggle. Since the negative impact of colonialism on Oromo society has been thoroughly explained by several scholars, I will focus on problems within Oromo society and explain how our intellectual and cultural potential have been chained by the legacy of Ethiopian colonialism and the internalization of victimization. In this paper, I argue that the legacy of Ethiopian colonialism and the consequence of the internalization of victimization have prevented us from realizing our political and human potential, perpetuating organizational deficits in Oromo society both at home and abroad. Although external forces shook our social infrastructure—underlying cultural foundation in the form of political, economic, cultural, and religious institutions—we now have the potential to rebuild our institutions despite the repressive actions of the Ethiopian government in Oromia. This is particularly true in the diaspora where we are beyond the control of the Ethiopian state and it is only the legacy of Ethiopian colonialism and the internalization of victimization that have dwarfed our vision and potential. To overcome this legacy, I will identify some the problems of the Oromo national struggle proposing some concrete steps that Oromo activists and scholars need to take in order to unleash the Oromo intellectual and cultural potential in order to liberate the Oromo people and achieve human dignity.

Ethiopian colonialism created an inferiority complex within some of us by conditioning us to believe that we were a people with no intellectual heritage and no culture. Through ongoing interference in our social institutions and the unrelenting attempt to replace Oromo social structures and institutions with Habasha ones, contemporary Oromo society faces significant individual, institutional, and organizational deficits. These deficits were further exacerbated by the creation of an Oromo collaborator class that pitted one Oromo against another. As a result,

17 Presented at "The Oromo National Forum: Meeting of the Minds," December 15-17, 2000 at University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

we lack confidence in ourselves and in our society. We even try to be somebody else through ideological, cultural, and religious means. Because of all these problems, we, as individuals and groups, engage in various forms of impression management to claim that we are knowledgeable about everything, when in reality we are afraid to take a concrete action, to take a risk in relation to the Oromo national struggle. This lack of confidence and trust within Oromo society has prevented us from engaging in open communication and dialogue with one another. Without open communication, trust, and the recognition of one's weaknesses and strengths, it is difficult to build a coherent leadership on the micro- and macro-levels and rebuild the social infrastructure of Oromo society.

We are proud of our democratic, egalitarian legacy known as *gada*, but we rarely openly and honestly discuss our individual, organizational, and societal weaknesses. We prefer to raise issues informally without critically assessing them. We tend to believe in rumors and allow ourselves to be influenced by them. We fear new ideas and approaches. We like to talk about our rights without recognizing our responsibilities. We rarely recognize that there are no rights without responsibilities. We would like to have a strong national organization, but we do not like to be organized effectively and efficiently, taking responsibility for achieving our collective goals. If we are organized, we are reluctant to hold leadership positions. We love to complain and talk about what others have done to us. We don't see ourselves as political actors who can change our unfortunate condition. We admire those who talk a lot and engage in impression management, while doing little or nothing. We harshly criticize those who try to do something for their nation without recognizing their positive contributions. Most of us want to look good by putting down those who have tried their best.

If we are committed to regaining our national sovereignty and political freedom, we must abandon narrow political thinking and divisions. We must develop a sophisticated and mature political outlook that will enable us to take collective national action. We need to recognize that the modern world and its imperial interstate system favor people who have a strong army and a strong state to protect them. In another words, the world only protects those who organize themselves effectively and efficiently to defend themselves by first overcoming their minor differences and then, by articulating their interests at a national level. We should know that the world is harsh and cruel; it belongs to those who can seriously take care of their own business. The world does not care for victims who do little more than complain.

Although we Oromo have numerical strength and rich resources, we have been unable transform our human and economic potential into material force and political strength because of the uneven development of our sense of nationalism and the legacy of Ethiopian colonial domination. This legacy has an ongoing negative impact on our political behavior on the individual, community, organizational, and societal level. In fact, because of our numerical strength, economic resources, and our ineffectiveness in defending our national interest, our enemies have targeted us for destruction. The destruction of Oromo social organizations and cultural institutions, such as the *gada* and *moti* systems, and *qallu* institutions has left most of us in an ideological and cultural vacuum. Furthermore, we have been unable to reorganize the cultural elements that we have borrowed from others in the service of our national interest.

Although Ethiopian colonialism and global imperialism have placed our people in the current predicament, I argue that, at this historical moment, our failure as political activists, intellectuals, organizations, and society to recognize the defects of our own political behavior and our own inability to take pragmatic political and organizational action have allowed the

perpetuation of the dehumanization of our people. In fact, because of the internalization of our oppression and a marked lack of self-confidence, some Oromos contribute to the dehumanization of Oromo society intentionally or unintentionally.

A few Oromo nationalists, either by sacrificing their precious lives or by dedicating themselves to the Oromo cause, have resurrected the damaged Oromo identity and transformed Oromo resistance into Oromo nationalism. As a result, today the majority of Oromos recognize their nation and their country, Oromia. After recognizing the potential of the Oromo movement, we should ask ourselves why we are unable take our destiny in our own hands. In answering this question, we should be honest with ourselves, avoid impression management and self-aggrandizement, and critically look at ourselves at the individual, group, organizational, and societal level. To consciously take control of our political destiny, we need to recognize our defects and struggle to overcome them in order to facilitate a paradigm shift in our perspective on our national movement so that we can critically understand the dynamic interplay of the Ethiopian colonial legacy and Oromo human agency. As Henry Kaiser asserts, "Choice, not chance, determines destiny."

Ethiopian colonialism reduced Oromo identity to local, regional, and religious identities by destroying pan-Oromo social, political, and cultural institutions. Most Oromos have accepted these externally imposed identities and confused them with Oromo national identity. This confusion gives witness to the uneven development of Oromo nationalism. The uneven development of Oromo nationalism is one of the great weaknesses of the Oromo national movement. While the Oromo national movement fights to dismantle Ethiopian colonialism, it also struggles to transform our nationalism from fragmented identities to a full sense of Oromoness through raising our political consciousness and facilitating our cognitive liberation. However, we activists and scholars have yet to contribute enough to raise Oromo political consciousness and develop cognitive liberation. As a result, the level of Oromo political consciousness and cognitive liberation is still rudimentary. Consequently, the infrastructure of Oromo society is dysfunctional and weak; the infrastructure of Oromo society in the form of institutions and organizations barely functions.

It is under these conditions that the ideologically, culturally, and materially ill equipped Oromo activists and revolutionary nationalists and their organizations have struggled to promote Oromo nationalism. As a result of these circumstances, the internal and external enemies of the Oromo nation have exposed the wisest and brightest elements of Oromo revolutionary nationalists to ideological and physical attack. "Minaan duura bishhatee sinbirootu nyata jeedha" Oromoon. Because of Ethiopian political slavery and its legacy, the internalization of victimization, and the lack of a coherent leadership, we Oromo nationalists do not engage in open dialogue with the trust and self-confidence necessary to develop revolutionary Oromo nationalism. These historical conditions have created a social space in which political opportunism, naive political speculation, fatalism, pessimism, and destructive rumors and criticism can take hold. Despite the fact that we, in the Oromo diaspora, are free of Ethiopian control, we have not yet utilized the expanding political opportunities available to us in the service of our national struggle.

Oppressed nationalism as cultural, political, and ideological projects mobilizes some colonized people to engage in concrete political and organizational action so they can achieve national self-assertion and self-development. Although Oromo nationalism emerged forty years ago, it has yet to mobilize the majority of Oromos for collective political, organizational, and

military action. The combination of the uneven development of our nationalism and our low political consciousness manifest themselves in political passivity, scattered worldviews, lack of experience and self-confidence. As a result, we continue to look outside of Oromo society for salvation and a miracle. We fail to realize that, under certain circumstances, active human agency can overcome infrastructural deficits.

Successive oppressive regimes have systematically prevented us from rebuilding social and political organizations and cultural institutions in Oromia. As a result of living under political slavery, the Oromo people have often sought ideological, religious, and institutional refuge in alien cultures. Since we have yet to return to our cultural sources and reorganize the cultural elements that we borrowed from others according to our national interest, we still face personal, institutional, and organizational deficits. Most of us who have received formal and informal training through the religious, educational, political, and cultural institutions of alien cultures have been insulated from our rich store of cultural resources. Hence, we look at Oromo society through the cultural lens of others and face a formidable challenge in rebuilding the effective institutions and organizations that are necessary for us to be able to engage in a successful liberation struggle. Without rebuilding Oromo-centric institutions and organizations that are compatible with effective management systems, it is difficult for Oromo activists to establish an enduring institutional and organizational structure that can cement Oromo society on the local, regional, national, and global level. In order to be an effective society in the complex world system, our movement needs to promote a coherent ideology and build a coherent leadership—on the micro and macro-levels—that can articulate the Oromo interest with a consistent voice on all levels. This does not mean that such leadership must agree on all things. Rather, it means that the Oromo leadership must honestly discuss issues and once a decision is reached through democracy or consensus, that decision must be honored and implemented by all at all levels.

Oromo nationalists must come to realize that the internal structure of our society both in Oromia and the diaspora determines whether we will be able to use available political opportunities to take a collective national action, based on a common denominator, to liberate ourselves. The full development and maturation of Oromo nationalism and the strengthening of the internal structure of our society require a paradigm shift in the Oromo national movement. This paradigm shift will enable us to fully realize our potential and responsibility. At the present time, we are reluctant to fully evaluate our political behavior and performance; but without critical self-evaluation, constructive criticism, and balanced-judgment, we can neither realize our potential, nor play a responsible role in the Oromo movement, nor support those who do.

The search for a new paradigm in Oromo society and in the Oromo movement must start with an ideological innovation that revitalizes Oromo cultural resources. We need to improve our ideology to enable our people to discern their problems and distinguish between their enemies, and their friends. We need to expose and challenge the internalized worldview of our oppressors that is lodged within our leaders, our communities, our society, and ourselves. Our Oromo activists need an innovative ideology that enables them to use informal and formal encounters to engage in discussion and debate with Oromos as a means of influencing their politics through the establishment of personal relationship and networks and through an attack on the internalization of oppression. The Oromo movement needs to develop a sophisticated ideology of liberation to increase the cognitive liberation of Oromos. This needs to be done in order to make us aware of the confusion and inaction, which results from the internalization of the view of our oppressors

and so we can prove to ourselves that we have potential power to liberate ourselves. The main responsibility Oromo activists and public intellectuals is to convince the Oromo people that they own the Oromo movement and they must use it as they want in order to liberate themselves and achieve their human dignity.

The Oromo nation lost its sovereignty and freedom as a result of two important conditions. First, the Oromo lacked alliances with foreign powers, and, second, there were internal contradictions in Oromo society due to the dissolution of the *gada* system in certain Oromo regions. The lack of internal unity within the process of class formation contributed to the division of Oromo society. These two conditions combined to allow the emergence of an Oromo collaborator class that continues to ally itself with the Ethiopian colonial state at the expense of Oromo nationhood. The Ethiopian state continues to use foreign powers and internal divisions based on class, religion, region, and ideology to perpetuate its colonial domination. Until we resolve our internal divisions, our energy and resources often undermine the Oromo liberation struggle.

One of the important weaknesses of the Oromo movement is that it has not yet developed a cultural and political mechanism that helps in identifying and isolating those who retard the development of the national agenda and serve the interest of the enemy at the expense of the Oromo nation. Therefore, Oromo communities, organizations, and society have been betrayed at all levels both in the diaspora and at home. One of the reasons why we find in many places the voices that attempt to undermine the Oromo national struggle, organizations, and Oromo heroes and heroines are because of the infiltration of Oromo society by the agents of our national enemies. We need to develop a cultural and political mechanism by which we can identify and deal with those individuals and groups who are ready to endanger the Oromo national interest for their own individual and group advancement by joining the enemy camp. There is no any nation that can liberate itself and maintain itself without controlling those who betray its cause.

Another important weakness of the Oromo movement is that it has yet to convince the world powers that it can provide an alternative vision that promotes democracy, peace, and stability in the Horn region based on the Oromo democratic culture, numerical strength, and rich economic resources. There are both global political obstacles and opportunities for the Oromo movement. The support of the Ethiopian colonial state by the West and its imperial interstate system is our major obstacle. If we make a conscious political decision based on research, rational analysis, and a sound policy that takes into account the structural limitation of the capitalist world system, we can transform these obstacles into opportunities. We need to have a clear global and national policy based on a range of scenarios as we make conscious political choices and decisions. We need to stop the idea of political, ideological, and philosophical purity. If anything we do can contributes to the improvement of the condition of our people, we must do it through a wide variety of approaches that continues to respect the dignity of each person. We need to understand the interests of those who have power in the modern world system and package our national interests without directly confronting their interests. We have to demonstrate to the world powers that we have a democratic culture that promotes peace and stability in the Horn of Africa and try to win them to our side. The movement of a few Oromos to the West and other parts of the world can be one of the significant political opportunities we have if these Oromos are organized and create a bridge between Oromo society and the world.

The Oromo movement is at a critical crossroads. Therefore, we Oromo nationalists at home and abroad need to recognize that the approaches we have used up to now to promote the

Oromo national struggle are not adequate to meet the newly emerging conditions. These conditions require the total mobilization of our people to come together and so we can determine our collective destiny. This cannot be successfully accomplished without full commitment and the integration of social knowledge and politics that can assist us in developing a dynamic national policy that reflects a common vision and mutual understanding among all sectors of our society.

One of the main goals of this chapter is to focus on and understand the Oromo institutional, ideological, political, and organizational shortcomings in an attempt to mobilize all sectors of Oromo society and enable them to overcome these deficits. Victory belongs to those who dream it, plan for it, and take strategic and concrete collective national action. We need to have faith in ourselves as we start to build a more enduring institutional infrastructure that can bring together politics and society. This institutional infrastructure must facilitate the development of a mechanism that can deal with Oromo issues on three levels: macro-, meso- and micro-levels. On the macro-level, politics, research, and policy issues must be combined to formulate flexible objectives, goals, strategies, and tactics. This, of course, requires the total mobilization of Oromo intellectual, cultural, and material resources. On all three levels, we need to develop networks that deal with the problems Oromo of infrastructure.

We need to establish task-oriented networks and groups. We need to re-conceptualize our understanding of leadership. In peripheral societies, only political leadership is recognized, and other forms of leadership are ignored or subordinated to political leadership. That is why in such societies politics, research, and policy formation are not combined. Hence every political action is arbitrary, and contradictions are solved via political violence. Similarly, the idea that only political leadership provides the solution to all of our problems has stifled the Oromo movement. If we want to advance the Oromo struggle, we must recognize that "Real leaders are ordinary people with extraordinary determination." We need to unleash the potential of the ordinary Oromo by developing a participatory movement in which Oromos who have interest, determination, knowledge, skills, and information so they can fully contribute to the Oromo national struggle both in the diaspora and Oromia.

We need to form the networks of groups to deal with the issues of politics and diplomacy, organization, environment, the media and information, culture and art, language, health, education, diplomacy, religion, youth, women, etc. For instance, organizing public networks and groups in the Oromo diaspora may help us move from simple talk to real and concrete action. One of the great weaknesses of our national movement is the lack of friends and supporters. The formation of political and diplomatic networks and groups in the United States and in other countries may help us interact with various politicians, civic organizations, and religious groups at the grass roots and organizational levels through introducing Oromo issues. If we can introduce Oromo issues to the world in an organized and coordinated way, the governments of different countries may be persuaded to take the Oromo question seriously. Particularly, Oromos who have become citizens of different countries have the potential to play an important political and diplomatic role, if they are organized and coordinated at the local, regional, and global levels. Other groups and networks can be coordinated and play a decisive role in our movement.

An enduring institutional infrastructure needs to be developed to link formal organizations and small, informally-formed groups, churches, mosques, civic organizations, and friendship network to facilitate the process of micro-mobilization for collective national actions. This micro-mobilization will assist in the process of developing cognitive liberation and in

mobilizing cultural, intellectual, and material resources for the Oromo cause. Cognitive liberation raises Oromo political consciousness so it can challenge externally imposed human shortcomings and internalized victimization that have weakened our people. Internalized oppression prevents us from loving one another and advancing our national culture. Internalized oppression and sexism turn Oromo men against their mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters. This internalized oppression dwarfs our dreams and potential by focusing on our weaknesses and ignoring our strengths. If Oromo men keep women in the position of second-class citizenship in Oromo society and hinder the development of their potentials, we cannot achieve our full human and political liberation.

Oromo women are the foundation of Oromo society, and they have less access to alien culture. If as Oromos we truly want to maintain our identity and human and political liberation, we need to recognize places where male domination pervades our social and political processes and open ourselves to the needs of women within Oromo society so that they can engage in their own liberation and fully participate in the liberation of their nation. Revolutionary nationalists should fight reactionary traditions that rationalize and justify inequality based on the criteria of gender, occupation, and class in Oromo society based on the principle of a single standard for humanity. Our strategy for micro-mobilization must allow every Oromo regardless of their age, gender, class, religion, region, education or professional status to feel at home in the Oromo national struggle and unleash full self-expression and self-development.

I propose to you that we entertain the idea of forming a public body that might be called the Institute of Oromia Policy Research. I also suggest that we discuss the notion of forming public networks and groups based upon commitment, interest, skills, and readiness to serve the nation. The main role of the Institute of Oromia Policy Research is to engage in research, to propose relevant global and national policies based on various scenarios for our nation, and to disseminate the resulting information. Since existing Oromo politics reflects the weaknesses of the Oromo national struggle, the policy body, networks, and public groups must engage in a dialogue that enables Oromos to develop Oromo revolutionary nationalism. All Oromos must be encouraged to openly and honestly discuss their perceived and real differences based on class, religion, region, and gender, so they can identify a common denominator of Oromoness, liberation, and popular democracy.

The networks and groups can provide information that encourages local Oromo movement centers, political organizations, and institutions to take initiatives by involving all interested Oromos in developing their grass roots level institutions and organizations. These networks and groups need to motivate Oromo activists, professionals, and intellectuals to use their full potential through organizing their knowledge, skills, and information and articulating the Oromo interest. It is also necessary that these networks and groups find and suggest ways of developing a learning culture so that Oromos will be open to new experiences, take responsible risks, and willing to acknowledge failures and learn from them. We should make sure that our destiny is determined by conscious political choice, not by chance. I suggest that we develop a national forum as the current embodiment of the *Gumi*i Oromia and continue to use it for public discourse for liberation and for the restoration of Oromo democracy.

Chapter 3

The Impact of Ethiopian Colonialism on the Oromo Political Behavior[18]

The political legacy of Ethiopian colonialism has had a long-lasting negative impact on the political behavior of Oromo individuals, organizations, and society. The suppression and/or destruction of Oromo social organizations as well as cultural and religious institutions have left most Oromos in an ideological and cultural vacuum. Prior to their colonization, the Oromo people successfully defended themselves from numerous enemies maintaining their culture, traditions and values. The organizational and military capacity of Oromo society was destroyed by an alliance between Ethiopian colonialism and European imperialism during the last decades of the nineteenth century. Today 40 million Oromos are treated worse than animals by the ethno-fascist Tigrayan leadership and their supporters. Although Ethiopian colonialism and global imperialism have placed our people in this predicament, at this historical moment, our failure as political activists, intellectuals, organizations, and society to recognize the defect of our political behavior and our inability to take appropriate ideological and political action have allowed the perpetuation of the dehumanization of our people. Therefore, any Oromo who feels that we must take responsibility to transform our historical misfortune into victory must begin by correcting the defects in his/her own political behavior by critically looking at oneself, Oromo organizations, and society and be ready to face the new emerging challenge.

For more than three decades, I have had ample opportunity to observe Oromo political behavior both in Oromia and in exile. Initially a few Oromo nationalists, who were attacked by Ethiopians, Ethiopianized Oromos, and Somalis and Somalized Oromos, resurrected Oromo identity and developed *Oromummaa* either by sacrificing their precious lives or by dedicating themselves to the Oromo cause. As a result, the majority of Oromos now proudly recognize their nation and their country, Oromia. Thus the Tigrayan ethno-fascists have failed to establish an ideological and cultural hegemony over Oromo society, despite the fact that they use fascism and state-terrorism. Recognizing this positive development in the Oromo movement, we need to ask ourselves why, up to now, we have been unwilling or unable take our own destiny into our hands. In answering this question, we should be honest with ourselves and avoid impression management. We need to critically look at ourselves at the individual, group, and organizational levels. Since adequate explanations have been already identified as to the structural impact of Ethiopian colonialism and global imperialism on Oromo society, we now need to move into new

18 The 2000 OSA Annual Conference, York University, Toronto, Canada July 29-30.

research areas that assist us in understanding the dynamic interplay of social structures and human agency in Oromo society.

Ethiopian colonialism and the Ethiopian State elite did everything in their power to reduce Oromo identity to clan, regional, and religious identities in order to prevent the development of Oromummaa. This policy of divide and conquer was partially successful. Most Oromos accepted these externally imposed identities allowing them to obliterate a sense of Oromo national identity. Even today, there are Oromos who embrace these externally imposed distorted identities while rejecting their Oromoness. This indicates that widespread sense of Oromo nationalism has not yet matured. The Ethiopian colonial legacy has negatively affected Oromo political behavior and performance. The Oromo have been systematically prevented from rebuilding autonomous social and political organizations and institutions. During the time they have been held in political slavery, some Oromo individuals have sought ideological, religious and institutional refugee in alien cultures. People who were colonized and forced to move from their cultural centers cannot liberate themselves without returning to their cultural roots and without critically assessing the cultural elements they borrowed from other societies to see how they comport with their national interest in rebuilding autonomous social and political organizations and cultural institutions.

Because we, as Oromos, have neither fully returned to our cultural elements nor reorganized the cultural elements we borrowed from others, we face organizational and infrastructural deficits. Most Oromos, who have received formal and informal training through the religious, educational, political, and cultural institutions of alien cultures, have been isolated from their cultural sources. Hence, because most of us look at our society through the cultural lens of others, we face the formidable problem of rebuilding the institutions and organizations that are necessary so we can engage in a successful liberation struggle. Without rebuilding Oromo centered institutions and organizations that are compatible with effective management and democratic procedures, it is difficult for Oromo activists to establish enduring institutional an organizational structures that will be able to unify Oromo society on local, regional, national, and global levels.

Because of the destruction of ongoing institutional and organizational structures, our human and material resources have been and continue to be used by successive Ethiopian colonial regimes for their advantage. Today Oromia and its natural resources are owned by the Tigrayan state and its supporters. Successive Ethiopian regimes have forced the Oromos to fight and die for Ethiopia; our people fought against Italians twice and victory went Ethiopia and her warlords. Our people fought against the Somali expansionists, and victory went to the Ethiopian military regime. Recently Oromos were forced to fight against Eritrea and victory went the Tigrayan colonial regime. Peoples like the Oromo, who suffer from institutional and organizational deficits, serve the interest of their enemies at their own cost.

Since we are confronted by organizational and infrastructure deficits we have diverse views and visions; we are often interested in impression management and symbolism. Since several scholars have already adequately explained what Habashas and their supporters have been doing to our people. We must start now to explore what we are doing to ourselves by internalizing victimization and by failing to take serious ideological, political, and organizational action. We are proud of having a democratic and egalitarian legacy know as *gada*, but we rarely apply what we have learned from this legacy to our life as a community; we rarely openly and honestly discuss our individual, organizational, and societal weaknesses. We prefer to raise

issues informally without critically assessing them. As a result, it is very difficult to know the difference between facts and rumors. We tend to believe rumors and allow ourselves to be influenced by them. We are terrified by new ideas probably assuming that these new ideas may bring individual responsibility. We like to talk about our rights without recognizing our responsibilities. We rarely recognize that there are no rights without responsibilities. There has never been a serious, open, and public policy debate among Oromo activists, intellectuals, and the public on the essence of Oromo nationalism and struggle.

Hence it is no wonder that Oromo activists, intellectuals, and the public have not been able to resolve Oromo ideological, institutional, and organizational problems. We love to complain and explain what others have done to us, without seeing ourselves as actors who can change our unfortunate conditions. We admire those who talk a lot and engage in impression management while doing little. We harshly criticize those who try to do something for their nation, without recognizing their positive contributions. Most of us want to look good and put down those who have tried their best. These are backward looking and politically naïve perspectives that fail to recognize that scattered forces with blurred visions cannot effectively resist intense Tigrayan ethno-fascism.

Most Oromos do not see nationalism as a national political and cultural project; most Oromos confuse regionalism and religion with national identity. Some of us see colonial administrative regions as the basis of Oromo politics. As a result, we fail to take a well-coordinated and organized national action on multiple levels. This means that Oromo nationalism has yet to mature. Oromo nationalists must come to realize that the internal structure of our society in both Oromia and the diaspora determines whether or not we will be able to use available political opportunities to take a collective national action based on a common denominator to liberate ourselves. The maturation of Oromo nationalism and the strengthening of the internal structure of our society require a paradigm shift in the Oromo national movement.

We have not yet realized our potential and our responsibility; many of us do not think that it is our obligations to play a decisive role in the Oromo national movement. As a result, we are reluctant to fully evaluate our own behavior and performance in relation to the Oromo national struggle. This lack of critical self-evaluation has encouraged many of us in exile to harshly criticize those who actively participate in the Oromo movement. Without critical self-evaluation, constructive criticism, and balanced-judgment, we can neither effectively realize our potential and take a responsible role in the Oromo movement, nor support those who do.

The Ethiopian state continues to use foreign powers and internal divisions based on class, religion, region, and ideology to perpetuate its colonial domination over Oromo society. Until we secure support from foreign powers and resolve the internal divisions based on region, class, religion, ideology, gender, and age, our energy and resources often undermine the Oromo liberation struggle. In contrast, five million Tigrayans are effectively organized and treat Oromos like non-human animals. In the same manner, if we forty million Oromos in Oromia and abroad become effectively organized and develop a sense of national power, within a short time we will be able to disarm the Tigrayans and their collaborators without resorting to a protracted guerrilla war.

Because most of the world stands on the side of the Tigrayan fascist state, the Oromo people are victimized by the alliance between the Ethiopian forces and the imperial racialized interstate system. In Oromia, the Oromo people live under political slavery, and are denied the freedom of assembly, association, organization, the press, and expression. Most of those living in

Oromia have trusted that we in the Oromo diaspora would work tirelessly and passionately to make the world aware of the ugly face of the Ethiopian colonial state and would create a global bridge between the Oromo nation and the world community.

Despite the fact that we in the Oromo diaspora are free of Ethiopian control, we have yet to utilize the expanding political opportunities available to us on behalf of the Oromo national struggle. This is because we lack commitment and political maturity; we suffer from institutional and organizational deficits, and we are dominated by a class of individuals who have come to value the maintenance of status quo in form of class, region, religion, organization, ideology, and culture. Although a few Oromo activists have begun to realize the danger of such tendencies, they often lack the courage and opportunity to effectively expose and discredit these tendencies in the Oromo diaspora.

If we are committed to regaining our national sovereignty and political freedom, we must abandon narrow political thinking and divisions based on class, region, religion, and ideology, and develop a sophisticated and mature political outlook that will enable us to take collective national action. We need to recognize that the modern world and its imperial interstate system favor those people who have a strong army and a strong state to protect them. In another words, the world only protects those who organize effectively and efficiently to defend themselves by first overcoming their minor differences and then by articulating their interests at a national level. How long will we Oromos remain ignorant and passive and fail to use global logic to defend ourselves? Are we waiting for the international community to protect our people from Tigrayan fascism? By now we should know that the world is harsh and cruel, and it belongs to those who can seriously take care of their own business.

It is time for all of us to critically look at our own political behavior and performance and evaluate ourselves honestly so that we can correctly identify our real problems and the problems of the Oromo national movement. If we are able to honestly and courageously recognize our strengths and weaknesses as individuals, groups, organizations, and society, and eliminate or reduce weaknesses while building on the strengths, we can emerge victorious from the cultural, ideological, and political nightmares we are facing as a nation. If, as Oromos, we do not hold ourselves accountable and do something for our nation, the blood and souls of our heroines and heroes will have been spilled in vain. Victory belongs to those who dream it, plan for it, and take strategic and concrete collective national actions.

Our leader, both formal and informal, need to understand how, up to this point, we have failed to establish a common denominator that brings us together and enables us to mobilize the Oromo cultural, intellectual, and material resources needed to consolidate Oromo nationalism into a united movement and to decisively confront our enemies on multiple levels. Furthermore, we need to build a more enduring institutional infrastructure that can bring together politics and society. An enduring institutional infrastructure is needed to link formal organizations and small, informally formed groups, churches, mosques, civic organizations, and friendship networks to facilitate the process of micro-mobilization for collective national action. This micro-mobilization will assist in developing cognitive liberation and in mobilizing cultural, intellectual, and material resources for the Oromo cause. It will also help to build a formal body that can create a lobby to campaign for Oromo issues. Further, this kind of mobilization will facilitate the formation of political and intellectual forums at the grass-roots level with the organization of seminars, workshops, and town meetings on different levels.

Particularly, we in the Oromo diaspora need to begin to overcome our infrastructural and organizational deficits by effectively mobilizing resources—membership, communication and friend ship networks, potential leaders, money, skills, knowledge, information, etc. With the intensification of globalization, we need to build effective international, regional, and local networks to mobilize resources and use media and communication technologies (such as electronic mail, Internet websites, newspapers, journals, magazines, mail technologies, telephone, etc.) to effectively attract members and friends, discredit enemies, and influence the international and national public by framing, packaging, and disseminating new meanings, ideologies, and programs. These activities cannot be done by the politics of common sense; however, they can be accomplished by combining commitment, politics, research, and policy issues.

We, in the Oromo diaspora, should recognize and build on our diversity and unity to form a participatory movement in which members, political and intellectual leaders, and all formal and informal leaders play decisive roles in activating, mobilizing, organizing, and managing the Oromo human, cultural, and intellectual resources and by implementing commonly agreed upon activities and policies. The participation of all sectors of Oromo society is needed to make the Oromo movement enduring and powerful. This is perfectly within the capability and the condition of the Oromo diaspora since we are beyond the rigid control of the Ethiopian political system and Western political culture, despite its racist environment, allows us to develop a participatory approach. It will permit Oromo leaders and activists not only to teach, but also to learn from their fellow Oromos and others, change their attitudes and outlooks, and develop new approaches. In a revolutionary movement, leaders and all participants need to change together to facilitate a fundamental social transformation.

Chapter 4

The Organizational Impact of Uneven Development of *Oromummaa*[19]

The ideological and organizational challenges of the Oromo national movement cannot be adequately explained without understanding the uneven development of *Oromummaa* and its impact on building Oromo organizational capacity. The uneven development of *Oromummaa* and the low level of organizational and institutional development in Oromo society are directly linked. Because of the uneven development of *Oromummaa*, most Oromos still manifest political passivity, engage in local politics, lack experience and self-confidence, and expect a miracle from Oromo political activists. Although, since 1991, most Oromos have become aware of their national identity, they have yet to become nationalist. When Oromos become nationalists, they shifts their frame of reference by focusing on collective grievances and Oromo awareness becoming willing to make the necessary sacrifice—in the form of money, time, skills, knowledge and expertise, and even life—through organizational and individual means to liberate the Oromo people.

Since *Oromummaa* is about creating national power and liberating the Oromo people, it attempts to construct a new Oromo peoplehood, *Oromummaa*, that transcends segmented identities of lineage or clans, regions, religions or borrowed-cultural identifies, such as Ethiopianized or Somalized or Arabized cultures. While *Oromummaa* facilitates the process of recovering the positive elements of Oromo cultural tradition, it is a future-oriented political and cultural project. Therefore, it is not only about getting rid off the Ethiopian colonial system; it is also about building a free and democratic society. If Oromo awareness is not transformed into *Oromummaa*, it simply focuses on collective grievances without addressing the challenge of building the new institutions that will be the foundation of an emerging society. While the Oromo national movement struggles to dismantle Ethiopian settler colonialism, it also must strive to transform Oromo nationalism from unevenness to full development through facilitating cognitive liberation. These processes require the development of a coherent leadership of thinkers and organizers that can cement Oromo society both institutionally and organizationally.

19 Paper presented at the 2001 Annual Conference of OSA, Minnesota University, Minneapolis, July 28-29.

Oromo awareness broadly emerged in the early 1990s. Most people confuse Oromo awareness with nationalism. Although Oromo awareness is a first step towards developing Oromo nationalism, this process requires systematic cultural, political, organizational, and institutional efforts to transform this emerging Oromo awareness into Oromo nationalism. Oromo awareness may even confuse religious or regional or clan identities with nationalism. This kind of awareness cannot solve the problem of the lack of internal unity that emerged with the development of autonomous *gada* systems and regional governments in pre-colonial Oromia. Ethiopian colonialism and its political slavery institutionalized the internal division of the Oromo society. Oromo nationalism strives to dissolve this division. The Oromo people were powerful when they had one *gada* government. The lack of internal unity in Oromo society allowed the gradual development of an Oromo collaborator class that continues to ally itself with the Ethiopian colonial state at the cost of the Oromo peoplehood. *Oromumaa* as a national ideology promotes the vision of creating an Oromo national power through dissolving internal divisions and defeating the Oromo collaborator class.

The internal division and the Oromo collaborator class are the twin enemies of the Oromo national struggle. These two problems persist in the Oromo society because of the uneven development of Oromo nationalism. One might wonder and ask why Oromos have several weak political organizations, although some of them are nominal, without having real ideological differences. If all Oromo political organizations embrace the Oromo nationalist ideology of *Oromummaa* that envisions the dissolution of the internal divisions of the Oromo society and the defeat of the Oromo collaborative class and its master, the Ethiopian colonial state, it is tantamount to endorsing the internal divisions of this society to promote political fragmentation without having real ideological and political differences. The Oromo nation that confronts the enemy with destructive internal division cannot achieve its national political agenda. Serious Oromo nationalists can have real ideological and political differences that can be tested and demonstrated through the fire of struggle without engaging in character assassination, rumor, lies, misinformation, cheap propaganda, etc.

To have competitive organizations that can develop *Oromummaa* and an Oromo national identity may be beneficial for the Oromo national movement. Unless we cheat ourselves, Oromo political organizations are not competitive and they do not have clear political and ideological differences at least in their political programs. If Oromo political organizations lack visions that can go beyond Oromo awareness and instead engage in lineage, clan, regional, religious or other limited identity politics, they consciously or unconsciously undermine the Oromo national struggle and expose the Oromo people to their deadly enemies. These are the ways of promoting defeat not victory. Despite all these weaknesses, these organizations are potentially important for the Oromo struggle. That was why the formation of United Liberation forces of Oromia, (ULFO), was endorsed by most Oromos. Although ULFO has yet to clearly map out the means of transforming the potential of these forces into the full development of *Oromummaa*. The unity of the Oromo political forces based on Oromo awareness alone cannot take the Oromo national struggle anywhere.

Current informal and formal debates in the Oromo diaspora show that Oromo awareness has yet to be transformed into *Oromummaa*. The debates are mainly focused on petty issues, rumors, or gossip, and do not focus on building organizations and institutions. Consequently, the institutional infrastructure of Oromo community in the diaspora is still weak and dysfunctional. Since the Oromos in Oromia live under Ethiopian political slavery, it is very difficult to build

independent Oromo institutions there. A close observation of the Oromo movement manifests a national struggle caught between the forces of nationalists and the forces of those Oromos who are only aware of their collective grievances but lack a sense of *Oromummaa*. This condition has opened a political space for opportunism, naive political speculation, fatalism, pessimism, destructive rumor mongering, and unhealthy criticism. Oppressed nationalism, as a cultural, political, and ideological project, mobilizes some elements of a colonized people to take concrete political and organizational action to achieve national self-determination and self-development. Although Oromo nationalism, as oppressed nationalism, emerged forty years ago, it has yet to mobilize the majority of Oromos for collective political, organizational, and military action. It took the Oromo movement almost forty years just to develop Oromo awareness. The reasons for the slow and uneven development of Oromo awareness and nationalism cannot be explored in this piece. How do we know the difference between Oromo awareness and nationalism? Even as Oromo awareness focuses on collective grievances, Oromo nationalism focuses on the shifting of a frame of reference to make calculated choices in order to achieve Oromo national power and liberation.

While Oromo awareness may involve the intellectual understanding of the Oromo national problem, Oromo nationalism embraces intellectual understanding and emotional commitment. Oromo nationalists can be subdivided into two categories: those who are committed to pay the ultimate sacrifice by being ready to give their lives, and those who are ready to sacrifice their intellectual and material resources for the liberation of their nation. These two groups have yet to integrate their efforts in systematic ways. The integration of the efforts of these two groups needs the development of the core of coherent leadership of thinkers and organizers. The ability to form such leadership requires integrating the political leadership of those who are ready to pay ultimate sacrifice and the leadership of those who are committed to sacrifice their intellectual and material resources to mobilize the Oromo people on micro- and macro-levels because both groups have developed the willingness, capacity, and courage to promote the Oromo national interest.

Despite the fact that there has been resistance to Ethiopian colonialism from the Oromo people, Oromo nationalism is a project of revolutionary Oromos. Some of the best and brightest elements of Oromo nationalists were assassinated or jailed by the enemies of the Oromo people. The remaining Oromo nationalists who continue to push the Oromo movement forward have yet to develop a broadly based core of coherent (united) leadership of thinkers and organizers. Without such broadly based and coherent leadership of thinkers and organizers, Oromos cannot transform Oromo awareness to Oromo nationalism. Transforming Oromo awareness into nationalism is a complex and difficult task; it needs a multifaceted and coordinated leadership that can rebuild Oromo-centered institutions and organizations that are compatible with good management practices. Such leadership needs to emerge from diverse backgrounds. These diverse backgrounds include cultural, religious, economic, and intellectual or educational arenas. Such diverse political, intellectual, religious, and cultural pools can consolidate the foundation of the Oromo movement by promoting the development of solid Oromo civil society.

Without such a broadly based and multifaceted leadership, we cannot organize our people and achieve our national political objectives. Because Oromian resources are under Ethiopian control, our people do not have capital or money. It is absolutely necessary to know how to mobilize and organize our people effectively and enable them to stand up for their rights. The major task of committed nationalists is to provide the organizational skills, ideological tools,

knowledge and expertise, information, and other resources for our national movement in an organized way. If our people are coherently organized, they can turn their resources into a political weapon. For instance, if in an organized way our people refuse to sell to and buy essential commodities from their enemies imagine what can happen.

The efforts of a broadly based and well-coordinated Oromo nationalist leadership can help establish a mechanism that can make our national movement accountable for problem analysis, decision making, and the implementation of decisions that have been made. Such efforts can influence the Oromo national movement to adopt approaches that require strategic planning, policy making, organizational and management development, monitoring operations and performance against the main objectives, and making key organizational decisions on micro and macro levels and implementing them.

To build an effective society in the capitalist world system, we Oromo nationalists also need to develop a coherent worldview that can build *Oromummaa* through the articulation of the Oromo national interest with a united voice. The coordinated micro and macro-level leadership must openly and honestly discuss national concerns and once decisions are made it must respect the decision of the community and work for their implementation. If we Oromo nationalists are able to accomplish these goals, we will find ourselves successfully engaged in a new paradigm. This requires an ideological innovation that revitalizes our cultural resources by integrating them with well-founded techniques and methods to build *Oromummaa* based on Oromo-centered institutions and organizations.

This ideological innovation enables us to expose and challenge the worldview of our oppressor that we have internalized within ourselves—leaders, communities, and the society—by drawing a clear boundary between the forces of liberation and those of oppression. New ideas, knowledge, expertise, information, and experiences that are integrated into a coherent worldview can be disseminated through formal and informal encounters so as to influence Oromo politics and transform Oromo awareness into nationalism. Through establishing personal relationships and networks, we can expose and challenge the confusion and inaction that has emerged from the internalization of victimization. Further, we can discover the Oromo power that is hidden within us to liberate us.

We need to realize that the approaches that we have used up to know have not gone beyond developing Oromo awareness. Today, we must transform this awareness into nationalism so that we can mobilize our people to come together to determine our national destiny. If we make a conscious political decision based on research and a sound policy, we can transform our obstacles into opportunities. Let us start to move forward by reconceptualizing our idea of leadership. We need to give up the idea that political leadership alone can provide all the solutions to all Oromo problems. We need to establish task-oriented networks and groups that recognize that "real leaders" are ordinary people with extraordinary determination.

The power of ordinary Oromos can be unleashed by transforming Oromo awareness into nationalism through the development of a participatory forum in which Oromos who have interest, determination, experience, skills, knowledge, and information can fully contribute to the promotion of the Oromo movement. Through developing Oromo nationalism—*Oromummaa*—we can increase our organizational capacity by overcoming our institutional deficits. At the present time, I am prepared to suggest three concrete steps: The first one is to create a national medium of communication to publish and disseminate our ideas and approaches. We can also

use available Oromo radio stations for this purpose by financially helping them and expanding their programming capability.

The second one is to reinvent the ULFO by critically assessing the weaknesses and strengths of its member organizations and by developing mechanisms that will allow prominent Oromo nationalists to directly participate in building the platform of the ULFO. The era of using a double standard to evaluate Oromo organizations must be over. Every Oromo organization must be evaluated by using the same criteria so that it either reinvents itself or abandons its nonexistent claim. We should recognize Oromo organizations for what they are and what they deliver for the Oromo cause. The third one is to start to establish task-based networks and encourage those already formed and by involving these networks in creating and developing an Oromo national forum.

Chapter 5

The State of Oromo Nationalism, Problems of the Oromo Struggle, and Strategies for the Liberation of Oromia[20]

I have been requested to comment on three important issues: the state of Oromo nationalism, the problems of the Oromo national movement, and the issue of developing strategies for the liberation of Oromia. Despite the fact that Oromo resistance to Ethiopian colonialism and its supporter, global imperialism, started with the colonization of Oromia, and despite the fact that an organized Oromo movement started in the 1960s, Oromo nationalism is still young and growing slowly. As I identify and discuss the process of the slow development of Oromo nationalism, I will explain the state of Oromo nationalism and its problems and strategies for solving these problems.

The state of Oromo Nationalism

In 1991, Oromo nationalism entered a new phase. Before this time, Oromo nationalism was accepted and recognized in only a few circles. Because of the impact of Ethiopian colonialism most Oromos identified themselves by colonial regions or borrowed religious identities, such as Christianity or Islam. Oromo identity was submerged under these fractured identities that were imposed from the outside. Although some progress has been made in overcoming these fractured identities, they still compete with the master identity, Oromummaa. At the point in time when most Oromos accept Oromummaa as the master identity, Oromo nationalism will have matured as a cultural and political project. Oromo nationalism as an Oromo cultural and political project attempts to empower the Oromo people to determine their own destiny. The Oromo national movement has yet to reach the level where it has the organizational capacity to mobilize the nation in taking concrete actions on the global, national, local, and individual levels simultaneously.

The process of building organizational capacity for the Oromo struggle requires coherent nationalist leaders who can agree on a common denominator and formulate a policy direction that inspires and enables most members of the nation to combine their efforts and take collective action at each level. These actions include political, ideological, cultural, financial, and military activities. It is time that we ask ourselves why, we the nation of more than forty million, have been unable to build an organizational capacity to accomplish what we want? Particularly, why

20 Prepared Presented at the Regional Seminar of the OLF, Minnesota, MN, April 12, 2002.

have we Oromo elites been unable to develop the ideological and political coherence that is necessary for us to be able to build our organizational infrastructure? These are very difficult questions that every concerned Oromo needs to answer with an honest heart and a critical mind.

On the positive side, despite all these problems, the Oromo national movement led by the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) is making marked progress. The OLF has developed a victorious consciousness in our nation by providing Oromos with the dream of liberation and hope. Despite its organizational and ideological shortcomings, this organization has become the pillar of Oromo politics. Those Oromos who are engaged in a self-deception and the politics of conventional wisdom deny this reality. Because of the uneven development of *Oromummaa* and the organizational shortcomings of many of its leaders and potential leaders, the Oromo national movement has yet to mobilize the nation fully for collective action.

The Problems of the Oromo National Movement

It was not our choice, as Oromos, to be colonized and dehumanized under Ethiopian political slavery and global tyranny, but it is our choice to rebuild the wounded *Oromummaa* by increasing our commitment and determination to liberate ourselves. History demonstrates that only a determined and organized people are able to achieve victory. We cannot achieve victory by the politics of conventional wisdom. We need to recognize our political problems, and solve them by using sound policy actions. There have been external and internal factors that account for both the slow and uneven development of the Oromo national movement and its organizational shortcomings. Several books and articles have been written on the external factors, and how these factors have negatively affected the development of Oromo nationalism.

We have previously focused on and discussed what Ethiopian colonialists and global imperialists have done to us. Today, I am not interested in discussing what our national enemies have done to us, except for one thing. This one thing is the legacy of Ethiopian political slavery that has affected our physique, demoralized our human spirit, and turned us against one another rather than developing new ideas and strategies that help us achieve our human liberation. The other problems include the uneven development of Oromo nationalism, the politics of conventional wisdom, the low level of cognitive liberation, the lack of political and ideological coherence, the low level of global awareness, and the low level of political experience and political deficits.

The Legacy of Ethiopian political Slavery

One of the primary objectives of Ethiopian colonialism is to make the Oromo people leaderless by killing individuals who have the potential for leadership and by castrating nascent Oromo leaders so that the Oromo cannot develop an independent leadership. Practically and psychologically, Ethiopians have inflicted heavy damage on us as some activities of our people in the diaspora and at home demonstrate. People who do not have confidence in themselves and who do not believe that there are capable individuals among them who can rise and lead them are psychologically damaged. Whenever leaders emerge among them, such people look for the weaknesses of these leaders and ignore their strengths, reducing their ability to provide effective leadership. As long as the cognitive liberation of such Oromos remains low, they will continue to do the same thing.

In a national movement, leadership involves sacrifice, possibly including life itself. Most of the time there is no material incentive for such leaders to emerge, particularly when they are engaged in a national struggle. These statements are true for Oromo political activists and leaders. If those who do nothing insult, disseminate misinformation, and continue to undermine a succession of Oromo leaders, how do we expect to develop a quality leadership? Some of us are interested in creating and imagining mistakes in order to attack Oromo heroes and heroines who have done something for our struggle. We tend to ignore good things that these individuals have done for their nation, and magnify their mistakes and weaknesses. How can individuals who have done little or nothing criticize those who have done something for their nation? Those who endeavor to provide liberative leadership will inevitably make mistakes. I believe that the correct approach is to recognize and praise the achievements of these individuals and to provide constructive criticisms for their weaknesses. By discouraging individuals from contributing to our struggle, unintentionally we are weakening our camp and strengthening the camp of our national enemies.

The idea of trying to look good by cutting down our brothers and sisters is a very dangerous trend. This approach encourages laziness and discourages achievement. Greatness comes from determination and hard work, and not from belittling others. There are some individuals who have no clear understanding of Oromo nationalism and prey on the low level of Oromo consciousness by spreading misinformation on individuals or organizations that are pushing the Oromo struggle forward. If we need to move ahead, we must stop these misguided actions and also challenge, expose, and discredit those individuals or groups or organizations that are engaged in such destructive behavior. Individuals or organizations should compete to excel by promoting the objectives of the Oromo movement and by producing results not by engaging in destructive behavior.

We can only unleash the potential of our people by overcoming the legacy of Ethiopian political slavery and by believing in leaders, organizations, and ourselves. Oromo nationalists must begin to liberate themselves and their nation by developing their individual qualities of leadership in one way or another. What kinds of leaders do we need? We need leaders who are ready to change with us and who are determined to coordinate our ideas, knowledge, money, and other resources in service of the liberation of the Oromo nation. Oromo revolutionary leaders who can successfully attack the legacy of Ethiopian political slavery and solve the problems of the uneven development of Oromo nationalism, the politics of conventional wisdom, the low level of cognitive liberation, the low level of global awareness, and the low level of political experience in Oromo society will build an Oromo organizational capacity that will lead the Oromo people to national victory.

Uneven development of Oromo nationalism

One of the great weaknesses of the Oromo national movement is the uneven development of Oromo nationalism. At this time, the Oromo people can be roughly categorized into three. On one extreme there are Oromo nationalists who have been sacrificing their lives and resources as they struggle to liberate their people. Those Oromos who have taken actions to defend the rights and interests of the Oromo nation belong to this category. The Ethiopians have targeted such Oromos for destruction. At the other extreme there are Oromos who consciously or unconsciously have betrayed their people for personal gains by joining the enemy camp and end

up fighting against the Oromo national interest and national struggle. One of the indicators of the weaknesses of the Oromo struggle is its inability to minimize the power and impact of these collaborators.

The majority of Oromos are between these two extreme ends. This is the third category. Oromo nationalism matures as it mobilizes this large section of Oromo society. The current Oromo student struggle gives evidence of the beginning of the development of Oromo nationalism. There is no doubt that Oromo awareness has increased among the student population since 1991, but we need to intensify the struggle in order to transform this awareness into Oromummaa. When Oromo nationalism mobilizes the large middle of society, there is no force that can stop the Oromo nation from achieving its political objectives. The uneven development of Oromo nationalism is manifested in the form of fractured identities political opportunism, political passivity, lack of commitment for the Oromo struggle, withdrawal, fatalism, false accusation, and malicious propaganda. All these can be categorized under the politics of conventional wisdom.

As we will see below, this kind of politics undermines the core principle of *Oromummaa*, which is defending Oromo personality, human dignity, culture, history, language, and Oromo individual and collective interests. It is essential to recognize that *Oromummaa* is built on the common denominator of collective grievances, the principles of human liberation and equality, the restoration of Oromo history, the development of the Oromo language, and at the same time recognizing religious and other forms of diversity in Oromo society. With further development of Oromo nationalism and its maturation, the political and cultural project of *Oromummaa* will be consolidated. The Oromo movement must be open and allow all Oromos to contribute their unique skills and abilities as they work to develop and rebuild *Oromummaa*. *Oromummaa* combines unity and diversity. In order to develop our unity, we need to replace the politics of conventional wisdom with that of liberation.

The Politics of Conventional Wisdom

To love the place where we were born more than any other place, to try to improve ourselves, to take our religion seriously, all of these are common human activities that give meaning to our lives. But, when we begin to think that we are superior to other people because of our birthplace, our effort, our religion, when we begin to think that those who are from a different place or belong to another religion are wrong and evil and insist that our organizations reflect these narrowly constructed values, we embark on a dangerous road. These attitudes may reflect conventional wisdom within our communities and organizations, but they result in the fragmentation of the greater Oromo community and lead us nowhere. One of the major reasons why the Oromo nation was defeated by Ethiopia was that Oromos lost a sense of *Oromummaa*, began to focus on fragmented identities, and allowed the development of decentralized *gada* systems when they started to form separate communities in different parts of Oromia. When Oromos had a centralized power and coordinated fighting forces between 16th and the 18th centuries, no political force challenged the Oromo people.

In the processes of differentiation and political decentralization, an individually focused Oromo class emerged. It was this group that, when it was expedient, joined the enemy camp as a collaborator class. Conventional wisdom would suggest that when faced with defeat at the hands of an enemy, the expedient thing to do is to join them. If we continue the politics of conventional

wisdom, we fail to learn the lessons of history and allow ourselves to continue to be oppressed. People who do not learn from history and instead commit themselves with the politics of conventional wisdom are doomed to fail and end up serving others to their own detriment. Do we Oromo nationalists want this to continue? The politics of conventional wisdom which yields to the status quo cannot help us understand the complexity of the racialized capitalist world system. The politics of this world system is based on the principle of brute force, which is practiced by the state. With large scale-changes in culture, politics, and economics, people were no longer able to handle their problems on clan, neighborhood, and local levels. To solve larger and more complex problems, the principle of state formation emerged. Those people who have the capacity to overcome the politics of conventional wisdom by developing a liberative nationalism that leads to the formation of their own state or gaining meaningful access to a multicultural state have a better chance of survival in the racialized capitalist world system. Those peoples who fail to achieve one of these objectives are exposed to state terrorism, which results in genocide and/or continued subjugation. If we want to survive as a nation in an era of intensified globalization, we Oromos must replace the politics of conventional wisdom with a politics of liberation that is based on research and sound policy.

The politics of Oromo liberation constructs "a new Oromo family" in which all subgroups come together to regain their human dignity by overthrowing Ethiopian colonialism and by building a just and democratic society. In these processes, *Orommumaa* reflects the common denominator of Oromoness. Oromo nationalism as a national project has yet to challenge the conditions that promote the politics of conventional wisdom because of the low level of cognitive liberation, the low level of global awareness, and the low level of political experience and organizational shortcoming.

Low Level of Cognitive Liberation

At the individual level, cognitive liberation means having critical knowledge that allows one to confront a complex problem and solve it. It means also developing a high level of political and cultural understanding and consciousness. On the societal level, a critical understanding of the past and current problems and formulating a dynamic policy to address and solve them indicate cognitive liberation. Despite the fact that Oromo political organizations have some kinds of programs, they have yet to develop specific policies, strategies, and tactics to achieve the objectives of their programs. It is necessary that these policies, strategies, and tactics be evaluated periodically. The existing organizations continue to depend on political programs that do not address this age of global development. Furthermore, the creation of duplicate organizations without major ideological differences also demonstrates how Oromo leaders lack the political maturity necessary to tolerate relatively minor differences in approaches to the liberation issue. Politicians and organizations with a high level of cognitive liberation push their national interest as first priority, and solve their residual differences through open dialogue based on the principles of a common denominator.

Our people have lived under Ethiopian political slavery for more than a century. As a result, many are chained under ignorance and poverty. Many of us are a rural and scattered people without modern communication networks and information. For many the understanding of the world is limited. Under these circumstances, most Oromos are fatalistic and think that external forces will solve their problems. What about formally educated Oromos? The legacy of

Ethiopian politically slavery has psychologically disabled educated Oromos; it has dwarfed our potential and undermined our creativity. Some of us want to be free from Ethiopians, but as a practical matter we act like Ethiopians in our daily lives. Some educated Oromos are more Ethiopian than the Ethiopians themselves. What about the Oromo nationalist intellectuals? Although we began to defend the interest of our people, our cognitive liberation has not reached the level that we can build our organizational capacity. We cannot transform our cognitive liberation without increasing our knowledge of the globalized world order and its politics.

Low Level of Global Awareness

As a consequence of our lack of critical understanding of the racialized nature of the global world order, we try to refashion the world after our disoriented perceptions rather than trying to understand how it works. The racialized capitalist world system is brutal to the people who do not have power and state to protect them. It is heaven for those who have power and wealth. It is hell for most people, like Oromos, who lack power, state, and wealth. We Oromos naively think that this world cares, and somebody in it is going to help us solve our political problems. We fail to understand that we only get support from others if we first help ourselves and convince others that they can benefit by helping us. "Ilma laafa haatu hin jaalatu," jeedhama.

We can only achieve our liberation when we realize our potential. To do this, we must know our potential as a nation, and refashion our understanding of the ways of the fast changing global system. We only get our freedom if we work for it. Otherwise, we remain a powerless and victimized people without voice in the world. We need to learn about the world around us, particularly about countries like the U.S., and how other oppressed people have taken matters into their own hands by aggressively organizing and defending their collective interests. We will build our power, if we believe in ourselves and take individual and organizational action to liberate ourselves. If we continue to see ourselves as powerless victims who fight one another while expecting some leaders or some organizations to liberate us, we remain hopeless victims. We need to understand the realities of the fast changing world order by overcoming our illusions and ignorance.

Low Level of Political Experience and Organizational Deficits

Because we have lived under Ethiopian political slavery for more than one century, we lack experience in building and running a strong political machine. We refuse to recognize our lack of experience. We tend to hide our ignorance through impression management, and pretend that we know every thing. A person who claims he or she knows everything is fool. Nobody is born with knowledge, and nobody knows everything. We fear to take action in order to avoid making mistakes so that we can be considered perfect human beings. We also believe that our leaders and organizations know everything for us, and we have only to do what we are told to do. This tendency has created a wrong impression among the Oromo leadership. As a result, our leaders and organizations require absolute loyalty without listening to the voice of their followers. Such approaches stifle creativity.

Most of us believe in wait and see. Without fulfilling our obligations, we expect miracles. If things go wrong, we are quick to blame those who tried to do something. We believe that external forces will liberate us. We need to stop transferring responsibility to others by blaming

certain leaders and organizations. We need to give up our helpless sense of fatalism. We must establish a single standard by which we measure ourselves both individually and organizationally before we blame others. When we do little or nothing we lack the moral standing to blame others. There is no external power or unknown perfect set of leaders who will lead us to the promised land of liberated Oromia.

Those revolutionary Oromos who have high level of commitment have their own set of problems. They are not ready to share with us their hardships, their grief, and their shortcomings. What they want from their supporters and sympathizer is material assistance, not ideas and knowledge. They always want to tell us stories but they are not ready to listen to their supporters and followers. Because the supporters and sympathizers are not ready to accept a higher level of commitment, they are satisfied with this relationship. It is my observation that such approaches didn't take us any where in the 1990s, and it is my belief they will not take us anywhere in the future. Such dead-end politics must be rejected if we want to make progress toward our liberation.

We must recognize that ideas and knowledge can emerge from ordinary people. The capacity of revolutionary leaders is measured by their ability to listen to their followers and sympathizers and by their willingness to mobilize and coordinate the best ideas and knowledge directed toward taking action. Because our best ideas, knowledge, and other resources are not mobilized and coordinated by our political leaders and activists, our political and social organizations are unable to bring about a paradigm shift in the Oromo national movement. The Oromo movement needs to create a platform using an alternative knowledge of liberation and mobilization. Particularly, the OLF should open up itself to diverse ideas; the ideas and knowledge of ordinary people.

We know that there are no ready-made answers for our problems, and millions of Oromos need to work together to find solutions together based on the principle of a common denominator. When we advocate for openness and inclusiveness of ideas on behalf of others, we should make sure that we operate with the same sense of openness and inclusiveness. We must work to respect each other as members of a family. These are the only way we can solve our organizational shortcoming on all levels.

Strategies for the Liberation of Oromia

The strategies for the liberation of Oromia should include developing policies that expose and destroy the legacy of Ethiopian political slavery both on the individual and societal levels. Our people, particularly we Oromo elites need to liberate ourselves from the prison house of the legacy of Ethiopian political slavery by overcoming our low level of cognitive liberation, our lack of political experience, and our organizational deficits by developing critical global awareness. It is only when we accomplish these that we can become united elite that can serve as the blood vessels of the Oromo movement in order to mobilize and coordinate our liberation strategy. In this way we can aid in building a national organizational capacity. The Oromo national family can build its organizational capacity by reinventing its democratic tradition, the gad system, in a way that can be compatible with the current democratic principles and values.

The OLF as the pillar of liberation politics needs to broaden its political activities. It must struggle to establish a coherent leadership on all levels. This leadership needs to be guided by a research-based policy in order to develop a uniform vision so they can take effective political,

cultural, and diplomatic action. This is an approach by which we can reduce the problem of the uneven development of Oromo nationalism, the politics of conventional wisdom, the low level of cognitive liberation, the low level of global awareness, and our organizational shortcomings.

The OLF should also wholeheartedly support all Oromo movement centers that are gathered together under the umbrella of ULFO because this umbrella can be a platform on which a coherent Oromo leadership based on the principles of common denominator and trust will emerge. These Oromo movement centers also need to be honest with themselves and specialize certain activities in which they are strong in order to broaden the Oromo national movement rather engaging in the politics of conventional wisdom.

Chapter 6

Oromia: The Nation in Search of Freedom, Statehood and Democracy[21]

The Oromos are one of the three largest ethnonational groups in Africa. In the Ethiopian empire alone, they are estimated at 40 million. They call their country Oromia. The Oromos used to be called Galla, a derogatory name (equivalent to Nigger), by the Ethiopian colonizers and Euro-American scholars who have supported them. The Oromos never accepted the name that was given to them by Ethiopians since it implied savagery, slavery, paganism, inferiority, and cultural backwardness. The Oromo used to call their homeland Biyya Oromoo," before they were colonized by the alliance of Ethiopian colonialism and European imperialism during the scramble for Africa.

When Africa was partitioned during the last decades of the 19th century by Christian European colonial powers, Ethiopia was seen as a Christian Island on a heathen continent, and because Ethiopians (Amharas and Tigrayans) were able to use a Christian discourse in their collaboration with European colonial powers, they were given military and other assistance to colonize and thereby Christianize some Oromo people. In this process, the Oromos were incorporated into Ethiopia and the European-dominated racialized capitalist world system as colonial subjects and semi-slaves. Since then, the Oromos have been under the total control of the Ethiopian colonial state that has been supported by global powers, including the UK, the former USSR, and the US. As a result, today the Oromo people are one of the most impoverished and uneducated population groups in the world. The Oromos live under Ethiopian political slavery. They do not enjoy the freedom of expression, organization, and association. In addition they have no access to an independent media. They are not allowed to bear arms. For the most part, the Oromos live in segregated rural areas while cities in Oromia are predominantly populated by Ethiopian colonial settlers who have better access to all opportunities, including employment, education, health services, and other social amenities.

Before their colonization, the Oromos had an egalitarian democratic system of government known as *gada*. This system was based on the principles of checks and balances (such as periodic succession of eight years and division of power among executive, legislative, and judiciary branches), balanced opposition (among five parties), and power sharing between higher and lower administrative organs to prevent power from falling into the hands of despots. Other principles of the system include balanced representation of clans, lineages, regions, and

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confederacies; the accountability of leaders; the settlement of disputes through reconciliation; and respect for basic rights and liberties. Recognizing this reality and challenging Euro-centric worldviews, American Anthropologist Bonnie Holcomb (1991: 1-10) notes that the *gada* system "organized the Oromo people in an all-encompassing democratic republic even before the few European pilgrims arrived from England on the shores of North America and only later built a democracy." Since the Oromos were organized under the *gada* system politically and militarily, the Ethiopians, although they tried for several centuries, could not colonize the Oromo until the last decades of the 19th century when the balance of power was changed by European intervention in the favor of Ethiopians. Oromo nationalists initiated the Oromo national movement under the leadership of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) in the early 1970s to liberate Oromos from Ethiopian colonial repression and exploitation.

The Oromo National Movement

The Oromo national movement seeks self-determination for Oromia. This movement, as an anti-colonial national struggle, aims at dismantling racial/ethnonational hierarchy, Ethiopian settler colonialism, and the Ethiopian institutions that have been legitimated by the ideology of racism. It specifically challenges economic and labor exploitation, cultural destruction and repression, and the denial of individual and national rights while struggling to restore Oromo democracy. The central contradiction that is built into Ethiopian colonial politics is the racialization/ethnicization of state power leading to further rigid ethnoclass stratification and dependence on big powers without accountability to the ruled (see Jalata, 1993, 1996). The acute political and economic crises in Oromia and Ethiopia, and the policy response to them, have contributed to social unrest, and ethnocultural and social movements. These crises stem from the political behavior of the Ethiopian ethnocratic state and the global forces that have become involved in the Ethiopian empire on the side of this state without requiring accountability, the rule of law, or the implementation of at least "limited democracy."

The interplay of multiple social, structural and historical factors in the global capitalist world system has facilitated the development of Oromo nationalism. Despite using brutal measures including murder and rape, the colonizers were unable to crush the Oromo human spirit, quash individual and collective resistance to the imposition of racial/ethnonational domination, or overcome the immortality of certain cultural memory. In addition, changes in social structures resulting from: economic and political changes, urbanization, community formation, the development of institutions, the emergence of an educated class, and the dissemination of social scientific and political knowledge through global and local networks resulted in a synergistic reaction that resulted in the development of Oromo nationalism. The development of Oromo nationalism cannot be understood without linking it to the processes of ideological formation, cultural revitalization, institutional development, and the production and dissemination of alternative knowledge. Gurutz Bereciartu (1994) calls these processes "national revindication" in which the colonized people recover and reclaim their lost cultural, political, and economic rights by developing their collective consciousness of nationalism.

The development of Oromo nationalism was slower than that of other Africans who were colonized directly by the European powers during the scramble for Africa. The Oromos were colonized directly by Ethiopian (Amhara-Tigray) minority settlers who attempted to destroy Oromo peoplehood through genocide/ethnocide and selective assimilation. The Ethiopian

colonial government with the help of the weapons, mercenaries, and advisors from Great Britain, France, and Italy liquidated half the Oromo population (five million out of ten million) and their leadership during the last decades of the nineteenth century (see de Salviac, 1901; Hassen, 1998). The Ethiopian colonial settlers established their main geopolitical centers in Oromia through which racist and colonial policies have been implemented to keep the remaining Oromos as second-class citizens, and to exploit their economic and labor resources by denying them access to state power. These geopolitical centers are garrison cities surrounded by the Oromo rural masses that are denied meaningful health, educational, and other social services, despite the fact that these colonial settlers and their collaborators depend on the economic and labor resources of the Oromo majority.

These "garrison cities were geopolitical headquarters from which Ethiopian soldiers were dispatched to impose colonial rule through enslavement, subjugation, and expropriation of the basic means of production, such as cattle, land, and other valuables. Through these centers expropriated goods flowed for local consumption and an international market" (Jalata, 1993: 62). The settlers also created the nafxanya-gabbar system (semi-slavery) that they used to allocate the Oromo farmers among numerous colonial officials, soldiers, and collaborators forcing the surviving Oromo populace to produce agricultural commodities for local consumption and the international marketplace. The farmers were also coerced into working without payment for the settlers, intermediaries, and the colonial state for a certain number of days each week.

The Ethiopian state introduced the process of forced recruitment of labor via slavery and the nafxanya-gabbar system. "The gun (from Europe) and the gun carrier (from Abyssinia) arrived in the colonies as one unit," Bonnie Holcomb and Sisai Ibssa (1990: 135) note, "and this unit basically expresses political alliance that created the neftenga-gabbar [sic] relationship, the relation that lay at the heart of the emerging Ethiopian colonialism." Whenever Oromo farmers failed to provide services or pay taxes or tributes, the settlers enslaved their children or wives. During the colonial wars, millions of Oromos and other colonized peoples were sold (Jalata, 1993: 67-68; Schmitt, 1994: 32-34; Bulcha, 1997: 19-33). The Ethiopian colonialists continued to depopulate Oromia through the slave trade until the 1930s when the Italian fascists abolished slavery in order to recruit adequate labor for their agricultural plantations in the Horn of Africa. Emperor Menelik, the founder of the Ethiopian empire, and his wife at one time owned 70,000 slaves, and he was considered "Ethiopia's greatest slave entrepreneur" (Marcus, 1975: 73).

The Ethiopian state destroyed the Oromo leadership that resisted Ethiopian colonialism, and co-opted those submissive Oromo leaders who accept the role of intermediary (balabbat) in the Ethiopian colonial system. After expropriating the three-fourths of Oromo lands, the settlers gave the remaining one-fourth to these Oromo intermediaries who were integrated into the colonial system and acted against the interests of the Oromo majority. As a result, the majority of Oromos became landless gabbars, tenants, and sharecroppers. The major objectives of the local balabbat system were to ensure the maintenance and reproduction of the Ethiopian colonial system and to facilitate the continuous supply of grain, labor, and other necessary materials for the settlers. A few Oromos who became collaborators and served the interests of their classes and that of the settlers were ethiopianized. However, Ethiopian colonialism and its institutions kept the Oromo majority under tight control and darkness by denying them education and information, and by suppressing Oromo institutions.

Paradoxically, from 1935 to 1941, the Italian fascist colonialism of the Ethiopian empire created new conditions by removing all these archaic Ethiopian institutions. Italian colonialism

by abolishing the nafxanya-gabbar and balabat systems, slavery, the Ethiopian landholding system, and by introducing wage-labor and colonial capitalism, created social structural and conjunctural factors that would allow the Oromos to express their Oromoness as well as their grievances (Jalata, 1993: 83-85). The Italians attempted to win over the Oromos and mobilized them against the Ethiopians by broadcasting in the Oromo language, using this language in the court and schools (Hassen, 1993: 77), and by giving "many of them full rights to the land they had cultivated under Amhara landlords" (Sbacchi, 1985: 160).

Although the Ethiopian state was restored with the help of the British government in 1941, Italian colonialism laid down an economic infrastructure that facilitated the development of colonial capitalism in Oromia. The new social forces that emerged with the development of colonial capitalism began to challenge the Ethiopian state and its archaic ideology. One of the political forces that started to challenge the Ethiopian state was an Oromo national movement. Despite the barbaric nature of Ethiopian colonial rule that restricted leadership development, in the 1960s Oromia began to produce a centralized leadership somewhat linked to a farmer rebellion. The lack of educational opportunity had delayed the development of an Oromo leadership for a long time. Even in the early 1990s, one source estimated that less than 0.01% of Oromos received modern education out of the total population of about forty million (see Baasaa, 1994: 30).

Global capitalism and the imperial interstate system facilitated the enslavement and the subjugation of the Oromos. In the capitalist world-economy, those peoples who have state power or meaningful access to state power relatively enjoy various political, economic, and cultural advantages. They are recognized internationally and regionally by the imperial interstate system including multinational organizations and corporations. Business and state elites who get resources from these linkages and who control domestic resources suppress the colonized peoples and deny them meaningful access to state power (Enloe, 1986: 39). The incorporation of Oromia into Ethiopia made the Oromos invisible in the world. Since the Oromos were identified with Ethiopians, the colonizers who suppressed their Oromo identity and robbed their cultural and economic resources, kept the existence of the Oromos and their national liberation struggle hidden until the early 1990s (see Lata, 1998: 125-152). Even today the Oromos in the diaspora are having difficulty in introducing themselves and their struggle to the world.

The Search for Freedom and Democracy

Oromo nationalism did not develop into a mass movement until the early 1990s (see Jalata, 1997). The Ethiopian colonial state and its institutions delayed the development of Oromo nationalism by preventing the emergence of Oromo leadership through co-opting the submissive elements and liquidating the nationalist ones, by suppressing Oromo autonomous institutions, and by erasing Oromo history, culture, and language. Despite the fact that Oromo individuals and various Oromo groups resisted the combined forces of Ethiopian settler colonialism and global imperialism, it took until the early 1960s for a few Oromo elites and urbanites to start developing Oromo collective consciousness and nationalism. The development of colonial/peripheral capitalism in Oromia, the emergence of a few conscious Oromo intellectual and bureaucrats, the cumulative experiences of struggle, and politicized collective and individual grievances has facilitated the development of Oromo nationalism (Jalata, 1993, 1998).

Beginning in the 1960s, some Oromos began moving into the cities where colonial settlers have been concentrated. As some Oromos flowed from rural areas into cities, the condition of urban areas began to change. While a few Oromos were successful and became petty traders, most became laborers, semi-laborers, or unemployed. These groups along with Oromo students brought the Oromo language and culture to urban areas where the colonialists were concentrated. The rural Oromo masses most of which lacked formal education were not the only ones mistreated by the Ethiopian colonizers. Those Oromo elites who joined the Ethiopian colonial institutions were not treated as equal citizens. Since the colonial government ignored them, those few Oromo individuals who joined colonial institutions (such as schools, parliament, the army, and the administration) and Oromo merchants began to think about ways to improve the Oromo living standard.

Despite their relative level of achievement, these individuals had inferior status in relation to the Ethiopians due to their Oromo national identity. Paradoxically, the idea of developing the collective consciousness of the Oromos and Oromo nationalism was mainly initiated by a few Oromos who were educated to be members of an Ethiopianized Oromo collaborative class. "Exclusion breeds failed assimilation," Anthony Smith (1982: 31) writes, "and reawakens an ethnic consciousness among the professional elites, at exactly the moment when the intellectuals are beginning to explore the historic roots of the community."

Since there was a fundamental contradiction between the Ethiopian colonizing structures and the colonized Oromos, Ethiopian society was unable to culturally and structurally assimilate the Oromo elites. The formation of the Macha-Tulama Self-Help Association in 1963-1964 marked the public rise of Oromo nationalism. These Oromo elites through forming this association in Fifinnee (Addis Ababa), the capital city of the Ethiopian empire, started to articulate the collective grievances of the Oromo people, and formulate programs to solve some of the economic, social and educational problems of Oromo society. Despite the fact that the Oromos provided resources used to build Ethiopian infrastructures and institutions, they were denied access to the resulting social amenities. Reflecting on this reality, in May 1966, the association at its Itaya meeting expressed that: "(1) less than one percent of Oromo school age children ever get the opportunity to go to school; (2)...less than one percent of the Oromo population get adequate medical services; (3) ... less than fifty percent of the Oromo population own land; (4)...a very small percentage of the Oromo population have access to [modern] communication services. [And yet] the Oromo paid more than eighty percent of the taxes for education, health, and communication" (quoted in Hassen, 1998: 205-206).

Furthermore, when the Ethiopian government and Ethiopian elites continued to mistreat these Oromo elites, conspired to deny the Oromos opportunities, and even attempted to destroy the leadership of the association, the association under its charismatic leader, Taddasa Biru, unsuccessfully attempted in 1966 to take over the control of the Ethiopian state by assassinating Emperor Haile Selassie (Zoga, 1993: 118-133). The Ethiopian colonial state and the Ethiopian settlers in Oromia did not tolerate any manifestation of Oromo consciousness. The Haile Selassie government banned the association in 1967, and its leaders were imprisoned or killed. Because the association started "to articulate the dissatisfaction of the Oromo with the government and particularly with their position in society," it was not tolerated (Wood, 1983: 516). Similarly, the Bale Oromo-armed struggle that started in the early 1960s was suppressed with the assistance of Great Britain, the United States, and Israel between 1968 and 1970 (Gilkes, 1975: 217-218). The banning of the Macha-Tulama Self-Help Association and the suppression of the Bale Oromo

armed struggle forced Oromo nationalism to go underground. "The Macha-Tulama movement marked the beginning of a new political experience that was crucial to the growth of Oromo nationalism in the 1970s, an experience that taught the Oromo elites that they needed a liberation movement that would marshal the resources of their people, harmonize their actions and channel their creative activities and innovation against the oppressive Ethiopian system" (Hassen, 1998: 196).

The suppression of Oromo reform nationalism forced some Oromo nationalists to go underground in Oromia while others went to Somalia, the Middle East, and other countries to continue the Oromo national movement. When the Oromos were denied the right to express themselves in the late 1960s and the early 1970s, a few Oromo militant elements produced political pamphlets, such as Kana Beekta (Do you know this?), and historical documents, such as The Oromos: Voice against Tyranny. For the first time the original name of this people, Oromo was used in publication by rejecting the derogatory name, Galla.

Oromo revolutionary nationalism emerged with the birth of the OLF in the early 1970s. The OLF declares that the main "objective of the struggle is the realization of national self-determination for the Oromo people and their liberation from oppression and exploitation in all their forms. This can only be realized through the successful consummation of the new democratic revolution . . . and the establishment of the people's democratic republic of Oromia." This organization also recognizes the significance of creating a multinational democratic state through voluntary association by dismantling the Ethiopian colonial, dictatorial, and racist structures. The more Oromos intensified their national struggle, the more the crisis of the Ethiopian state and its terrorism increased.

Oromo Nationalism and State Terrorism

A few Oromo revolutionary elements established an underground political movement and transformed reform nationalism into a revolutionary one because the Ethiopian colonial government totally denied the Oromos any legitimate channel through which to express their individual and collective interests. The revolutionary Oromo leaders produced political pamphlets and expanded their sphere of influence by organizing different political circles in different sectors of the Oromo society, such as students, professionals, workers, farmers, soldiers, students, and the army. Those Oromos who fled to foreign countries and received military training returned to Oromia and initiated the Oromo-armed struggle in 1973. This group and other Oromo revolutionary elements created the OLF in 1974. As soon as the OLF began to challenge Ethiopian colonial domination ideologically, intellectually, politically, and militarily, the Ethiopian state initiated terrorism against Oromo nationalists and the Oromo people.

The Oromo movement played an important role in overthrowing the Ethiopian military regime headed by Mengistu Haile Mariam in May 1991. With the demise of this, regime the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), dominated by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF), came to power with the support of the US government. It subsequently established a minority Tigrayan-based authoritarian-terrorist government. To obtain political legitimacy, the new regime initially invited different liberation fronts—most prominent of which was the OLF—and other political organizations to join it in establishing a transitional government. The new regime persuaded these fronts and organizations that it would

prepare the ground for the formation of a multicultural federal democratic government of Ethiopia.

However, in less than a year, this regime expelled all coalition partners by using intimidation, terrorism, and war establishing an ethnic-based party dictatorship without any opposition from the US and other Western countries (Trueman, 1997; Pollock, 1996, 1997). The US, other Western countries, and the Organization of African Unity called the sham elections this regime used to legitimize it power satisfactory, fair, and free (see Reuters Business Briefing, July 5, 1994; Reuters, May 15, 1995). The election victory was accomplished through systematic intimidation and outright terrorism. During the transitional period, however, Oromo nationalism was transformed from an elite enterprise into a mass movement. The development of the Oromo national movement, representing the largest national group in the Ethiopian empire, prevented the Tigrayan-led regime from establishing its hegemony. As a result, the Oromos are the main targets of Ethiopian state terrorism. Because those groups who control the political, intellectual, and economic resources of the world dominate the discourse on terrorism, the state terrorism of the Tigrayan regime goes unnoticed. That is why Annamarie Oliverio (1997: 48) notes that "relatively little scholarly attention has been devoted to the relationship between the politics of the state, the politics of terrorism, and the production of injustice in the world."

State terrorism is a systematic policy of a government through which massive violence is practiced to impose terror on a given population group to change their behavior of political struggle or resistance. The essence of Ethiopian state terrorism can be clearly understood within this context. The state that engages in terrorism is not a protector of citizens; it rather violates civil and human rights through assassinations, mass killings and imprisonments, and the display of corpses on streets so that the remaining population accedes to the power of the violent state due to the fear of terror. The main assumption of such a state is that it can control the population by destroying their culture of resistance and leaders. States, such as the Ethiopian state, that fail to establish ideological hegemony and political order are unstable and insecure; hence they engage in terrorism (see Oliverio, 1997; Gibbs, 1989). The Tigrayan-led Ethiopian government has accepted state violence against the Oromos and others as a legitimate means of establishing political stability and order.

The Tigrayan-dominated regime practices state terrorism against the Oromos with the support of global capitalist elites because the Oromos have intellectually challenged Ethiopian cultural and ideological domination. In the process they have also redefined the relationships among Oromos, Amharas and Tigrayans. Since this regime primarily survives on Oromo economic resources, it uses terrorist actions against the Oromo people to maintain control of these resources. The terrorist activities of this regime include systematic assassinations of prominent Oromos, open and hidden murders of thousands of Oromos, reinitiating of villagization and eviction of Oromo farmers and herders, expansion of prisons in Oromia, forcing of thousands Oromos into hidden and underground detention camps, and looting of the economic resources of Oromia to develop Tigray, enriching Tigrayan elites and their collaborators (see Seifa Nabalbal, no. 94, Nov. 8, 1996; Urjii 1994, 1995, 1996 and 1997 series).

The OLF (1996: 6), comparing the state terrorism of the military regime with that of the Tigrayans, asserts that "the Derg's terror was conducted officially, and the regime actually tried to justify its actions and took responsibility for it. Executions and extrajudicial killings were announced officially. But the current regime carries out its crimes mostly in secret and unlike the Derg's period, there is no official records . . . The present regime's policies . . . actually amounts

to a policy of genocide " Umar Fatanssa (Fossati et la., 1996:43), an elderly Oromo, also says the following: "We had never experienced anything like that, not under Haile Selassie, nor under the Mengistu regime: these people just come and shoot your son or your daughter dead in front of your eyes."

Without any doubt, the Oromos are exposed to systematic state terrorism; Tigrayan elites, their collaborators, and transnational corporations terrorize the Oromos in order to use their lands and natural and economic resources (see Jalata, 1997). History repeats itself in different forms and contexts. The Amhara elites, with the help of European colonial powers, systematically destroyed an independent Oromo leadership through extermination. Later they used so-called "socialism" and the Soviet bloc to suppress the Oromo national movement. Currently, state terrorism manifests itself in this empire in different forms. Its obvious manifestation includes violence in the form of war, assassination, murder, castration, hanging, torture, and rape. There are instances of burying people alive or throwing them off cliffs. The seemingly endless violence includes confiscation of property by the police and the army, forcing people into submission by intimidation, and beating and disarming citizens (Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch/Africa, 1997; Survival International, 1995; Oromia Support Group 1997 series).

Since 1992, several thousands of Oromos have been killed or arrested for suspicion of being OLF supporters or sympathizers or for refusing proposed membership of the EPRDF (Fossati, Namarra, and Niggli, 1996). Former prisoners testified that their arms and legs were tied tightly together on their backs and their naked bodies were whipped. Large containers or bottles filled with water were fixed to their testicles, or if they were women, bottles or poles were pushed into their vaginas. There were prisoners who were locked up in empty steel barrels and tormented with heat in the tropical sun during the day and with cold at night. There were also prisoners who were forced into pits so that fire could be made on top of them.

The government soldiers have openly shot thousands of people in rural Oromia and left their bodies for hyenas, or buried them in mass graves, or thrown their corpse off cliffs. Other methods of killings include burning, bombing, cutting throats or arteries in the neck, asphyxiation by tightly binding the chest or by strangulation, and burying people up to their necks in the ground. Prompted by hate for the Oromos, TPLF soldiers don't even spare pregnant women or youth. They have killed several pregnant women and hundreds of Oromo children between the ages of 12 and 16 (the Oromia Support Group, August/September 1996). According to the Oromia Support Group (1997:8), "A 7-month pregnant woman in Robe, Bale was arrested and beaten . . . She miscarried and later died in custody. When relatives went to claim her body, they were told to replace the remains with a living relative. When asked to explain, the TPLF soldiers said, "She died with OLF objectives still stuck in her brain and we could not get what we wanted from her."

The way these soldiers have treated women and girls demonstrates widespread inhumane behavior. Fossati, Namarra and Niggli (1996:10) report that, "in prison women are often humiliated and mistreated in the most brutal fashion. Torturers ram poles or bottles into their vaginas, connect electrodes to the lips of their vulva, or the victims are dragged into the forest and gang-raped by interrogation officers." Despite all these inhumane and criminal activities, US officials deny the existence of torture in Ethiopian prisons or camps (see US Department of State, 1993). Explaining how systematic terrorism takes place through a tightly organized party which functions from the central government to the grass-root committee, the Oromia Support Group (May/June 1997: 18) notes the following: "Testimonies of victims of abuse by rural

security personnel persistently pointed to the role of security committees, consisting of local officials, political cadres of the EPRDF and its affiliates and army officers, in control of the 'peasant militias.' The committee system made the militia an integral part of the national political structure and placed them under the control of the central government through the ruling party apparatus. They provided the interface between local authorities, the militia, the army and the ruling party, in practice subordinating local security structures to the federal authorities."

Being misled or intentionally accepting the Ethiopian Constitution at its face value, US officials praise the Ethiopian government for its goal of a "decentralized system that brings justice closer to the people" (US Department of State, 1997: 4) and reject the idea that "real power is retained at the center and used repressively" (the Economist, August 16, 1997:36). It is paradoxical that when Oromos and others assert that the Tigrayan-dominated regime has brought terrorism to their neighbors and families, US officials argue that it has brought justice closer to the people. The Oromos are not even allowed to have a meaningful relief association in Ethiopia and neighboring countries. Realizing that the Ethiopian government and international organizations care very little about the welfare of Oromo society, a few Oromo leaders created the Oromo Relief Association, ORA, in exile as an independent humanitarian Oromo association in the late 1970s to assist Oromo refugees in the Horn of Africa (Dibaba, 1997: 7). Terfa Dibaba (1997: 9) estimated that in 1984/85 there were more than a half million Oromo refugees in Sudan, Somalia and Djibouti. Assuming that the political change of 1991 would allow a peaceful and democratic political resolution for the Oromo problem, ORA moved its head office to Finfinnee and shifted its program from relief work to rehabilitation and settlement activities, and developed projects that included health, education, agricultural and forestation activities (see Dibaba, 1997).

According to the Oromia Support Group (August/September 1996), one thousand three-hundred fifty-two ORA orphans moved to Oromia from Sudan, when ORA decided to locate its headquarters in Oromia in 1991. Some of these children were killed by TPLF soldiers or drowned by big rivers while being chased by these soldiers, and others were captured and taken to the Dhidheessa concentration camp where they were beaten, tortured, raped, and some died of hunger and infection. The regime closed ORA regional offices in August 1995 and its headquarters in February 1996 and confiscated all its property. ORA activities were banned not only in Ethiopia, but also in Djibouti, Somalia and Kenya. Explaining the banning of ORA in Djibouti, Fossati, Namarra and Niggli (1996: 3) comment that "The only organization that for some years looked after the Oromo refugees, the Oromo Relief Association (ORA), was banned...in June 1995 by the Djibouti government at the request of the Ethiopian government." Most international humanitarian organizations did not object (see Dibaba, 1997).

Impoverishing people by transferring their wealth and capital from non-Tigrayans to the Tigrayan elites and Tigrayan society and their local and international collaborators through the use of state machinery is a form of hidden economic violence. Thousands of Oromos have lost their lands through eviction and their cattle through looting; Oromo forests have been set on fire in an attempt to destroy the Oromo Liberation Army. Tigrayans and their collaborators cut Oromo forests to sell or use the woods. This regime uses economic violence to impoverish the Oromo society in an attempt to destroy it. According to Trueman (1997:147-8), "Natural resources in Oromo and other areas in the South—agricultural products, natural forests and minerals—are being plundered and the environment destroyed. Villages close to areas of conflict

with the OLF have been subject to waves of arrests, beatings and disappearances. There are reports of families being burned alive in their houses and many reports of looting of property."

Using the leverage of Western countries, the Meles regime pressures neighboring governments to return or expel Oromo refugees from their countries. The alliance of the West with this regime has frightened neighboring countries, such as Djibouti, Kenya and Sudan and turned them against the Oromo struggle and Oromo refugees. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) has even failed to provide reasonable protection for thousands of Oromo refugees in Djibouti: "The Oromo refugees are generally regarded by the Djibouti authorities as unwelcome aliens or illegal immigrants, despite the fact that Djibouti is a signatory to the Geneva Convention on Refugees. Every day the refugees fear being caught in one of the frequent police raids and forced back across the border. Only a small minority has legal refugee status" (Fossati et la. 1996: 3). The burdens of Oromo women refugees are heavy. Many of them are raped while crossing the border on the way to Djibouti. In addition, Djibouti households or the Djibouti police force them to work as slaves. Sebida Musa says that, "They take the women home and treat them as their personal property. If one of the women gets pregnant, she is mercilessly thrown out into the street, where she and her unwanted child have to …survive by begging" (Quoted in Fossati, Namarra and Niggli, 1996: 10).

Oromo refugees have been abused by the Djibouti authorities and the Ethiopian government, and ignored by international organizations, such as UNHCR. In addition to the lack of food, Oromo children are denied an education in Djibouti. "Our difficulty is that as Oromo we are threatened and endangered both at home in Ethiopia," Zeinaba Ibrahim says, "and as refugees in Djibouti" (quoted in Fossati, Namarra and Niggli, 1996: 28). Probably following the instructions of the Ethiopian and Djibouti governments or due to the fear of these governments, the UNHCR provides no material help to Oromo refugees in Djibouti. Fossati, Namarra and Niggli (1996:44) note that: "The Oromo council of elders told us they believed they were entitled to a small portion of the international aid available to refugees, but did not even get a glass of water from the UNHCR and had been completely forgotten."

Some refugees have also faced terrorism and forced repatriation. Hussein Sora, a young Kenyan Oromo lawyer, accused the Ethiopian regime of international terrorism compiling a report on the criminal activities of the Ethiopian security forces in Kenya since 1992. According to this report, the TPLF forces assassinated prominent Oromo refugees, bombed the houses of some Kenyan Oromos, abducted civil servants, and shot some citizens in Kenya (cited in Oromia Support Group, 1997). This lawyer died the same year he compiled and distributed the report to the Kenyan authorities and international organizations. The agents of the Ethiopian government were suspected of killing him by poisoning. The TPLF forces have continued to enter into Kenya murdering and looting the economic resources of some Kenyan Oromos by accusing them of harboring the Oromo Liberation Army. "The Tigrean incursions are ostensibly to punish Boran Oromo suspected of supporting the OLF. The soldiers bear characteristic facial markings of Tigrean culture: they wear Ethiopian army uniforms… The raids are of two kinds. The bombing, murder, rape and plunder of Boran Oromo and assassination of prominent elders suspected of supporting the OLF are one kind. Simple banditry . . . and murder [are] the other" (Oromia Support Group, (March/April 1997: 10).

When it comes to the Oromos, international organizations care less even if international laws are broken. The Oromos are denied sanctuary in neighboring countries and are denied the right to be refugees. Since Oromo refugees are not welcomed by neighboring countries and

international organizations, there are thousands of 'internal' Oromo refugees in Oromia and Ethiopia. Fleeing from Ethiopian state terrorism, these internal refugees hide in the bush and remote villages. Fossati, Namarra and Niggli (1996:36) assert that "there are not only Oromo refugees abroad, but probably just as many refugees in their homeland—displaced, in hiding, hunted, who still see a slim chance of staying in the country." Suspecting that these internal refugees support the Oromo national struggle, the regime attempts to control their movements and the movement of other Oromos. Trevor Trueman (1997:146) notes, "The movement of rural people is closely watched. Peasants are repeatedly searched on the way to market and goods are likely to be confiscated. Those traveling by bus are subjected to body searches, beatings, robbery and imprisonment. Peasants avoid being seen talking to foreigners." The government and its international supporters use democratic discourse to hide state terrorism and massive human rights violations.

The Problem of Oromo Nationalism

Ethiopian settler colonialism, state terrorism, cultural destruction or repression, political slavery, and the denial of education disabled the development of Oromo indigenous institutions. Indigenous institutions and organizations provide "a favorable structure of political opportunities" for oppressed groups (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, 1988: 697). Hence, the destruction or suppression of Oromo institutions denied the Oromos "organizational infrastructure" that could evolve from Oromo indigenous and institutions. D. McAdam (1997: 178) asserts that, "the ability of insurgents to generate a social movement is ultimately dependent on the presence of an indigenous infrastructure that can be used to link members of the aggrieved population into an organized campaign of mass political action." D. McCadam, J.D. McCarthy and M. N. Zald (1988: 709) also note that, "the key concept linking macro- and micro-processes in movement emergence is that of the micro-mobilization context. A micro-mobilization context can be defined as any small group setting in which processes of collective attribution are combined with rudimentary forms of organization to produce mobilization for collective action."

Under Ethiopian colonial rule, the Oromos have never been permitted to develop autonomous institutions. The Ethiopian colonial government has imposed absolute control both on Oromo nationalists and the Oromo masses. The indigenous Oromo institutions and organizations have been suppressed and denied freedom of development. As a result, Oromo society still lacks organizational infrastructure. Movement scholars consider "the strength and breadth of indigenous organizations as the crucial factor in the rapid spread of the movement" (see McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, 1988: 703). The lack of development, state violence, and tight control has disabled the Oromo society by maintaining what McCarthy (1987: 49-66) calls "infrastructure deficits." Consequently, Oromo nationalists and activists have been prevented from educating and helping the Oromo masses. Under these conditions, it has been very difficult to build informal groups or associational networks that "serve as the basic building blocks of social movements" (McCarthy, 1987: 711).

The Oromo national movement, particularly the Oromo Liberation Front, has been struggling under these dangerous conditions. The Ethiopian state is above the rule of law, and it has liquidated Oromo activists without any hesitation. That is why the Oromo national movement has been an underground movement in Oromia. Several thousands of leaders, activists, and sympathizers have been killed or imprisoned. Movement scholars explain that "the

level of infrastructure in a given population is itself shaped by the type of macro factors…. Broad macro-processes, such as industrialization, urbanization, mass migration, and the like, largely determine the degree to which groups in society are organized and the structure of that organization. The extent and structure of that organization in turn imply very different potentials of collective action" (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, 1988: 711). The Oromos still lack such macro-structural political opportunities since they are a geographically dispersed and impoverished rural people.

More than ninety percent of Oromos are still poor farmers and herders. In garrison cities in Oromia, the Oromos are minority since Ethiopian settlers dominate these cities. These conditions created serious obstacles for the development of Oromo nationalism and collective action. Because of the lack of modern communication and transportation networks, and the domination of the media (television, radio, newspaper) by the Ethiopian colonial government, the Oromos have limited communication among themselves. The Oromos are denied the opportunity to have their own independent media. Most of those few Oromos who had an opportunity of education were forced to be Amharized or Ethiopianized rejecting their Oromo identity. Most of those educated elements that tried to maintain their Oromo identity and promote the interest of their people were systematically suppressed or liquidated. Explaining how writing about Oromo by Oromos can lead to death, Hassen (1998: 203-204) says, "Mamo wrote a history of the Oromo, which was confiscated by the government when his house was searched in 1966. In addition to writing history, Mamo prepared a plan for a new government, a new constitution and distribution of land among the landless tenants. This was too much for the ruling Amhara elites, and Mamo Mazamir was martyred for producing that document."

The denial of intellectual freedom still prevents Oromo scholars and the whole of Oromo society from freely developing alternative knowledge. The Oromo literature that started to mushroom when the OLF joined the Transitional Government of Ethiopia between 1991 and 1992 was suppressed. Some Oromo scholars and journalists who tried to express themselves were killed or have perished in Ethiopian prisons. Today, Oromo scholars in the diaspora produce and disseminate an alternative knowledge that is considered illegal in Ethiopia and Oromia. Challenging how the Ethiopian knowledge elites and Ethiopianists have treated Oromos, the diaspora "publications on Oromo cultural and social history challenge a top-down paradigm to historiography and make the Oromo subjects rather than objects of history. Studying people as subjects or agents helps scholars avoid producing false knowledge" (Jalata, 1998: 253-254).

Until the Oromos intensified their struggle in the 1990s, the world even did not recognize the existence of 40 million Oromos. The Oromos were seen as people "without history" who were to disappear through assimilation or genocide. "The lack of critical scholarship has inadvertently distorted the human achievements of conquered peoples like the Oromo," William Shack (1994: 642-643) notes, "including transformations of their social, cultural, and political institutions." Oromo nationalism influenced several Oromo scholars and friends of the Oromos to produce and disseminate an alternative knowledge in Oromo studies. The emergent Oromo studies in North America and Europe, and the formation of the Oromo Studies Association in the diaspora attest to this reality (Jalata, 1998: 253-292; Lata, 1998: 125-152). The Oromos in Oromia and Ethiopia do not have intellectual freedom. The Ethiopian colonial elites are deliberately keeping Oromos in the darkness of ignorance in order to maintain the Ethiopian colonial system.

Conclusion

Despite all these problems, the Oromo national movement has gained some cultural, intellectual and ideological success in the Oromo society both in Oromia in the diaspora. Oromia has emerged out of one century of historical obscurity; the Oromo people have achieved a degree of cognitive liberation because of the development of Oromo nationalism. Oromo organizations have begun to embrace Oromo democratic tradition known as *gada*, and recognize the importance of the unity of purpose. They have started to work toward building a united front. By challenging the Ethiopian ideological and cultural hegemony, the Oromo movement has introduced political instability to the Ethiopian empire. The empire currently survives by sheer military force. "Generalized political instability destroys any semblance of a political status quo," McAdam (1997: 177) writes, "thus encouraging collective action by all groups sufficiently organized to contest the structure of a new political order."

Since the Ethiopian government does not allow for a peaceful struggle, the only avenue that the Oromos have is armed-struggle. The destruction of the emerging indigenous Oromo associations and organizations, such as the Oromo Relief Associations, the Oromo Human Rights League, and various professional, political, and economic organizations negatively affected the expanding political opportunities for the Oromo national movement. The US-sponsored Ethiopian "democracy" has utterly failed to resolve the main contradiction of racialization/ethnicization of state power that has been built into Ethiopian politics since the creation of this empire. Without an accountable, democratic and legitimate state, the colonized nations, such as the Oromo may face disastrous conditions similar to Bosnia, Rwanda, and Kosovo. If the world community allows the current Ethiopian state terrorism and massive human rights violations to continue, these conditions may soon lead to a genocidal war. The world conflicts that are racial or ethnic-related cannot be easily contained or stopped once they erupt into a full violent conflict and confrontation. Therefore, the world community needs to become capable of mediating these processes in Ethiopia and to develop procedures and criteria by which to resolve these dangerous conflicts before it is too late.

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Chapter 7

Oromo Political Culture and Leadership[22]

The problem of Oromo political leadership manifests in three ways. First, the Oromo community is politically fragmented. This fragmentation manifests itself both among the populace and the leadership. Second, the community relies on a model of leadership that depends upon a restricted core of decision and policy makers with few democratic feedback links to the broader community and little tendency on the part of some leaders to use those links. Third, the present generation of active and emerging leaders has had few legitimate opportunities to learn and practice leadership skills. Given the current political situation and despite the claim of *gada* principles and values much of the leadership is exercised surreptitiously and thus with limited ties to the broader community.

These issues have their roots in and are interwoven through the last four centuries of Oromo history. Oromo development prior to the mid-seventeenth century resulted in a territorial expansion that made it increasingly difficult for people in far-flung areas to fully participate in the central democratic *gada* tradition that was celebrated and renewed in the octennial gathering of the Oromo people, the *Gumi Gayoo* (assembly of multitudes). Between the mid-seventeenth and the end of the eighteenth century, this territorial expansion resulted in the decentralization of a single *gada* republic into local and regional autonomous governments. These emerging governments often lost connection to the centralized political authority that is symbolized by the *Gumi Gayoo*. Over time some local democratic *gada* governments were replaced by the *moti* system (kingdom), allowing for the concentration of political power and decision making into the hands of a few.

The moti system developed in areas like Wallo, Dambea, Gojjam, Wallaga, the Gibe region and some parts of central Oromia. At the same time some autonomous democratic regional governments continued to exist in some parts of Oromia until Ethiopian colonialism suppressed or abolished most of them during the last decades of the nineteenth century. The *gada* principles and values have survived relatively intact among pastoral groups such as Borana, Guji and Jibat. The internal political problems of Oromo society were further complicated by the development of the capitalist world system, which began in the sixteenth century, and its initial expansion into the Horn of Africa through mercantilism and the extraction of slaves and surplus goods from the area.

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During the second half of the nineteenth century, by allying itself with Abyssinian warlords, the capitalist world system—operating through England, France, and Italy—extended its control over the land and peoples of the central portions of the Horn of Africa, including Oromia and the Oromo. The resulting Abyssinian/Ethiopian colonialism fragmented and destroyed the Oromo political leadership as a part of its consolidation of power. To maintain power the Ethiopians cultivated the development of a small collaborative class to serve an intermediary function, insulating the colonial powers from the masses.

The brutality of the Ethiopian state, the clandestine aspect of the Oromo liberation struggle, and the vanguard mentality of the leadership, have encouraged a top-down leadership style since there are limited opportunities for an open, democratic dialogue. This condition has allowed the exclusivist leadership approach on one side and the fragmentation and multiplication of the leadership on the other. The centralizing and decentralizing tendencies of the leadership in the Oromo national movement demonstrate these contradictory processes. Although the Oromo nationalists created the Macha-Tulama Self-Help Association (MTSA) in the 1960s and Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) in the 1970s as their national leadership, later there were a few nationalist elements, which opted to withdraw from the OLF to create other organizations that failed to surpass the mother organization.

The failure to solve these centralizing and decentralizing leadership tendencies has contributed to the problem of Oromo national political leadership. Further due to the lack of a coherent and unified leadership even within the OLF, the Oromo national struggle is confronted with a serious political and leadership challenge. Despite the fact that the OLF plays the central role in the Oromo national movement, it has never showed an interest in seriously addressing and solving the problem Oromo national political leadership. Since other Oromo liberation organizations pay less attention to the problem of Oromo national leadership, they mainly focus on criticizing and attacking the OLF.

Several scholars have explained the details of how Oromos were colonized, exploited, and dehumanized losing their political leadership by the joint forces of Ethiopian colonialism and European imperialism. What, to date, have not received scholarly attention are the issues of Oromo political leadership and human agency. Despite the fact that an independent Oromo national political leadership emerged in the 1960s and the 1970s, Oromo society continues to face a monumental leadership crisis. The major reasons for this include the legacy of pre-colonial Oromo leadership and institutions, the impact of Ethiopian colonialism, and the ideological and identity crises of Oromo elites that continue to affect their organizational culture or norms. This chapter explores the development of the problem of Oromo political leadership, institutions, culture, and organizations in their historical context.

Background

The historical legacy of Oromo political leadership is double-edged: One edge is positive and the other is negative. The positive legacy of Oromo political leadership is the sovereignty of the Oromo people experienced under *gada*, a popular form of representative government, and an egalitarian social system. For many centuries, the Oromo people organized themselves both politically and culturally using the social institution of *gada* to maintain their independence. Under *gada*, they established the rule of law, promoting equality, social justice, and democracy.

Specifically, the design of *gada* as a social and political institution, worked to prevent exploitation and political domination.

On the negative side, since *gada* was an egalitarian system, it couldn't compete with other social systems that engaged in the extraction of economic surplus through exploitation and oppression by building a permanent professional bureaucracy, expanding formal education, and developing technological development. The intervention of the Ottoman Empire and the Ethiopian and European powers in Oromo society through military, mercantilism, and colonialism demonstrated the challenge the Oromo political leadership was facing because of an externally imposed exploitative and oppressive social system. Consequently, Oromo society and its political leadership started to face serious internal and external dangers.

Because of the external influence and the internal weakness of the *gada* system after its decentralization, autocratic and hereditary chiefs emerged by overthrowing democratically elected leadership in some parts of Oromia. Internally, in some parts of Oromia, the *moti* political system with its rudimentary bureaucracy emerged. This political system was based on class differentiation. Because of several factors this political system later facilitated the development of an Oromo collaborative class that willingly or by force joined the Ethiopian political system. Evidently the negative legacy associated with a collaborative and subservient leadership emerged in Oromo society because of some external and internal factors.

The Abyssinians allied themselves with European colonial powers and an Oromo vassal class colonizing the entire Oromo nation during the second half of the 19th century. Consequently, Oromo human agency was violently suppressed by the Ethiopian political structure. The existing Oromo political leadership was annihilated and the ongoing development of autonomous leadership was curtailed. Under these difficult circumstances, an independent Oromo political leadership emerged in the form of a self-help association in the early 1960s and as a liberation front in the early 1970s.

The formation of the MTSA and the emergence of the OLF marked the beginning of a new Oromo political leadership whose goal was Oromo self-determination and national sovereignty. In the intervening years since the early 1970s, the OLF has played a central role in raising Oromo political consciousness and in the development of *Oromummaa* or Oromo nationalism. The brutal nature of the Ethiopian political system, the legacy of the *mot*i political culture, the lack of experience with bureaucratic institutions, the forced substitution of alien cultures and ideologies for Oromo traditions and values, and the absence of a democratic conversation and platform created an ideological and identity crisis among Oromo elites, that left them without the crucial resources they need to be able to develop a strong Oromo national political leadership that can reinvent itself. These crucial resources are needed so that the leadership can fulfill the objectives of the Oromo national struggle by meeting the challenges that continue to emerge in the face of changing local, regional and global social, economic, and political conditions.

The Problems of Contemporary Oromo Political Leadership

The contemporary Oromo political leadership emerged from unusual circumstances; a few determined and farsighted Oromo nationalists created this leadership in the 1960s and 1970s by challenging the existing system of domination. The Ethiopian political system was designed to produce a small number of Ethiopianized Oromo leaders through its educational institutions who

function as intermediaries between the Ethiopian ruling class and the Oromo people. It intentionally limited the number of Oromo collaborative leaders by denying education to the overwhelming majority of Oromos. Further, through various political and cultural mechanisms, including assimilation, political marriage, religion, divide and conquer policies, the Ethiopian government disconnected most of the few educated Oromo vassals from their cultural and historical roots, continuously forcing them to show fealty to their suzerain.

Only a few persons within nationalist circles clearly understood these complex problems by familiarizing themselves with Oromo history, culture, values, and various forms of the Oromo resistance to Ethiopian colonialism. These circles initiated the Oromo national movement. Some of those who became Oromo nationalist leaders were collaborators who were initially neutral or opposed to the nationalist movement because of political opportunism and/or their lack of political consciousness. Generally speaking, Oromo intermediaries have ensconced themselves in Oromo cities that were overwhelmingly populated by Ethiopian colonial settlers. Ethiopian political, religious, and media institutions had powerful influence on most of this educated Oromo collaborative leadership. Consequently, most educated Oromos joined Ethiopian political organizations and institutions.

The few Oromo nationalist intellectuals who emerged from this system were targeted for destruction. The Ethiopian and Somali governments and Oromo opportunist and reactionary vassals who collaborated with the enemy opposed to the Oromo emancipation. Consequently, the founding leadership of the MTSA and the OLF was decimated along with the membership of these groups. Further, within the Oromo nationalist camp complex political problems and confusion emerged in the 1970s and 1980s because of the low level and uneven development of *Oromummaa*, the lack of political experience, and political opportunism. A few individuals, using clan or religious politics, corrupted the movement by introducing conflict, suspicion, and other factors. Such problems undermined the development of the Oromo national struggle. Oromo nationalists were subsequently divided into a few camps that started to fight one another while fighting against the Ethiopian and Somali forces. Consequently, the Oromo national movement lost outstanding Oromo nationalist heroes and heroines. Individuals who know the inside story of the Oromo national movement see the survival of the OLF as a political miracle.

Despite political fragmentation, ideological confusion, and a multiplicity of enemies, the few Oromo nationalists who survived the political onslaught from all directions managed to maintain the integrity of the OLF, continuing the Oromo liberation struggle. The political integrity and determination of its leaders and members allowed the OLF to spread the concept of Oromo nationalism among the Oromo people. In 1991 along with other Oromo liberation organizations, the OLF hesitantly agreed to join in the formation of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia and in less than a year it taught its political objectives to the Oromo people. When the Oromo people accepted the OLF, the Tigrayan-led Ethiopian government and several semi-fascist groups attempted to totally destroy the Oromo national movement and Oromo nationalists. The leadership of the Oromo national movement wasn't prepared to face this political challenge. Why? To answer this question critically and comprehensively without being biased is central to an understanding of Oromo politics. While some Oromos believed that an individual or a few individuals within the leadership sabotaged the Oromo struggle for personal reasons, their analysis fails to address the central problems of Oromo politics.

This kind of myopic political discourse has prevented Oromo nationalists from identifying and solving the real political problems of Oromo society. If the real problems of the

Oromo national movement were the behavior and activities of an individual or a few individuals, removing such people from the leadership could have solved these problems. The real problems of the Oromo national movement include (1) the lack of coherent and organic leadership or team leadership; (2) the absence of open and honest dialogue; (3) the low level of and uneven development of *Oromummaa* and the lack of political, cultural, and ideological strategies with which to build *Oromummaa*, (4) the absence of accountability of some leaders and followers; (5) the attachment to borrowed political culture and ideologies; and (6) the failure to mobilize Oromo human and material resources effectively.

The Oromo national movement has been lacking in coherent and organic leadership as the result of the untimely death of some of its founding leaders such as Haile Mariam Gamada, Taddasa Biru, Mamo Mazamir, Baro Tumsa, Ramadan Hussein Kalil, Elemo Qilixu, Magarasa Bari, Demisie Techane, Yigazu Benti, Aboma Mitiku, and Muhee Abdo. Despite the fact that there are Oromo political leaders who are well educated, to date they have not developed the organizational norms and culture of teamwork needed to conceptualize the theoretical, ideological and organizational concepts necessary to address the problems of Oromo leadership. It must be kept in mind that human society is dynamic and all visions and strategies must be reevaluated and reinvented from time to time to enable the Oromo leadership to be able to effectively respond to emerging conditions and opportunities.

This lack of coherent political leadership had denied the Oromo national movement the possibilities of developing the formal and informal, political and social networks that can effectively help in developing *Oromummaa* and in taking collective political actions at the individual, relational and collective levels. Since the formal and informal networks have not been integrated, members of the Oromo political leadership have been unable to develop the organizational capacity necessary to engage in political dialogue and activities both in formal and informal settings. It is impossible to build an effective institutional order or organization without integrating formal and informal rules of the society. Since Oromo traditions lack bureaucratic codes and procedures, Oromo political leaders and the Oromo community at-large have not had culturally ingrained systems to fall back upon. As a result, they have reacted in a number of different and contradictory ways.

This lack of coherence in the leadership in turn has created suspicious conditions that have prevented open and honest dialogue among leaders and between leaders and followers. In absence of o coherent organizational milieu, rumor, gossip, and impression management have replaced critical and open dialogue within the movement. Like any movement, the Oromo national movement must develop a collective identity that results in collective action. Oromo nationalists cannot develop an *Oromummaa* that facilitates collective action without critical discussion and open dialogue. The role of the leader is very important in building a leadership core through persuasion, analytical capacity, capacity to communicate, and capacity to listen and learn. The leader is responsible for the creation of formal and informal networks that allow for the development of an effective leading political team by bringing together layers of people who share strategic ideas to win over others.

Historically in a national movement an exclusivist leadership in which one person has dominated or a small group dominated played the central role. The Oromo movement has tried to create this kind of leadership but does not fit Oromo-centric democratic values. While Oromos love their heroes and heroines and admire them, they expect open dialogue and interaction consistent with their democratic political tradition. Oromos also want to reject the leadership

style of the Habasha. Oromos dislike exclusivist leaders who equate their personal interests with the interests of the organization they lead and separate themselves from the rank and file members. Practically speaking, the Oromo political leadership is neither coherent nor exclusivist, although there has been an attempt by a few leaders to develop exclusivist leadership from the Habasha political culture. However, there is no question that the leadership of the Oromo national movement manifests some exclusivist characters.

As the Oromo political leadership lacks political coherence, some Oromos lack organizational discipline and engage in political anarchism or passivism. Without challenging anarchism and passivism among the Oromo populace and the exclusivist political tendency of the leadership, the Oromo nationalist movement cannot search "for combinations of forms of organization and leadership which are practically compatible with larger struggles for popular self-emancipation." Oromo nationalists need to speak up and struggle to develop leadership for self-emancipation through facilitating the integration of "leading" and "led" selves of the Oromo political leadership. While struggling to build a democratic and coherent political leadership, Oromo nationalists must fight against political anarchism, passivism, and anti-leadership sentiment that emerged in some Oromo sectors. Anarchist and anti-leadership Oromos discourage the emergence of strong leadership by engaging in trivial issues, such as superficial clan or religious, or regional politics, and by attacking prominent Oromo leaders and organizations.

While demanding accountability from the leadership Oromos must fight publicly against the anti-leadership ideology. Oromos need to acknowledge, value, encourage, and support an emerging democratic Oromo political leadership since strengthening the leadership of the Oromo movement is necessary to defeat dangerous enemies. Since amorphous and less structured leadership is ineffective, the Oromo national struggle must have more structured leadership that can provide organizational capacity to eventually take state power. Oromo nationalists cannot build a more structured leadership without clearly understanding the processes of leadership and followership.

Just as Oromo leaders do not adequately understand the essence and characteristics of their followers, the followers lack information about their leaders and leadership. While Oromo political leaders like to lecture their followers and sympathizers, they are less interested in establishing formal and informal relationships with their followers and sympathizers and engaging them in dialogical conversation. Since they care less to the opinions and experiences of their followers, they do not ask for the input of their followers. Leadership is a processing of influencing followers and others by changing their perceptions through closely relating and communicating with them. Similarly, some Oromos have not developed mechanisms by which they can influence political leaders, as a result they prefer to attack and discredit these leaders without considering the consequences of their actions. It is difficult to identify the weaknesses of the leadership without identifying those of the followership.

We recognize that the role played by the Oromo national political leadership is dangerous, complex, and difficult. This leadership has been politically, ideologically, and militarily attacked both internally and externally. To date the movement has been able to survive by developing shared meaning, purpose, language, and symbols. But as the complexity of the Oromo movement increases and as the size of Oromo nationalists expands, the leadership cannot expand its organizational capacity without developing internal cohesion, expertise, support, and coalition. Without changing the past habits, ideologies and approaches, building internal

cohesion by developing Oromummaa on the individual, relational and collective levels, and without fully mobilizing Oromo human and economic resources, the Oromo political leadership will continue to face more crises and may eventually become a political liability.

The Oromo national political leadership must be challenged to abandon its reliance on a narrow political circle, borrowed political ideologies and practices, and encouraged to embrace some Oromo-centric democratic values and organize different forms of leadership in Oromo society and establish dynamic connections with them. The leadership should be pressured to speak with the Oromo people and listen as well, allowing the Oromo community at-large to engage in the process of self-emancipation by participating in and owning their national movement. The process of self-emancipation is only possible by building Oromummaa as a means of mobilizing all Oromos to establish self-confidence, consciousness, self-organization, and self-emancipation. This is only through developing Oromummaa as the master ideology of the Oromo national movement. Oromummaa as an ideology of human liberation should include the vision of an Oromo democratic state and the principles of multinational democracy in order to be emancipatory, revolutionary, democratic and inclusive. It is time now to formulate new demands and ideas that encourage democratic dialogue that promotes and enriches the principles of self-emancipation and human liberation.

Chapter 8

Oromummaa: Nationalism in Transformation or Stagnation?[23]

Orommumaa, as a cultural and political project, attempts to combine the best elements of the Oromo cultural traditions with a revolutionary nationalist ideology to mobilize all sectors of Oromo society to participate in the Oromo national movement and achieve human liberation. As a key element of the politics of Oromo liberation, *Orommumaa* envisions the construction of "a new Oromo national community" in which all Oromo subgroups come together to regain their human dignity by overthrowing Ethiopian settler colonialism and its institutions through the building of a just and democratic society. Some Oromo nationalists aspire to build this just and democratic society on the principles of the Oromo democratic traditions as they take into account the current conditions of the Oromo people.

Whether Oromo nationalism is in transition or in stagnation depends on the degree to which the Oromo nationalist ideology can gradually transform the segmented identities of religion, region, clan, and borrowed cultural identities into *Oromummaa*. Although the concept of *Oromummaa* as a cultural and political project has reached different sectors of the Oromo society since the early 1990s, it is not well developed into the master Oromo ideology of liberation. As a result, some Oromo elites either subconsciously or by their behavior confuse their fractured identities with the concept of *Oromummaa*. Consequently they promote ill-conceived visions and ideologies.

To speak in the Oromo language and to complain about the impact of the Ethiopian colonialism does not necessarily make us nationalists who promote the concept and ideology of *Oromummaa*. It is essential to recognize that the ideological foundation of *Oromummaa* is built on the common denominator of collective grievances, the principles of human liberation and equality, the restoration of the best elements of Oromo culture, history, and traditions, and at the same time, the recognition of religious and other forms of diversity in the Oromo society. Those Oromos who make the necessary sacrifices to defend the Oromo national interest are true nationalists.

Oromummaa as Cultural and Political Project

Since 1991, Oromo nationalism has entered into a new phase. Before this time, *Oromummaa* was only accepted and recognized in a few circles. Before the 1990s, because of the impact of

23 Paper Presented at the 2002 OSA Conference, Howard University, Washington, D.C.

Ethiopian settler colonialism, most Oromos identified themselves by clan, colonial region, or borrowed religious identity such as Christianity and Islam. Oromo identity was submerged under these fractured identities. Although some progress has been made toward overcoming these segmented identities, they still compete with the master cultural identity, *Oromummaa*, in the minds and activities of some Oromos. This means that an ideological transformation has not yet taken place in the minds of such Oromos.

When most Oromos accept *Oromummaa* as the master cultural identity, Oromo nationalism will have been transformed into the cultural and political project of Oromo liberation. An Oromo cultural identity that is confused with fragmented identities is political raw material that can be used by the enemy against broader Oromo interests. As a result, those Oromos who have yet to develop *Oromummaa* can be enticed into doing almost anything for material gain. For example, Somalis and Ethiopians have recruited such Oromos and mobilized them against the Oromo national struggle. The development of *Oromummaa* can discourage the development of an Oromo collaborative class.

The Oromo national movement has yet to reach the level where it exhibits the requisite ideological maturity and organizational capacity needed to mobilize the Oromo people so they can take coordinated concrete political action on local, national, and global levels. Because of the uneven development of Oromo nationalism, the ideologies and political activity of most Oromo elites are incoherent. The transformation of Oromo nationalism and the process of building organizational capacity require a coherent Oromo nationalist ideology that can be packaged into a plan and message that can mobilize most members of the nation to unite their efforts and take collective action. Practically, these efforts involve organizational, political, ideological, cultural, financial, propaganda and military action in well-organized and coordinated ways.

The development of *Oromummaa* is absolutely necessary for the empowerment of the Oromo people. Oromo power will enable Oromo society to exercise political power, facilitating the creation of a democratic state by uprooting Ethiopian settler colonialism and its institutions. Oromos want to have state power that will allow them to regain political liberty and enjoy the fruit of their labor without exploitation and dehumanization. Such a state will also allow all sectors of the Oromo society and others who are committed to the principles of national self-determination and multinational democracy to have the freedom of the media, association or organization, education, employment, and development. All religious institutions, including the church and mosque, will reflect Oromo-centered culture and values and other democratic traditions and freely participate in spiritual and cultural development of Oromo society. Women and children will be protected and encouraged to freely develop their talent through education and work.

Individuals who lack a clear vision of *Oromummaa* think that the Oromo people will remain as they are now. They think that colonial names such as Shawa, Wallaga, Hararghe, will remain the primary means by which people identify themselves. Large-scale political and cultural change and technological and educational transformation will make segmented identities secondary to a sense of being Oromo. Every part of Oromia and Oromian resources belong to all citizens. Like in any democratic society, any Oromo can be at home in any administrative region of Oromia. In order to accomplish all these objectives, the concept of *Oromummaa* must be formulated and packaged as the main nationalist vision in solving the internal problems of the Oromo society.

The Internal Problems of the Oromo Society

It was not our choice to be colonized and dehumanized under Ethiopian political slavery and global tyranny, but it is our choice to rebuild *Oromummaa* by increasing our commitment and determination to liberate our people. History demonstrates that only politically and culturally conscious, determined, and organized people achieve political victory. We cannot achieve victory by the politics of conventional wisdom. We need to further develop *Oromummaa* through systematically identifying our political problems and solving them by using sound policy action. The internal political problems of our society include uneven development of *Oromummaa*, low level of cognitive liberation, the politics of common sense, low level of global awareness, and organizational deficits.

Uneven development of *Oromummaa*

One of the great weaknesses of the Oromo national movement is the uneven development of Oromo nationalism. At this time, the Oromo people can be roughly categorized into three. On one extreme there are Oromo nationalists who have been sacrificing their lives and resources to liberate their people. Those Oromos who have taken actions to defend the rights and interests of the Oromo nation belong to this category. The Ethiopians have been targeting the destruction of such Oromos. At the other extreme there are Oromos who have consciously or unconsciously betrayed their people for personal gain by joining the enemy camp and by fighting against the Oromo national interest and national struggle. One of the indicators of the weaknesses of the Oromo struggle is its inability to minimize the impact of these collaborators in the quest for liberation.

Most Oromos are somewhere between these two extreme ends. This is the third category. *Oromummaa* will become a powerful force when it is able to mobilize this large section of Oromo society. The recent Oromo student struggle shows the beginning of the development of Oromo nationalism in this direction. There is no any doubt that Oromo awareness has developed among this group in the years since 1991, but we now need to transform this awareness into *Oromummaa*. When Oromo nationalism mobilizes the large middle, there is no force that can stop the Oromo nation from achieving its political objectives. With the further development of Oromo nationalism and its maturation, the political and cultural project of *Oromummaa* will be consolidated. The consolidation of *Oromummaa* involves the cognitive or mental liberation of the majority of Oromos.

Low Level of Cognitive Liberation

At the individual level, cognitive liberation means having critical knowledge that allows people to confront complex problems and solve them. It also means developing a high level of political and cultural understanding and consciousness. On the organizational level, cognitive liberation is demonstrated through a critical understanding of past and present problems, and by formulating a dynamic policy to address and solve them. Despite the fact that Oromo political organizations have some kinds of programs, they have yet to fashion specific policies, strategies, and tactics to achieve the objectives of their programs. These policies, strategies, and tactics must then be evaluated on a regular basis.

Because of the low level of the Oromo cognitive liberation, Oromo political organizations, including the Oromo Liberation Front, have yet to effectively mobilized Oromo cultural, intellectual, and material resources. These organizations depend on political programs that do not necessarily address this age of global development. Furthermore, the creation of different organizations that lack major ideological differences demonstrates how some Oromo leaders are politically unsophisticated, and how they are not ready to resolve their political differences within existing organizations. Politicians and organizations with a high level of cognitive liberation push national interests as first priority, and solve their differences through open dialogue based on the principles of a common denominator.

Our people have lived under Ethiopian political slavery for more than a century. As a result, they are chained by ignorance and poverty. They are rural and scattered people without modern communication networks and information. Therefore, their understanding of the world is limited. Most of them are fatalistic, and they think that external forces will solve their problems. What about formally educated Oromos? The legacy of Ethiopian politically slavery has psychologically disabled educated Oromos; it has dwarfed their potentials and undermined their creativity.

Some of us want to be free from Ethiopians, but we act like Ethiopians in our daily lives. Some educated Oromos are more Ethiopian than Ethiopians. What about the Oromo nationalist intellectuals? Although we, as nationalist leaders, began to defend the interest of our people, our cognitive liberation has not reached on the required level of blossoming Oromummaa and building organizational capacity. One of the indicators of the low level of cognitive liberation in our society is intoxication by the politics of conventional wisdom.

The Politics of Conventional Wisdom

If we need to survive in the era of intensified globalization as a nation, we Oromos must replace the politics of conventional wisdom with a politics of liberation that is based on research, scientific knowledge and a sound policy. Oromo nationalism, as a national project, has yet to challenge the conditions that promote the politics of conventional wisdom because of the low level of cognitive liberation, the low level of global awareness, and our organizational shortcomings. Since the experiences of various forms of our leaders, such as political activists and public intellectual, are not working harmoniously our political activities and ideological visions are based on the conventional wisdom politics. The common sense politics hinders an ideological leap and perpetuates political passivity and ignorance.

The politics of conventional wisdom undermines *Oromummaa* by promoting political opportunism, fatalism, withdrawal, and by encouraging false accusation and malicious propaganda—it confuses Oromo nationalism with segmented identities. It prevents us from critically understanding the world, and legitimizes our political weakness and ignorance. Since we are decades behind other nations in the struggle for liberation, we need to catch up by replacing the politics of conventional wisdom with the politics of liberation.

Low Level of Global Awareness

Because of our lack of critical understanding of the racialized global world order, we try to refashion the world after our disoriented perceptions rather than trying to familiarize ourselves

with the contemporary world by learning how it works. The racialized capitalist world system is brutal to the people who lack power and state. It is heaven for those who have access to power and wealth. It is hell for people like the Oromo who have neither power, nor state, nor wealth. We Oromos naively think that this world cares, and somebody is going to help us in solving our political problems. But, even when we get help from a few corners or individuals, we do not know how to maintain friendship and use their knowledge, expertise, commitment, and other resources in our quest for freedom and democracy. We fail to understand that we only get support from others if we first help ourselves and convince others that helping us are in their personal or national self-interest.

We must refashion our perceptions and understanding to keep up with the fast changing global system. We will only achieve our freedom if we work for it. Otherwise, we will remain a powerless and victimized people without any voice in the world. We need to learn about the world around us, particularly about the countries like the U.S., and how oppressed people took matters into their own hands by aggressively organizing and defending their collective interests. If we continue to see ourselves as powerless victims who continue to fight with one another while expecting some leaders or some organizations to liberate us, we will remain hopeless victims. We need to be prepared to deal with a fast changing world by overcoming our illusions and ignorance, by building *Orommumaa* and by overcoming our organizational deficits.

Organizational Deficits

Since most Oromos continue to live under Ethiopian political slavery, we lack the opportunity to gain the experience necessary to build and run a strong political organization. As a result, we tend to hide our ignorance through impression management, pretending that we know every thing. Nobody is born with knowledge, and nobody knows every thing. We fear taking action so as to avoid making mistakes, hoping that others will see us as perfect human beings. We also believe that our leaders and organizations know everything for us, and defer to them too readily. This tendency has created a wrong impression among the Oromo leadership. As a result, our leaders and organizations require absolute loyalty without listening to the voice of their followers. Such approaches stifle creativity.

On the other hand, without fulfilling our obligations, we expect a miracle from our organizations. If things go wrong, we are quick to blame those leaders and organizations that try to do something. We need to stop transferring responsibility away from ourselves by blaming certain leaders and organizations. We must establish a single standard by which we measure ourselves both individually and organizationally before we blame others. We do not have the moral power to blame others if we are doing little or nothing. There are no external powers or unknown perfect leaders that will lead us to the promised land of liberated Oromia.

Those revolutionary Oromos who have high level of commitment live in a different world and they are not ready to share with us their hardships, grief, and shortcomings. What they want from their supporters and sympathizer is material assistance—not ideas and knowledge. They always want to tell us stories, while they are not ready to listen to their supporters and followers. Because the supporters and sympathizers are not ready to commit to a higher level of involvement, they are satisfied with this relationship. I believe that such approaches have not taken us anywhere in the past and will not take us anywhere in the future. Such dead-end political

positions must be rejected if we want to build *Oromummaa* and develop our organizations and make progress toward our liberation.

We must recognize that ideas and knowledge can emerge from ordinary people. The capacity of revolutionary leaders is measured by their ability to listen to their followers and sympathizers and by their willingness to mobilize and coordinate the best ideas and knowledge into a coherent program leading to full liberation. Since the best ideas, knowledge, and other resources have not been mobilized and coordinated by our political leaders and activists, our political and social organizations have been unable to bring about a paradigm shift in the Oromo national movement. The Oromo movement needs to create a platform for an alternative knowledge of liberation and mobilization.

Particularly, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) should open itself up to giving serious attention to the diverse ideas and knowledge of ordinary people. We know that while there are no ready-made answers for our problems, millions of Oromos should be empowered to work together to find solutions based on a common set of values. When we advocate for openness and inclusiveness of ideas, we should make sure that the leaders of our organizations and members are loved and respected. We should stop those who attempt to improve their own images by destroying the images of others. We must defend one another as members of a family. These are the only ways we can further develop *Oromummaa* and solve our organizational shortcomings on all levels.

Strategies for Developing *Oromummaa*

The strategies for building *Oromummaa* should include developing policies that attack and destroy the legacy of Ethiopian political slavery both on individual and societal levels. We Oromo elites need to liberate ourselves from the prison house of the legacy of Ethiopian political slavery by overcoming our low level of cognitive liberation and resulting organizational deficits In addition we need to develop a critical awareness of the global context in which we live. It is only when we accomplish these that we can form a united leadership that can serve as the blood vessels of the multidimensional Oromo movement so as to mobilize and coordinate our political, cultural, ideological, economic, and military activities. In this way we can build the national organizational capacity of the Oromo nation. The Oromo national family can build its organizational capacity by recovering its democratic tradition of *gada* in a way that will be compatible with current democratic principles and values.

The OLF, as the foundation of Oromo liberation politics, needs to broaden its political activities. It must struggle to establish a coherent leadership at all levels. Such leadership needs to be guided by a research-based policy in order to develop a uniform vision, which can be implemented through coherent political, cultural, and diplomatic actions. The OLF should wholeheartedly support all Oromo movement centers that are gathered together under the umbrella of the United Liberation Forces of Oromia (ULFO) because this umbrella can be a platform for the building of the vision of *Oromummaa*. The development of Oromummaa will involve the creation of a coherent core of Oromos based on the principles of common denominator and trust. The Oromo movement centers also must engage in special activities in which they work to develop *Oromummaa* and broaden the Oromo national movement.

Chapter 9

Oromummaa as the Unifying Ideology of the Oromo National Movement[24]

The developing of *Oromummaa* as the unifying ideology of the Oromo national movement has mobilized all sectors of Oromo society and resulted in the establishment of the United Liberation Forces of Oromia (ULFO). The primary reason driving the creation of ULFO was the need to increase the effective national organizational capacity of the Oromo nation by overcoming the ideological deficiencies and differences that have long hampered the Oromo national struggle. These deficiencies have created confusion and misunderstanding among Oromo elites who, in turn, formed different liberation organizations. The building of an effective national organizational capacity is only possible when *Oromummaa* can be packaged into national symbols, norms, values and policies that can be used to mobilize the Oromo nation as a whole so that it can engage in well-organized and coordinated collective action at both the personal and interpersonal levels. In addition to a clear understanding of *Oromummaa*, practicing it as values, norms, and policies facilitates the mobilization of Oromo individuals and enables diverse groups to overcome political confusion and take concrete cultural and political action in the quest to liberate themselves from Ethiopian settler colonialism.

Oromummaa unifies all Oromo sectors, groups, and individuals at personal, interpersonal, and collective levels. The foundation of *Oromummaa* is built on the common denominator of collective grievances, the universal desire for collective survival, and the principle of human liberation. Although *Oromummaa* emerges from Oromo cultural and historical foundations, it goes beyond culture and history in shaping the future of the Oromo nation. *Oromummaa* as the unifying ideology facilitates the mobilization of some Oromo political and cultural experiences for building national institutions and organizations with the capacity to liberate and develop Oromo society.

Oromo liberation organizations are not characterized by clear ideological, political and strategic differences. Almost all Oromo liberation organizations branched out from the Oromo Liberation Front. Among other things, the lack of political experience, borrowed culture and political practices, the abandonment of our democratic heritage of consensus building, and a lack of open dialogue and conversation contributed to this political fragmentation. Furthermore, all Oromo liberation organizations have focused on the structural problems of Oromo society while paying less attention to personal and interpersonal relations and identities. Hence, some of our political problems have emerged from the attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions that have been engraved in our minds by colonial institutions that we passed through. All Oromo liberation organizations, including the OLF, have these problems and they are still not ready to confront and solve these problems. These problems still play a significant role in undermining

[24] Paper presented at the 2003 OSA Conference, Howard University, Washington, DC; July 2-3.

Oromummaa and the organizational capacity of the Oromo national movement. We know the result of this political fragmentation and we cannot afford to continue on this path.

As the behavior and political practices of Oromo elites and leaders of independent Oromo institutions in the diaspora—churches, mosques, associations, and political organizations—demonstrate, the legacy of Oromo war chiefs and the impacts of Ethiopian institutions are far-reaching. Leaders and followers spend most of their times producing gossip, rumors, conflicts and unproductive arguments and stories. They have little interest or time in learning about management, administration, and conflict resolution from their host culture. Despite the fact that we are proud of our democratic tradition, our behavior and practices in politics, religion, and community affairs indicate that we have learned more from Habashas and Oromo warlords than from the *gada* system of democracy.

The low level and uneven development of *Oromummaa* and the lack of open dialogue among Oromo nationalists, political leaders, and activists on the problems of "Baleness," "Jimaness," "Ilubaborness," "Wallaganess," "Harargheness," "Shawaness," "Arsinness," etc. has provided opportunities for the internal and external enemies of the Oromo people—political opportunists, free-riders, and localists of various forms—to fabricate and disseminate misinformation among less informed Oromos in order to turn them against one another. These distinctions were externally imposed and subsequently internalized by some Oromo elites. Individuals and groups that attempt to turn Oromos against one another rather than uniting them to fight against Ethiopian colonialism are not the forces of political diversity. Since the colonial administrative regions were invented by the Ethiopian colonial structure, they do not correspond to Oromo group or regional identities.

Oromummaa was targeted for destruction and the colonial administrative regions that were established to suppress the Oromo people and to exploit their resources were glorified and institutionalized. Today there are Oromo elites who have internalized these externally imposed regional identities because of their low level of political consciousness and a clear understanding of Oromo nationalism or because of political opportunism. Oromo identities at various interpersonal levels have included extended families and clan families. Historically and culturally speaking, Oromo clan families never had clear geopolitical boundaries among themselves. Consequently, there are clans or clan families that have the same name in southern, central, northern, and western Oromia. For example, there are Jarso, Gida, Karayu, Galan, Nole and Jiru clans all over Oromia. Therefore, clan families or colonial territories cannot be the basis of Oromo diversity. Using these categories consciously or unconsciously as political bases is tantamount to supporting the continued destruction of Oromo society. As the decentralization of the *gada* system during the 17th and 18th centuries without an overarching national political structure contributed to the defeat of the Oromos, using localized categories in the Oromo national movement will promote the perpetual subordination of the Oromos to Habashas.

We Oromo elites survived schools that were designated to domesticate or "civilize" us by molding us into intermediaries between our people and those who dominated and exploited our people. We were disconnected from our history, culture, language, and worldviews and trained by foreign educational and religious institutions to glorify the culture, history, language and religions of others. Consequently, most of us do not adequately understand our history, culture and worldviews. Some of us experience difficulty in reading and writing in our language and we cannot effectively communicate with each other using Afaan Oromoo. When Oromo nationalists emerged to liberate their people by rejecting the worldviews and institutions of the colonizers, they turned to Marxism-Leninism to fight against the Ethiopian colonial system. Although the Oromo movement has achieved many important things, the organizational and ideological tools that we have been using have not helped us in organizing our people effectively so we can enable them to defend themselves from their enemies. The Oromo human and material resources are still scattered and used by the enemies who are committing hidden genocide on our people.

The failure of Oromo nationalists and political leaders to frame issues and to formulate policies and directives that promote pragmatic actions has given a great opportunity for those who functionally stand in the way of the liberation of Oromia. While using Oromo slogans, such individuals or groups attack and attempt to discredit other individuals and organizations that have accomplished many things for the Oromo cause. The Oromo national organizational capacity will develop when true nationalists and political leaders start to work openly and courageously by formulating practical domestic and foreign policies that can be implemented by a broad-based Oromo movement. Although Oromos can learn a lot from other forms of leadership, without developing the style of leadership that is Oromo-centric, we cannot build enduring national institutions and organizations.

While recognizing the unity of Oromo peoplehood, it is important to acknowledge the existence of diversity within Oromo society. Oromos have been separated from one another and prevented from exchanging goods and information with each other for more than a century. They were exposed to alien cultures—languages, customs, values, etc—and religions and have adopted some elements of these cultures and religions. The Oromo movement has primarily focused on the collective identity of Oromo peoplehood while paying less attention to Oromo diversity. The social and cultural construction of the Oromo collective identity is an ongoing process and cannot be completed because the Oromos consist of a body of diverse and heterogeneous individuals, groups, and occupations with a variety of cultural and economic experiences. Hence, Oromo nationalists need to recognize that both the diversity and unity of the Oromo people are important for mobilizing the nation for collective action.

The concept of diversity applies to an Oromo religious and political plurality, professional, class, and gender divisions. Studying *Oromummaa* and diversity is a very difficult and complex task, because it requires integrating structural, cultural, psychological, and behavioral issues. Particularly it is very difficult to study the psychology and behavior of individuals who were raised under the Ethiopian political system and who say one thing in public and do something else in an informal setting. One can understand the serious consequences of the legacy of Ethiopian system by studying or observing the behavior of Oromo elites. Let us make connections among structural, cultural, psychological, and behavioral approaches in order to explain the problem of the Oromo national movement in relation to the behavior and practices of the Oromo individuals.

Collective identities are not automatically given. Oromo nationalists must reach a common understanding of Oromummaa through open, critical and honest dialogue and debate. Fears, suspicions, misunderstandings and hopes or aspirations of Oromo individuals or groups should be discussed through invoking Oromo cultural and institutional memory and democratic principles. Through such discussion a single standard can be established for all Oromos regardless of gender, class, clan or clan families, and religion. Oromo personal and social identities can be fully released and mobilized for collective actions if reasonable Oromos recognize that they can freely start to shape their future aspirations or possibilities without discrimination. This is only possible through developing an Oromo collective identity at personal and interpersonal levels.

The structural mode of analysis helps in identifying and explaining chains of factors that facilitate large-scale and long-term social, cultural, political, and economic changes or transformations. The cultural analytic approach helps in understanding basic values, symbols and belief systems. The behavioral and psychological approaches provide assistance in the exploration of the attitudes and actions of Oromos at individual, relational, and collective levels. These approaches enable us to understand Oromummaa at structural and practical levels.

Using the theoretical perspectives of social-cognitive researchers, let us explore the essence of *Oromummaa* at all levels. In every society, personal and social identities are flexible to some degree; they are not rigid and monolithic. An Oromo self-identity exists at personal, interpersonal and collective levels, and this confederation of identity is shaped by the past

Oromo historical and cultural memory, current conditions, and by hopes or future possibilities. Every Oromo has an internally focused self and externally focused social selves. The Oromo social selves emerge from intimate personal relations and less personal relation. The former is a relational identity and the latter are a collective identity. Oromo individuals have intimate relations with their family members, friends, and communities. These interpersonal and close relations foster helping, nurturing, and caring relationships.

The concept of self and relational identities have been localized, and not strongly connected to the collective identity of Oromoness. Collective grievances, the Oromo language and history, the historical memory of the *gada* system and other forms of Oromo culture, and the hope for liberation have helped in maintaining fragmented connections among various Oromo groups. The Ethiopian colonial system and borrowed cultural and religious identities imposed regional and religious boundaries on Oromo society. Consequently, there were times when Christian Oromos were more identified with Habashas and when Muslim Oromos were more identified with Arabs, Adares and Somalis. Oromoness was seen as a raw material that was ready to be transformed to other identities. Millions of Oromos lost their identity and became other peoples.

The relational-level identity is based on perceptions or views of others about an individual. As individuals we have knowledge of ourselves from our personal viewpoint, and we gain knowledge from the perspective of significant others or social groups. It requires political consciousness to link personal, interpersonal and collective-level identities in dialectical and dynamic ways. Oromo political leaders and other activists need to recognize that understanding and organizing the Oromo people require learning about these triple level identities. Mobilizing Oromos by reminding them of what Habashas have done to them is not adequate. Most Oromos are more familiar with their personal and relational selves than they are with an Oromo collective self because their level of Oromo nationalism is rudimentary. One of the roles of Oromo political leadership is to connect the personal and relational identities to an Oromo collective identity through expanding the concept of *Oromummaa*.

The broadening and deepening of *Oromummaaa* require the cognitive liberation of Oromo leaders and followers. Leaders with cognitive and/or behavioral deficiencies will be unable to facilitate the broadening and deepening of Oromo nationalism and the development of Oromo personal, social, and collective identities. Because leadership as an activity involves intellectual guidance directive and organizational capacity, Oromo leaders need to actively work to achieve full cognitive liberation. Leaders with full cognitive liberation can be effective leaders by balancing their "leading" and "led" selves and by interacting and conversing with their followers. Through intense conversation between and among effective leaders and followers, strategic innovations and new solutions for existing problems can be formulated out of diverse perspectives and experiences. Democratic conversations allow Oromo political leaders to be teachers and effective communicators, and also to be effective listeners and students. Such leadership develops skills that empower all members of Oromo society to broaden *Oromummaa* at the personal, interpersonal and collective levels.

An Oromo individual cannot start an open and honest dialogue with other Oromo individuals without engaging in dialogue with oneself. The Oromo individual should critically evaluate oneself and look at her/his own attitudes, perceptions, behavior, and knowledge with a single standard that she/he uses to evaluate others in relation to the Oromo national struggle. When an individual Oromo treats his/her Oromo sisters and brothers as he or she treats herself/ himself, the sense of justice, equality, and fairness starts. Without understanding these basic principles, to make the claim that "I struggle for the liberation of the Oromo people" is problematic. Change must start with Oromo individuals. These individuals are both leaders and followers. The Oromo political leadership must be guided by Oromo-centric cardinal values and principles that reflect honesty, fairness, and the use of a single standard, equality, and democracy.

The emergence of Oromo nationalism from underground to public discourse in the 1990s allowed some Oromos to openly declare their *Oromummaa* without clearly realizing the connection between the personal and interpersonal selves and the Oromo collectivity. This articulation occurred without strong national institutional and organizational capacity that can cultivate, develop and sustain *Oromummaa*. We cannot build effective national institutions and organizations without taking our personal, interpersonal, and collective-level Oromo selves to a new level. Our collective selves develop through our relationships with one another. Good interpersonal relations and the proper treatment of one another create sense of security, confidence, sense of belonging, strong and effective bonds, willingness to admit and deal with mistakes and increase commitment to our political objectives and organizations.

The individuality of an Oromo can be observed and examined in relation to the concept of self which is linked to psychological processes and outcomes, such as motivation, affection, self-management, information processing, interpersonal relations, commitment, dignity and self-respect, self-preservation and so forth. The Oromo self-concept as an extensive knowledge structure contains all of the pieces of information on self that an individual internalizes in his or her value systems. Every Oromo has a self-schema or a cognitive schema that organizes both perceptional and behavioral information. An individual's self-schema can be easily captured by accessible knowledge that comes to mind quickly to evaluate information on any issue. The Oromo self is the central point at which personality, cognitive schema, and social psychology meet. The Oromo self consists both personal or individual and social identities. The former is based on an individual's comparison of oneself to other individuals and reveals one's own uniqueness and the latter are based on self-definition in relation to others or through group membership.

The Oromo self has been attacked and distorted by Ethiopian colonial institutions. While fighting against these institutions, the restoration and development of the Oromo self through cognitive liberation and Oromo-centric values must be the order of the day. The attack on the Oromo self at the personal, interpersonal and collective-levels has undermined the self-confidence of Oromo individuals by inducing an inferiority complex on them. Without the emancipation of Oromo individuals from this inferiority complex and without overcoming the ignorance and the worldviews that our enemies have imposed on us, we cannot have the self-confidence that will facilitate individual liberation and Oromo emancipation.

The development of the Oromo self and relational self facilitates the development of a collective-level Oromo identity. The collective-level Oromo identity involves complex social dynamics that are based on the organizational culture or on collective norms. Because of internal cultural crises and external oppressive institutions, our collective norms and organizational culture are at a rudimentary level at this moment in history. Consequently, comrades in an Oromo organization do not see themselves as members of a team, and they engage in undermining members in their team through gossip and rumors. Without recognizing and confronting these problems at all levels, we cannot build our organizational capacity. The social experiment of exploring and understanding our internal, relational and collective selves must start with Oromo elites who aspire to organize and lead the Oromo people.

The main goal of Oromo nationalism is to facilitate the creation of state that will defend the interests of Oromian citizens. Oromos can achieve sovereignty by themselves or with other peoples. But without establishing Oromo political unity within, we cannot reestablish our sovereignty from without. When most Oromos fully develop *Oromummaa* and unite to speak with one voice and take similar actions collectively both in Oromia and worldwide, the global community will be forced to pay attention to their demands and the self-determination of Oromia will be achieved. Establishing internal political unity and enduring peace among the Oromo people also require the need to critically address the question of *Oromummaa* in relation to the contemporary global context. *Oromummaa* can be also used in building regional and

international relations with others based the principles of fairness, justice, mutual benefit, and democracy.

The lack of a deep and critical understanding of Oromo culture, behavior, perceptions, actions, the brutality of the capitalist world system, and the inability to play by the rules of the system have created conditions conducive to engaging in the politics of self-destruction. The politics of self-destruction that was started by Oromo war chiefs has been continued by some Oromo elites who are engaged in promoting themselves at the cost of other individuals who try to do something. These actions discourage real or potential leaders through rumor, gossip, and misinformation; activities that are not compatible with the Oromo political objectives. *Oromummaa* is about Oromo national politics and about building state power through organizing and enabling the Oromo people to solve their political, social, economic, and cultural problems as a nation. Without critically and deeply understanding *Oromummaa*, Oromos will be unable to build the strong Oromo social and political institutions and organizations that will take the Oromo nation to "the promised land".

It is only when Oromo elites adequately understand the concept of *Oromummaa* and engage in fully deploying the Oromo cultural and political institutions both in the diaspora and at home through a centralized and organized channel that the Oromo people will be able to uproot Ethiopian colonial institutions in Oromia and gain recognition and support for the Oromo cause from the international community. The ULFO as an umbrella organization should openly challenge the tradition of Oromo war chiefs, the legacy of the Habasha culture and political system, and the fragmentation of Oromo politics. The first step in dealing with the major problems is to develop and unleash Oromo selves at the personal, interpersonal and collective levels by clearly understanding the concepts of *Oromummaa* and by openly and honestly addressing issues that Oromos discuss in informal settings including the issues of citizenship, country, and what they want Oromia to look like after achieving its statehood. Establishing regional *gada* assemblies in exile in North America, Australia, the Middle East, Europe, and Africa including the representatives of women, youth, various professional groups, elders, mosques, churches, and other Oromo sectors is essential in practicing *Oromummaa* and broadening it. Every interested Oromo can also participate in these assemblies provided that he or she is not against the national interest of Oromia.

ULFO should be a platform for creating and managing the networks of national and global assemblies. To make these assemblies a reality, ULFO needs to create study circles or fora and workshops wherever Oromos can come together to study Oromo democratic traditions, history, culture, language, values, norms, belief systems, and customary and *gada* laws. Comparing and contrasting these issues with the "modern" concept and practices of democracy is essential in the process of evaluating their relevance for building Oromian national institutions, including an Oromian state. The experiences, information or knowledge gained at local levels can then be reexamined at regional assemblies. These regional assemblies may meet once or twice a year. The ULFO leaders can use the experiences gained through the deliberations of regional assemblies in developing national guidelines, constitution, and policies. It should be also the responsibility of ULFO to enable these study circles or forums, workshops and regional assembles to come together to critically look at the causes of the continued suffering of the Oromo people, to assess the impact of Oromo behavior and performance, and honestly evaluate the problems that hinder our progress toward the finding and generating of a clear articulation of *Oromummaa*. With such a paradigm shift, I believe that we can mobilize our human and material resources effectively to achieve national and human liberation.

If we honestly and courageously recognize our strengths and weaknesses as individuals, groups, organizations, and society and capitalize on building our strengths while reducing or eliminating our weaknesses, we can emerge victorious from the cultural, ideological, and political setback we face as a nation in the twenty-first century. Recognizing the inadequacies of our organizations, visions, and strategies and starting to plan and develop new strategies and

approaches from time to time will unleash the potential of Oromo society. Let us actively engage in the process of self-emancipation and human liberation from all directions by shaping our individual and national destinies and by reinventing our national political leadership.

Discussion and Conclusion

It is ironic that in the period since the early 1990s when Oromo society in Oromia is united by the ideology of *Oromummaa*, we Oromo elites in the diaspora are fragmented and confused. We Oromo nationalist elites have yet to clearly develop the concept and vision of *Oromummaa* in order to overcome our organizational shortcomings. Therefore, one can observe the transformation of *Oromummaa* from below in Oromia, and stagnation of Oromo nationalism among the elite. This is a serious challenge to the Oromo nationalist elites and the Oromo national movement.

Practically and psychologically, Ethiopians have inflicted heavy damages on us as some of the activities of our people in the diaspora and at home demonstrate. People who do not have confidence in themselves, and who do not believe that there are capable individuals among them who can rise up and lead them are psychologically damaged. Whenever leaders emerge among them, such people look for weaknesses in these leaders and ignore their strengths so they can belittle them. Some of us are interested in creating and imagining mistakes and thus attack Oromo heroes and heroines who have done something for our struggle. We tend to ignore the good things that these individuals have done for their nation, and magnify their mistakes and weaknesses.

Those who try to do something inevitably make mistakes. Therefore, I believe that the correct approach is to recognize and praise the achievements of these leaders while providing constructive criticism of their weaknesses. By discouraging individuals from contributing to our struggle, unintentionally we are weakening our camp and strengthening the camp of our national enemies. The idea of trying to look good by cutting down our brothers and sisters is a very dangerous trend. This approach encourages laziness and discourages achievement. Greatness comes from determination and hard work, and not from belittling others. There are some individuals who have no clear understanding of Oromo nationalism and prey on the low level of Oromo consciousness by spreading misinformation about leaders or organizations that are pushing the Oromo struggle forward.

If we want to move ahead, we must stop these misguided actions. Individuals and organizations should genuinely compete to excel by promoting the objectives of the Oromo movement and by producing results, not by engaging in destructive behavior. We can unleash the potential of our people from the ordinary to the elite by overcoming the legacy of Ethiopian political slavery and believing in our leaders, our organizations, and ourselves. What kinds of leaders we need? We need leaders who are ready to change with us, and who are determined to coordinate our ideas, knowledge, money, and other resources. Oromo revolutionary leaders and organizations that can successfully attack the legacy of Ethiopian political slavery and solve the problem of uneven development of *Oromummaa* can build Oromo organizational capacity that will lead the Oromo people to national victory.

Chapter 10

Harmonizing Pragmatism, Globalization and the Oromo Struggle[25]

The majority of the Oromo are dissatisfied because Oromo liberation organizations have yet to develop the level of national organizational capacity that is required to liberate them. There are four major interrelated reasons for the perpetuation of Oromo organizational shortcomings. The first reason is that there is a great gap between what the Oromo aspires to achieve and what they practically do to accomplish their political goals. Today millions of Oromos verbally express their deep anger and the desire for liberation from Ethiopian colonialism without making the necessary sacrifices in the form of the time, energy, money, knowledge or expertise, determination, and commitment that is necessary for the building of a strong and effective liberation organization. The second reason is that only a minority of the Oromo has been making the necessary sacrifices but without developing the organizational capability needed to overcome the ideological and organizational shortcomings of the Oromo movement and without taking into account the struggle with the global system. Consequently, what has being achieved to date is the increasing of Oromo awareness without fully developing Oromo nationalism or *Oromummaa*. The third reason is that Oromo nationalists have yet to develop the capacity to fully transform Oromo awareness into *Oromummaa.* The fourth reason is that because of a lack of pragmatic domestic and foreign policies, the Oromo movement has yet to receive support from global powers, the interstate system and from the neighbors of the Oromos.

Oromo leaders and liberation organizations must understand that the Oromo problem cannot be solved without building an organizational capacity that can harmonize Oromo politics with the global system. Harmonizing Oromo politics with the politics of the global system requires learning about the system and developing an Oromo national platform, such as ULFO through which the Oromo can speak with one voice and act as a nation both domestically and globally. Further, all Oromo leaders need to learn from the negative and positive Oromo history in order to overcome divisions and political ignorance and to build a ULFO political platform that can facilitate the full development of *Oromummaa* and Oromo national power in the context of a fast changing world. This world is called the capitalist world system or globalization.

Globalization and its Impacts on the Oromos

What is globalization? 2) How does it affect the Oromo national struggle? 3) How should Oromo nationalists and liberation organizations promote their struggle in this age of globalization to achieve their political objectives? Globalization is a complex process because it involves quantitative and qualitative worldwide changes in economics, politics, culture, organization, and other areas of human lives. Capitalist "globalization can be seen as the near culmination of a centuries-long process of the spread of capitalist production around the world…bringing about a

[25] ULFO Conference, Howard University, Washington, D. C. April 9-10, 2005.

new form of connection between all human beings around the world."[26] In other words, it "is the underlying dynamic that drives social, political, economic, and cultural-ideological processes around the world in the twenty-first century and therefore linked to our individual and group biographies."[27] The process of globalization started in the 16th century and brought the whole world together through the processes of broadening and deepening of the capitalist world system.[28]

Broadening is the process of incorporating new areas into the capitalist system to search for economic and labor resources and trade. The colonization of the Americas, Africa, and Asia between the 16th and 19th centuries was the first wave of the broadening of the system. The process involved genocide, slavery, terrorism, and continued subjugation of indigenous peoples in order to transfer their resources to those who colonized and dominated them.[29] Deepening is the process of intensifying capitalist activities in the areas that are already part of the capitalist world economy. Consequently, the last decades of the 20th century witnessed new scientific and technological revolutions in the areas of communication and information. Revolutions in transportation, marketing, management, and computerization of information enabled capital (money) to achieve global mobility.

The consolidation of transnational corporations and their global victory have reduced the material and the political obstacles of transnational capital. Transnational capital has increased economic globalization through replacing national economies. Because transnational capital dominates the whole world, it is gradually changing the role of the state through the neo-liberal agenda. Transnational capital is reorganizing production worldwide through fragmentation and decentralization of production processes and concentration and centralization of worldwide economic management, control, and decision making power. States are becoming the instrument of the transnational capitalist class and their local collaborators. They are encouraging the total commoditization or marketization of social life in areas of health, education, natural resources, and other public areas. Globalization and its neo-liberal agenda have institutionalized the power of the minority ethnonational groups that dominate capitalist market.[30]

The majority of the world populations, particularly indigenous peoples, have been entangled in the racialized global capitalist system since the 16th century. The colonization of the Oromo and their struggle for national self-determination has been an integral part of these global processes. Today the Oromo are estimated at forty million in Ethiopia alone.[31] During the last decades of the 19th century, the Oromos who survived genocide entered into the capitalist world system as colonial subjects and semi-slaves without political, cultural, and political rights. Since then, the Oromo have been under the total control of the authoritarian-terrorist Ethiopian state that has been financed and supported by successive global powers. Consequently, today the

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[26]William I. Robinson, *A Theory of Globalization: Production, Class, and State in a Transnational World, (*Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 2004), p. 2.

[27]*Ibid.,* p. xv.

[28]See Thomas Richard Shannon, *An Introduction to the World-System perspective,* (San Francisco: West View Press, 1996).

[29] See fro example, Asafa Jalata, *Fighting Against the Injustice of the State and Globalization: Comparing the African American and the Oromo National Movements*, (New York: Plagrave, 2001).

[30]See Amy Chua, *World on Fire: How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instablity, (*New York: Anchor Books, 2003).

[31]When they were colonized by the alliance of Ethiopia and European powers, the size of the Oromo population was reduced from ten to five million. War, genocide, famine, and slavery reduced the size of the Oromo population by half.

Oromo live under Ethiopian political slavery, and they lack the freedom of expression, access to the media, and the freedom to establish independent organizations. Primarily, they live in segregated rural areas, while garrison cities in Oromia are overwhelmingly populated by Ethiopian colonial settlers who have better access to all opportunities, including employment, education, health services, and other social amenities.

The incorporation of Oromia into the global capitalist system through Ethiopia made the Oromo people invisible in the world. Since the Oromos have been identified with Ethiopians—the colonizers who suppressed their identity, and robbed their cultural and economic resources—the existence of the Oromo people and their national struggle were hidden from the world until the early 1990s. In the capitalist world economy, those peoples who have state power or meaningful access to state power enjoy various political, economic, social, and cultural advantages. Those with state power are recognized internationally and regionally by the interstate system, by transnational organizations, and corporations. Business and state elites who get resources from these linkages and who control domestic resources suppress the colonized indigenous peoples and deny them a meaningful access to state power. Recognizing these problems, Oromo nationalists initiated the Oromo national movement just as other colonized peoples have.[32] However, Oromo liberation organizations and their umbrella organization, ULFO, have yet to overcome three determining and interrelated obstacles. These are ideological, organizational and diplomatic problems.

Recognizing and Confronting Ideological Weaknesses

Oromo liberation organizations lack clear ideological, political, and strategic differences. Almost all Oromo liberation organizations branched out from the Oromo Liberation Front. Among other things, lack of political experience, borrowed culture and political practices, abandoning the Oromo democratic heritage of consensus building, confusion and political naivety, lack of open dialogue and conversation, and political intolerance have contributed to political fragmentation. Partly, Oromo political problems emerged from attitudes, behavior, and perceptions that had been engraved in the minds of some Oromo elites by the colonial institutions that they passed through. These problems still play a significant role in undermining the development of *Oromummaa* and the building of Oromo organizational capacity. Today there are Oromo elites who have internalized the externally imposed religious and regional identities because of their low level of political consciousness or political opportunism and the lack of clear understanding of Oromo nationalism. While using Oromo slogans, such individuals or groups attack and attempt to discredit those individuals or organizations that have accomplished many things for the Oromo cause.

Oromo national institutions and organizational capacity will develop when true nationalists and political leaders start to work openly and courageously through formulating practical domestic and foreign policies that can be implemented by a broad-based Oromo movement. This broad-based Oromo movement cannot be built without expanding the development of *Oromummaa*. Developing *Oromummaa* as the core ideology of the Oromo national movement consolidates the ULFO and mobilizes all sectors of Oromo society. The main reason for the creation of the ULFO was to unite Oromo political forces in order to build the Oromo national organizational capacity by overcoming the ideological deficiencies of the Oromo

[32]For more explanation, see Asafa Jalata, *Fighting Against the Injustice of the State and Globalization,* pp. 55-88. The inability of the colonizers to crush the Oromo human spirit, the immortality of certain cultural memory, changes in social structures, the emergence of an educated class, politicized collective grievances, and the dissemination of scientific and political knowledge through global and local networks had interplayed and assisted the emergence of the Oromo struggle for national self-determination. These conditions facilitated the emergence and the development of Oromo nationalism and Oromo liberation organizations and its umbrella organization, the United Liberation Forces of Oromia (ULFO)

national struggle that created confusion and misunderstanding among Oromo elites who formed different liberation organizations. The building of this national organizational capacity is only possible when *Oromummaa* can be packaged into a policy to mobilize the Oromo nation as a whole for a well-organized and coordinated collective action.

Oromummaa cements all Oromo sectors, groups, and individuals at personal, interpersonal, and collective levels. The social and cultural construction of the Oromo collective identity is an ongoing process and cannot be completed because the Oromo consist of diverse and heterogeneous individuals, groups, occupations, and various cultural and economic experiences. Hence, Oromo nationalists need to recognize that the diversity and unity of the Oromo people are important because "people who participate in collective action do so only when such action resonates with both an individual and a collective identity that makes such action meaningful."[33] Collective identities are not automatically given, but they are "essential outcomes of the mobilization process and crucial prerequisite to movement success."[34] Oromo nationalists must reach a common understanding of Oromoness through open, critical, and honest dialogues and debates. The broadening and deepening of *Oromummaa* require the cognitive liberation of Oromo leaders and followers.

Leaders with cognitive and/or behavioral deficiencies cannot facilitate the broadening and deepening of Oromo nationalism and the development of Oromo personal and social identities. Since leadership as an activity involves intellectual directive and organizational capacity, Oromo leaders need to actively work to achieve full cognitive liberation. Leaders with full cognitive liberation can be effective by balancing their "leading," and "led" selves and by interacting and conversing with their followers. Through an intense conversation between effective leaders and followers, strategic innovations and new solutions for existing problems can be formulated from diverse perspectives and experiences. Democratic conversations allow Oromo political leaders to be teachers and effective communicators, and also to be effective listeners and students. Such leadership develops skills that empower them to broaden *Oromummaa* at personal, interpersonal, and collective levels.

Oromummaa is about Oromo national politics and about capturing state power through organizing and enabling the Oromo people to solve their political, social, economic and cultural problems as a nation. Without critically and deeply understanding *Oromummaa*, the Oromos cannot build strong Oromo social and political institutions and organizations that will take the Oromo nation to a promised land. It is only if Oromo elites adequately understand the concept of *Oromummaa* and engage in fully deploying Oromo cultural and political institutions through a centralized and organized channel, the Oromo people can challenge Ethiopian colonial institutions in Oromia and gain recognition and support for the Oromo cause from the international community.

The major problem of Oromo society at this historical period is the lack of organizational capacity that can mobilize all Oromo material and human resources to confront both the internal and external enemies of the Oromo nation. The first step in dealing with this major challenge is to develop and unleash Oromo selves at personal and collective levels by clearly understanding the concepts of *Oromummaa*. The ULFO should create cultural and political forums at which Oromo organizations, intellectuals, religious and community leaders, and women and students must come together to critically look at the causes of the continued suffering of the Oromo people so that they can correctly identify their problems that hinder their progress toward the

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[33] S.M. Buechler, "Beyond Resource Mobilization: Emerging Trends in Social Movement Theory," *The Sociological Quarterly,* vo. 34, no. 2 (1993), p. 228.

[34] *Ibid.*

finding and generating a clear articulation of *Oromummaa*. Without the blossoming of *Oromummaa*, the Oromo national organizational capacity cannot be built.

Overcoming Organizational Deficits

The Oromo are organizationally weak because they are ideologically incoherent. As already mentioned, Oromo nationalism has been the project of a few Oromo revolutionaries. Some of the best and brightest elements of Oromo revolutionaries were assassinated or jailed by the enemies of the Oromo people. The remaining Oromo nationalists who have continued to push the Oromo national movement forward have divided Oromo political forces into small segments, and they have been unable to develop a coherent leadership. Without such coherent leadership, the Oromo could not transform Oromo awareness into nationalism and organizational capacity.

Transforming Oromo awareness into *Oromummaa* and organizational capacity is a complex and difficult task; it needs multifaceted and coordinated leadership that can rebuild Oromo-centered institutions and organizations that are compatible with scientific principles and management. The major task of a coherent leadership is to provide ideological visions, organizational skills, knowledge or expertise, information, and other resources for the Oromo national movement. The efforts of a broadly based and well-coordinated leadership must be to establish a mechanism that can make the movement accountable for analysis of a problem, decision-making, and implementation of decision. There cannot be an effective organization without strategic planning, policy making, organizational and management development, monitoring operations and performance against the main objectives, and making key organizational decisions on micro- and macro-levels and implementing them.

All Oromo nationalists must start to move toward re-conceptualizing the concept of leadership. Ordinary Oromo nationalists need to give up the idea that only political leadership provides all solutions to all Oromo problems. They need to establish task-oriented networks and groups that recognize that real leaders are ordinary people with extraordinary determination. Recognizing the inadequacies of existing organizations, visions, and strategies and starting to plan and develop new strategies and approaches from time to time will unleash the potentials of Oromo society. There is a need to have well-focused groups within the ULFO that study issues and then develop action plans that will allow the free participation of different sectors of Oromo society in the Oromo national struggle. The ULFO must also develop well-thought out plans that will attract sympathizers and supporters from other societies. Oromo liberation also requires global connections and supporters.

Pragmatic Foreign policy

States or political organizations use diplomacy as a political tool to manage their relations with other societies and international institutions or organizations. The main task of diplomacy is to gain what is possible or to achieve the highest possible or to maintain the least possible loss in the prevailing conditions. Since diplomacy works in a never-ending sequence, it involves the assessment of immediate and longer-term interests, balancing of domestic and foreign policies, responding to proposed policies, and implementing of policies within the complex and difficult global environment. Furthermore, diplomacy involves understanding the interests of other nations, assessing the compatibility of these interests with one's objectives, and pragmatically balancing these interests. The success of the diplomacy of a nation is primarily determined by its organizational capacity and effectiveness. Therefore, framing and implementing Oromian foreign policy and diplomacy require the building of the Oromo national organizational capacity.

Achieving success for Oromian diplomacy needs to harmonize Oromian domestic politics with international politics. Some foreign relations experts call the balancing of domestic and

international politics "double-edged" diplomacy. The calculation of constraints and opportunities on both domestic and international politics must be done on structural and behavioral levels. That is why a serious discussion of diplomatic and international relations takes place on three levels of analysis. The first one occurs on a world system-level to explain the structures and dynamics of global capitalism and the political structures of the international system. The second-level analysis deals with the society, culture, and political institutions. The third-level of analysis attempts to explain the behavior of individual actors within the system. As domestic policies can be used to influence the outcomes of international bargaining, international policies can help consolidate domestic politics. Oromian domestic policies should assist Oromos in better understand themselves and the world. Claiming to have a unique cultural experience as people cannot help in achieving the Oromo political objectives without integrating the Oromos into the capitalist world system the way it benefits them within its structural limitation.

The Oromos, particularly the activist ones, need to understand that the world belongs to those people who have power in the form of knowledge or expertise, organizational and military capability and economic resources. By realizing the norms of international politics, the Oromo leadership must develop different scenarios that assist the Oromo movement to achieve its political objectives. One of the major reasons why the Oromos were colonized was that they were unable to establish international and diplomatic relations with powerful countries in order to get access to modern weapons, technology and information, and modern organizational and management skills. Although the Oromo people had developed democracy and built a strong defense army before their colonization, due to lack of support from outside, they could not play the game of the capitalist world system. As a result, they lost their country and freedom. The Oromo as a people are still inward looking and have not learned from their past mistake. Still, the Oromo national movement faces the same danger in the twenty-first century. The Oromos have failed as a nation for several centuries to establish foreign relations with other countries in order to get assistance for their national cause.[35]

By colonizing the Oromos with the help of European powers, the Ethiopians emerged as the intermediary representative in the outside world for the Oromo people and other colonized peoples and denied them access to the world system. Therefore, achieving the objectives of the Oromo national movement requires the building of the Oromos organizational capacity to convince the world powers by action that the Oromo can establish a multinational democracy and implement national self-determination and popular sovereignty that the interstate system recognizes as the important political principles of the modern world. Since the Tigrayan-led regime is committing genocide on the Oromo and other peoples, the primary objective of the Oromo struggle should be removing this state as the intermediary between the Oromo people and the global capitalist system. Since successive Ethiopian regimes have failed to bring democracy, national-self determination, peace, development and stability, the policies of the big powers have failed, and Ethiopia has continued to produce war, instability and famine. The Oromo leadership should capture these opportunities by speaking the languages of these global powers through developing an alternative political strategy that can bring democracy, peace, development and political stability to Oromia, Ethiopia, and the Horn of Africa.

Discussion and Conclusion

Organization is a political tool that enables people to use their human and material resources effectively in order to accomplish their specific agendas. All strong organizations need to change

[35]The intervention of European powers on the side of Abyssinia in the war between the Oromo and Abyssinians, and the collaborations of global powers with the Ethiopian state until now have helped Amharas and Tigrayan in colonizing, dominating, dehumanizing, and underdeveloping the Oromo nation. As a result, Oromia was removed from the global map and denied the status as a nation among the community of nations.

in order to adapt themselves to the fast changing world. The effectiveness of organizations comes from leaders and other members who have commitment, knowledge, determination, and readiness for change when there is a need for change. Survivability and growth of organizations depend on achieving objectives. The building of the Oromo organizational capacity requires developing policy measures and taking practical actions.

The first priority in solving Oromo organizational shortcomings must be struggling to enable conscious Oromos to critically understand the true meaning of nationalism within the global context. Nationalism is best understood by exploring its dialectical connection with the state and global capitalism. Global capitalism has brought about large-scale and long-term structural changes. The new political structure that initially emerged with capitalism was the state. This state created centralized and concentrated "national" power by destroying a village-level parcelized power. The processes of state- and nation-building in the capitalist world system transferred the allegiance of people from a lineage or clan, village or city-state, to a "nation" through developing state nationalism. In these processes, the concepts of nation, nationalism, and the citizen were invented. The Oromo national movement and *Oromummaa* must be understood within the parameters of these concepts. Since the Oromo struggle is the Oromo national project, every Oromo must take action through macro-, meso-, and micro-mobilization under a centralized leadership.

While building the ULFO, Oromo liberation organizations must build an alliance with other colonized ethnonations and oppressed groups that are determined to promote the principles of national self-determination and multinational democracy. The Oromo movement must establish a single standard for humanity both in theory and practice by challenging and uprooting the racialized Ethiopian state. Because of the institutional violence of the Ethiopian state and the support that this state secures from the imperial interstate system, the Oromo movement faces a very difficult situation. Since the Oromo movement has been progressive and revolutionary, it should be able to mobilize all political forces that struggle to dismantle colonialism, underdevelopment, and racial/ethnonational hierarchy and to promote social justice, self-determination, and multinational democracy.

Oromian foreign policy needs to demonstrate to the world community that the Oromo worldviews, philosophy, and system of governance are different from that of the Ethiopians and can help in peacefully and democratically integrating peripheral areas, such as the Horn of Africa, into the world system. When the world system is becoming unstable because of state and global terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the widening gap between haves and have-not, religious polarization, and the failure of the policy of big powers to integrate peripheral parts of the world into the world economy through democratic means, the Oromo secular movement which galvanizes both Christians and Muslims and the followers of original Oromo religion, *Waqeefata*, can show the way of integrating the peripheral parts of the world into the global system in mutually beneficial ways.

It is clear that most non-Oromos who live in Oromia and the neighbors of the Oromo oppose the Oromo struggle for self-determination or they are not enthusiastic about the Oromo national movement because of several reasons. These elements have enjoyed life at the cost of the Oromos since the Oromo have been powerless. The Ethiopians are connected into the global community via Oromian cities, particularly via Finfinne. The political and economic machinery that controls Finfinne automatically controls not only Oromia, but the Ethiopian Empire. Consequently, if the Oromo movement captures state power in Oromia, the responsibility of establishing political order in the region will be transferred to the Oromo automatically.

The groups that are not enthusiastic or who oppose the Oromo national struggle know that if the balance of power shifts toward the Oromos, the Oromo movement has a potential to bring a fundamental social change in Oromia, Ethiopia, and the Horn of Africa because of the size of the Oromo population, their geopolitics, their economic resources, and their cultural and democratic traditions. These groups can be divided into two: The first group includes those who

have fundamental contradictions with the Oromo people. These are Ethiopian state elites, colonial settlers, and those who benefit from the Ethiopian colonial system. The second group includes the colonized population groups who are not sure about the motive of the Oromo movement. Some elites and members of these groups fear the Oromo national movement. These situations make the Oromo struggle very complex. Therefore, by considering these complex political conditions and global politics, the OLF and ULFO need to develop political approaches that take these matters into consideration.

The TPLF/EPRDF brought about a coup on the Oromo movement in its foreign policy and diplomacy by persuading the West, particularly the USA, by its discourse and propaganda of fake self-determination, democracy and federation. This colonialist policy and the lack of pragmatic foreign policy on the part of the Oromo movement put the Oromo on the defensive. Therefore, it is time for the OLF and ULFO to develop alternative political strategies and foreign policies, and to engage in an aggressive diplomacy to practically place the Oromo movement at the center of political gravity in the Horn of Africa. The first political goal of the OLF and ULFO should be the removal of the Ethiopian intermediary state between the colonized peoples and the global economy through articulating the principles of national self-determination and multinational democracy. Since Oromia and its cities are the centers of regional economic activities where several population groups are interconnected to the Oromo people, Oromian domestic and foreign policies and diplomacy should be framed in such a way that those population groups who live in Oromia will achieve democratic rights by entering into a democratic alliance with the Oromo nation. Similarly, various population groups who are the neighbors of the Oromo can voluntarily establish a form of political union with Oromia through the principles of national self-determination and multinational democracy.

Chapter 11

The Current State of Oromo Politics: What should be done about it?[36]

My fellow Oromos, I request you not to personalize my critical analysis of the current Oromo politics by relating to your personal or organizational views. My reflections are based on many years of research and observations. As far as logic and facts allow me, I am critically and honestly analyzing the current problems of Oromo politics in order to suggest an alternative paradigm that may help in overcoming our debilitating political behavior and activities.

The current political confusion in the Oromo nationalist camp demonstrates that the Oromo national movement has yet to develop a coherent, pragmatic, assertive, and powerful leadership. Consequently, the Oromo movement lacks political maturity and organizational capacity. This situation has created political space for a few ambitious Oromo individuals or groups who wish to be political leaders to create weak and amorphous political groups that have struggled against one another rather than consolidating the Oromo political camp against the colonizers of the Oromo nation. Each political group has created political confusion for the Oromo national struggle by creating and promoting artificial political issues that do not adequately address the complex and difficult political problems facing the Oromo society.

All Oromo liberation organizations, including the OLF, have failed to precisely define and seek practical solutions to four major and complex Oromo political problems: The first problem is that Oromos still do not have the organizational capacity to defend the Oromo national interest. The second is the lack of a political mechanism that can be implemented to solve the problem of political fragmentation and effectively unite Oromo political forces to speak and act in unison both domestically and globally. The third problem is the lack of pragmatic political scenarios that can be used to deal with the neighbors of Oromos and the international community. The final problem is the lack of political wisdom and experience to develop a paradigm shift in Oromo politics with the changing circumstances of Oromian, Ethiopian, and global politics.

The Lack of Organizational Capacity

Today, Oromos have about six liberation organizations, and almost all of their leaders are in exile. About seven political organizations claim that they promote the Oromo national interest in Oromia. Of course, some of these organizations have been formed and controlled by the enemies of the Oromo nation. All these liberation organizations and political organizations were unable to demonstrate the existence Oromo political muscle during the May election of 2005. One would expect that strong Oromo liberation organizations would have disturbed a few polling stations and demonstrated to the international observers that there cannot be political stability in Oromia when Oromos are marginalized. When Tigrayan state elites and their Oromo and Amhara

[36] Presented at the 2005 OSA Annual Conference, Washington, D.C., Howard University, August 27-28.

collaborators on one hand, and their competitors, Amhara and Gurage politicians and their Oromo collaborators, on the other hand, peacefully campaigned and won hundreds of parliament seats in Oromia, how can one be sure that there have been Oromo liberation forces that could have made difference in Oromia?

When Tigrayan and Amhara politicians have been contesting in the heart of Oromia, Oromian cities, some of our politicians have failed to fully comprehend the far-reaching consequence of this event. As the Tigrayan elites have made a diplomatic coup on the Oromo politics in the name of democracy, the Amhara elites have recently won the international community to their side by the discourse of democracy although neither camps believes in practical democracy. It should be known to all Oromos and the international community that both the Tigrayan and Amhara political camps are the primary enemies of the Oromo people at this time. An independent Oromo voice has not been articulated to the international community in the ways it can understand and become sympathetic to the Oromo cause. Since we have not been playing our political cards correctly, there is no wonder why the Oromo political camp was degraded to the periphery by the international community over the period of a few weeks.

All Oromo liberation and political organizations have failed to demonstrate to the world community and the major powers that both the Meles regime and the Amhara-led political parties are illegitimate because the Oromo, the largest nation, and its legitimate political forces were excluded from the election. Rather than facing the challenge, these forces ignored the issues of democracy. To ignore the issues of democracy at this age of globalization is tantamount to committing political suicide. Ethiopian fake "democracy" should not stop Oromo political forces from championing a genuine and representative multinational democracy. At a minimum, Oromo forces should win other colonized nations to the side of the Oromo by promoting the principles and practices of multinational democracy.

The TPLF government has been pressured to open itself for a limited "democracy" in order to receive financial support and more political legitimacy from the international community. The international community has ignored the report of the Human Right Watch that demonstrated that Oromos have been denied their political and human rights, and prevented from freely participating in May 2005 election. Ignoring these realities, the election observers from international community have testified that this election was close to fair and free. How could an election that marginalized the Oromo, the largest population group, be close to be fair and free? Do Oromo politicians realize the political consequence of this decision?

While the Tigrayan state elites have military and organizational capacity, the Amhara elites have money and educated human resources. Despite the fact that the Oromo national movement has human resources, because of the size Oromo population, its strategy has primarily focused on the rhetoric of armed struggle, neglecting other forms of political struggle. The Oromo movement has failed to build an organizational capacity that can mobilize Oromo human resources both globally and domestically. It also has not envisioned strategies and approaches that will allow mass mobilization and participation in the national struggle. It is wrong to limit the Oromo national struggle to an armed struggle that until now has not been effective. It should have accepted both armed and legal struggles without directly linking them together. One reason for the lack of the organizational capacity in Oromo society is political fragmentation.

Political Fragmentation

Although the founders of the OLF were wise in creating a centralized organization for the liberation of their people, current Oromo political leaders have lacked the political skills, maturity, and tolerance needed for solving their differences and maintaining their organizational and political unity. Some of them opted to withdraw from the OLF and create other organizations that have not surpassed the OLF. Rather than struggling and solving their organizational problems within the OLF, they chose the process of political fragmentation. After realizing that

all of them have failed to build the organizational capacity that is required of a national liberation struggle, they formed the United Liberation Forces of Oromia (ULFO) in 2000. Creating ULFO has yet to solve the problems of political ignorance and fragmentation. Rather than focusing on winning victory for the Oromo nation, Oromo liberation organizations have preferred to compete among one another and subordinated the Oromo national interest to their respective political interests. The objectives of ULFO will be successful only when all political groups subordinate their respective political interest to the Oromo national interest and speak and act as one both domestically and globally.

Almost all Oromo liberation organizations branched out from the OLF while lacking fundamental political differences. When one wants to understand the cause of this political fragmentation two issues stand out. The first one is that the OLF lacks a mechanism for democratically and peacefully resolving its problems within itself. The second reason is that contemporary Oromo elites compete for political power like Oromo chiefs of the last decades of the 19th century—these chiefs undermined the Oromo *gada* system in some parts of Oromia. These two issues raise a fundamental question about the formation of elites or leadership in Oromo society. There is no question that some Oromo nationalists are committed for the Oromo cause, but they often confuse their political ambitions with the Oromo cause. Oromo political leaders have failed to understand that they cannot have real political power before the development of Oromo national power.

I believe that it is positive to have ambitious revolutionary leaders who are committed to promoting the Oromo cause by any means necessary. But if such leaders mix priorities by equating their personal political ambitions with the cause of the nation, both their ambitions and the cause of the nation will be lost. Ambition alone is not enough to be a political leader. Like in any area, a person can be an effective leader through hard work and excellence. At the same time, all revolutionaries cannot be national leaders at the same time. Without recognizing these principles, if all Oromo revolutionaries struggle to be national leaders without demonstrated leadership expertise and if those who have become leaders resist change of leadership, the Oromo cause is subordinated to personal interests. These conditions have emerged in the Oromo national movement ahead of the creation of Oromo national power, causing the stagnation of the Oromo national struggle.

Oromo society does not have a large pool of educated people. If those few who are educated are fighting among themselves rather than fighting against the enemy of the Oromo people, they are repeating the experiences of the Oromo chiefs of the 19th century who contributed to the colonization of Oromia. With the current crisis of Oromo politics, most Oromo elites are confused and have lost their political direction. Political fragmentation and the political indulgence of insult proved themselves meaningless. Then what should we do about our political fragmentation? What should we do about the formation of an accountable and transparent national leadership that can represent all Oromo interests? If we continue to worship our dual and confusing identity and fail to overcome our political ignorance, we cannot build the requisite organizational capacity for political liberation.

The Danger of Political Dualism and Rigidity

Although the Oromo national struggle led by the OLF has enabled all Oromo branches to retrieve their national name, Oromo, to recognize their country, Oromia, and to write their language in *Qubee*, some Oromo elites still have political dualism. There are still Oromos who have accepted a dual identity—provincial and Oromo identity. There are also Oromos who see *Oromummaa* in relation to Christianity or Islam. This duality emerges from low level of political consciousness or nationalism. There are Oromo political activists who use such dualities to bolster their political ambitions. Such dualities have undermined the development of the Oromo

national movement. We need be honest about our regional and religious variations and address them publicly.

There are Oromo political activists who combine the demands of democracy and self-determination. There are also who think that the Oromo political demand should be limited to political independence. If these demands are genuinely pursed they are not contradictory. But many Oromo nationalists have wasted their energies by creating such artificial political boundaries between such political demands. If these demands can be implemented through struggle, they can help in creating Oromo national power. Once the Oromo national power with democratic authority emerges, the Oromo nation can provide a political direction for both Oromia and Ethiopia. There is no reason why Oromos should oppose this. However, the serious question to be asked and answered is how these principles can be implemented by preventing the political debacle of 1991 and 1992.

If we continue to limit our demand to political independence and ignore the demands for democracy, self-determination, and federalism, we continue to further isolate ourselves from larger powers that make a difference in global politics. No liberation organization won its victory without a support from important countries. One of the reasons why Oromos were defeated by the Amharas in the last decades of the 19th century and by Tigrayans in the 1990s was the lack of recognition and support from the global powers. How long will we continue to deny this reality? We must use all possible strategies in our national struggle. We should stop using a scenario that is counter-productive for our national cause while promoting our perceived personal and organizational interests. We concerned Oromos must demand that all Oromo political leaders and organizations subordinate themselves to the Oromo cause and use all strategies to promote the Oromo struggle through a united front. Particularly, the OLF, as the leading organization, should come out from its political confusion and a wait and see approach and, instead, show us the way.

We must demand that all Oromo political leaders reassess their political positions and stop hiding behind their narrow political circles that are colored by propaganda of regionalism, religion, independence, and democracy and build a united Oromo movement that can speak and act in unison both domestically and internationally. Considering the danger that our people are facing at home today and the role of the international community, Oromo liberation and political organizations need to utilize various political strategies that include self-determination, democracy, federalism, and independence, combining the strategies of armed and legal forms of struggles. While reorganizing various scenarios and strategies of the Oromo struggle, every Oromo political force should know that to be subservient to the political enemy of the Oromo people is a national treason. Oromos should seek to prevent Oromo collaborators from engaging in dirty politics by isolating them from political and social influence. The strategy of only focusing on one approach should end. We need to institute a paradigm shift in our political thinking in order to embrace innovative political scenarios and approaches and use them in complementary ways.

The Need for Paradigm Shift

The Oromo people are currently facing state-terrorism, genocide, and massive human rights violations. Both Amhara and Tigrayan elites are struggling in Oromian cities by using their respective Oromo collaborator group, the discourse of democracy, and the support of the international community. Again the international community has showed that it willingly responds to a fake democracy while ignoring the issues of human rights and genuine democracy. The Human Rights Watch declared to the world community that the Oromo nation has been under the total control of the Tigrayan regime and could not participate in the “democratic” election of May 15, 2005. It also declared that prominent Oromo organizations were not allowed to participate in this election. The world powers ignored all these and almost unanimously endorsed this election as democratic.

Whatever the Ethiopian government does is considered democratic and legal by the major powers. There is no doubt that such moves will increase the violations Oromo human rights. All lands may be commoditized and transferred to Habasha elites. If this happens, most Oromos are going to be tenants and servants once again. The degradation of Oromo history and culture will increase. Most Oromos will be limited to rural areas or forced into reservation camps like Native Americans. Facing these possibilities, the Oromo national struggle cannot afford the status quo of wait and see. Furthermore, in Oromia, several nominal political parties have currently emerged and given democratic credibility for the Tigrayan-led authoritarian terrorist regime without creating political power for the Oromo nation.

In this era of globalization, global capitalism is deepening its activities in Oromia and Ethiopia. It is doing this in the name of democracy without having a commitment for social justice, self-determination, and genuine democracy. As it captured Oromia via Ethiopian colonialism in the last decades of the 19th century, global capitalism can give a final death blow to Oromia, if Oromos do not act wisely in a united way. Since Western powers are stakeholders in the affairs of Oromia and Ethiopia, if we do not play our political cards wisely we can be total losers. All these conditions require an immediate paradigm shift in the Oromo national movement.

This paradigm shift should first focus on the issues of leadership, united front, and total mass mobilization and participation in the Oromo national struggle. The problems of Oromo elites, leadership, and united front should be openly confronted to find adequate solutions. The development of Oromo elite is at its formative stage. At this stage, our society needs wise leaders more than at any time in order to build a democratic national authority that is accountable, consultative, and representative. The Oromo national movement also requires the emergence of a core of leaders who can be the symbolic expression of the Oromo democratic authority and Oromo society. We should resist Oromo politicians who promote the politics of fragmentation and chieftaincy. We should struggle to form the democratic national authority that can make the objective of a united front a reality. The Oromo national movement should forcefully struggle for self-determination and a genuine multinational democracy in order to convince the international community and the neighbors of Oromos that Oromos can bring stability to Oromia, Ethiopia, and the Horn of Africa

A broadly based national democratic authority should mobilize all sectors of Oromo society both domestically and globally. Political mechanisms that can enable almost all Oromos to actively participate both in democratic and national struggles should be adopted. The current domestic politics in the Ethiopian Empire and global politics require Oromos to fully struggle for their democratic rights in Oromia. Oromos cannot afford to leave a political space for Habashas and being forced to vote for them. The struggle that Oromo students started in Oromia should be expanded and be part of the struggle for democracy. We should employ all approaches that combine armed struggle and the movement for democracy. These two tactics should be complementary.

Globally we must identify approaches that can win global powers for our struggle. We must use all possible approaches that can help in removing the intermediary position of Habasha political power between Oromos and the global interstate system. We should not shy away from using the discourse of democracy to win our neighbors and the international community to our side. Our motto must be "Mirgan Yabanis bitan yabanis walga'ii kooraadhuma." We should struggle to capture state power both in Oromia and beyond in order to create and institutionalize a multinational democracy by replacing the Ethiopian colonial and intermediary state. To save our people from the danger that is looming before them, we need to gain access to state power and use it to improve the deplorable condition of our people.

Conclusion

There is only one Oromo liberation organization that has the capacity and credibility to facilitate the paradigm shift I have mentioned above if it wants to save itself from further disintegration and promote the Oromo struggle in a better and more effective way. This organization is the OLF. The OLF has more moral power and resources than other organizations to promote the strategy of building the Oromo national democratic authority. It can do this by calling for an Oromo national conference consisting of all Oromo sectors, Oromo liberation organizations, and political parties in order to commonly assess the successes and the failures of the past and develop a new strategy for the Oromo national struggle. The responsibility of all Oromo nationalists and organizations is to recognize that we cannot continue our national struggle in the old ways. We must be ready to collaborate with any Oromo political force that can map our political future in innovative, practical, and effective ways.

I recommend that the Oromo Studies Association (OSA) establish a committee of senior scholars who have experience with Oromo politics to critically study the current problems of political parties, representative of Oromo sectors, and prominent Oromo individuals within three months. The committee should also suggest other steps that Oromo society can take to save itself from further destruction in the case that Oromo liberation forces and parties ignore its recommendations.

Chapter 12

The Oromo People's Movement, the Ethiopian Colonial State, and the West[37]

Oromos are one of the three largest ethno-national groups in Africa; in Ethiopia alone they are estimated at 40 million. Some Oromo branches also live in Kenya. Before their colonization, the Oromo people used to call their homeland "Biyya Oromoo," which Lewis Krapf named Ormania in the mid-1850s.[38] When Africa was partitioned during the last decades of the 19th century by European colonial powers, Abyssinia/Ethiopia was seen as a Christian Island. As Christian Europeans were ready to support the Abyssinians, the later was ready to ally with the former. Since Ethiopians (Amharas and Tigrayans) were ready to collaborate with European colonial powers, they were given military and other assistance to colonize the Oromo and other peoples. In this process, Oromos were incorporated into the Ethiopian Empire and the European-dominated racialized capitalist world system as colonial subjects and semi-slaves. Since then, Oromos have been under total control of the Ethiopian colonial state that has been supported by global powers, namely the UK, the former USSR, and the U.S.[39] As a result, today the Oromo people are one of the impoverished and uneducated world population groups. Oromos live under "Ethiopian political slavery," and they do not have the freedom of expression, the media, and organization.[40]

Ethiopia is an empire in the verge of collapse because of the competing nationalisms of various population groups, such as Oromos, Amharas, Tigrayans, Ogaden-Somalis, and Sidamas. While the colonized populations, including Oromos, Sidamas, Ogaden-Somalis and others see Ethiopian nationalism that manifests itself as Amhara or Tigrayan nationalism a form of oppressor nationalism, Amharas and Tigrayans consider the nationalism of the colonized nations as "tribalist" or secessionist. The refusal of the Tigrayan-dominated minority regime and its supporters from the West to deal democratically with these contradictory issues and the commitment to maintain Ethiopian colonialism through massive human rights violations and state terrorism on one side, and the determination of the colonized nations to achieve national self-determination and multinational democracy or complete independence on the other side, have set Ethiopia on fire. Further, the determination of the Amhara elites to come back to power to control the Ethiopian colonial state has increased the intensity of the Ethiopian political problem. Since it is impossible to deal with all these issues in this paper, I focus on the Oromo struggle for national self-determination and multinational democracy or independence due to its centrality to the current Ethiopian political crisis.

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37 Paper presented at the Forum on "Ethnicity and National identity in Ethiopia," organized by the Ethiopian Students Association at Harvard, November 12, 2006.

38. J. Lewis Krapf, *Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labours in East Africa* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1968.

[39] See Asafa Jalata, *Oromia & Ethiopia*, Second edition (Trenton, N. J.: The Red Press).

[40] *Ibid*, pp. 229-256.

Today Oromos are exposed to massive human rights violations and state terrorism because of their resistance to Ethiopian colonialism and abundant economic resources.[41] The Tigrayan-dominated Ethiopian regime has acquired complex information and communication networks and modern weaponry through its connections with global powers and transnational elites and uses them to terrorize Oromo activists and the Oromo population to destroy their social and organizational infrastructures. First, the paper explains the essence of the Oromo people's movement. Second, it explores the relationship between Ethiopia and global powers to situate the Oromo question in the global context. Third, the paper explains how the Tigrayan-led Ethiopian regime practices state terrorism to control Oromos and transfer their resources to Tigrayans and their supporters. Fourth, it explores why the West supports the Meles regime by claiming that it is democratic. Fifth, the paper suggests some political strategies and approaches that can help different ethnonational groups to move beyond conflict and war by recognizing and correcting the past and present crimes and injustices in order to engage in peaceful co-existence and development for the future.

The Oromo People's Movement

The Oromo people's movement seeks self-determination for the nation known as Oromia. The movement also struggles to restore Oromo democracy known as the gada system.[42] Oromos have been engaged in the Oromo national movement under the leadership of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) since the early 1970s to liberate themselves from Ethiopian colonial repression and exploitation. This movement, as an anti-colonial national struggle, aims at dismantling racial/ethno-national hierarchy, Ethiopian settler colonialism, and its institutions that have been legitimated by the ideology of racism.[43] Racism is defined as a discourse and a practice in which a racial/ethno-national project is politically, culturally, and "scientifically" constructed by global and regional elites in the capitalist world system to naturalize and justify racial/ethno-national inequality in which those at the top of the hierarchy oppress and exploit those below them by claiming biological and/or cultural superiority. In other words, race and racism are sociopolitical constructed to maintain the identities of the dominant ethno-nations and their power and privileges through policy formulation and implementation. Consequently, these two concepts as sociopolitical constructs define the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized ethno-nations in Ethiopia.

The central contradiction that is built into Ethiopian colonial politics is the racialization/ethnicization of state power leading to further rigid ethno-class stratification and dependence on big powers without accountability to the ruled. The acute political and economic crises in Oromia and Ethiopia, and the policy response to them, have contributed to social unrest,

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[41] See Asafa Jalata, *ibid*.

[42] Before their colonization, Oromos had an egalitarian democratic system known as Gada. This system has the principles of checks and balances (such as periodic succession of eight years and division of power among executive, legislative, and judiciary branches), balanced opposition (among five parties), and power sharing between higher and lower administrative organs to prevent power from falling into the hands of despots. Other principles of the system include balanced representation of clans, lineages, regions, and confederacies; accountability of leaders; the settlement of disputes through reconciliation; and respect for basic rights and liberties. Recognizing this reality and challenging Euro-centric worldviews, American Anthropologist Bonnie Holcomb notes that the Gada system "organized the Oromo people in an all-encompassing democratic republic even before the few European pilgrims arrived from England on the shores of North America and only later built a democracy." Since Oromos were organized under the Gada system politically and militarily, the Ethiopians, although tried for several centuries, could not colonize the Oromo until the last decades of the 19th century when the balance of power was changed by European intervention in the favor of Ethiopians. Bonnie K. Holcomb, "Akka Gadaati: The Unfolding of Oromo Nationalism-Keynote Remarks," *Proceeding of the 1991 Conference on Oromia*, (University of Toronto, Canada, 3-4 August, 1991), pp.1-10.

[43] For further discussion, see Asafa Jalata, *Fighting against the Injustice of the State and Globalization: Comparing the African American and Oromo Movements*, (New York: Palgrave, 2001), PP.5-12.

and ethno-cultural and social movements. These crises stem from the political behavior of the Ethiopian racialized/ethnicized state and the global forces that have been involved in the Ethiopian empire on the side of this state without requiring accountability, the rule of law, or the implementation of at least "limited democracy."

The interplay of multiple social structural and historical factors and conjunctures in the racialized global capitalist world system facilitated the development of Oromo nationalism. The inability of the colonizers to crush the Oromo human spirit, individual and collective resistance to colonial or racial/ethno-national domination, the immortality of certain cultural memory, changes in social structures because of economic and political changes, urbanization and community formation, the development of institutions, the emergence of an educated class, politicized collective grievances, and the dissemination of social scientific and political knowledge through global and local networks have interplayed and helped the development of this nationalism. The development of Oromo nationalism cannot be understood without linking it to the processes of ideological formation and cultural revitalization, institutional and organizational manifestations, and alternative knowledge production and dissemination. The development of Oromo nationalism was slower than that of other Africans who were colonized directly by the European powers. Oromos were colonized directly by the Ethiopian (Amhara-Tigray) minority settlers that attempted to destroy Oromo peoplehood through genocide, ethnocide and selective assimilation. The Ethiopian colonial government with the help of the weapons, mercenaries, and advisors from Great Britain, France, and Italy liquidated half the Oromo population (i.e. five million out of ten million) and their leadership during the last decades of the nineteenth century.[44]

The Ethiopian colonial settlers established their main geopolitical centers in Oromia through which racist and colonial policies have been formulated and implemented to keep the remaining Oromos as second-class citizens, and to exploit their economic and labor resources by denying them access to state power. These geopolitical centers are garrison cities surrounded by the Oromo rural masses that are denied meaningful health, educational, and other social services, despite the fact that these colonial settlers and their collaborators depend on the economic and labor resources of the Oromo majority. Placing these complex contradictions in the global and historical context and analyzing them enable us to critically understand the relationship between the West, particularly the US, and the Meles regime and the difference between the legitimizing discourse of 'democracy" and the actual political practices of massive human rights violations and state terrorism.

Ethiopia, Global Powers, and the Discourse of Race

Ethiopia is an empire in which two ethnonational groups, namely Amharas and Tigrayans successively control state power.[45] These two dominant population groups call themselves Habashas.[46] Successive Ethiopian regimes have used the discourses of race, culture, and Christianity to link themselves to the Middle East, Europe and North America in order to consolidate their power against their fellow Ethiopians and the colonized population groups. Race, Christianity, socialism and democracy have been used as political discourses by successive Habasha ruling classes to legitimate Ethiopian state power without changing its essence of authoritarianism and terrorism. The Ethiopian state has different policies and practices: It

[44] See Martial De Salviac, *The Oromo: An Ancient People, Great African Nation,* and translation from the Original French Edition of 1901 by Ayalew Kanno, 2005).

[45]. See Asafa Jalata*, Oromia & Ethiopia, 1868-2004*, second edition, (Trenton, NJ: The Red Sea Press, 2005).

[46.] The Habashas (mainly Amharas and Tigrayans) were the mixture of Arabs and Africans. The Habashas and the Oromo were the major ethnonational groups in what is now the Horn of Africa when the Europeans began colonizing Africa in the last decades of the nineteenth century. The Habashas favored by the Europeans, in effect allied themselves with the colonialists, creating an Ethiopian ruling class. This ruling class brought the human and econmic resources of the Oromos and other colonized populations under control.

practices authoritarianism on the Amharas and Tigrayans from which it emerged, and terrorizes the colonized population groups, such as Oromos. Therefore, I characterize the Ethiopian state as an "authoritarian-terrorist" regime. Successive heads of the Ethiopian state have the power to kill their subjects without any repercussions, and they have been above their own laws. These authoritarian-terrorist regimes are highly militarized and repressive, and they tightly controlled information and resources in forms of foreign aid, domestic financial resources, lucrative businesses, and political appointments. They have also directly owned and controlled all aspects of state power including the security and military institutions, judiciary and other public bodies, and financial institutions. These successive regimes have legitimized their corrupt political practices in the discourses of culture, civilization, religion, race, and other ideologies.

Habashas see themselves as a Semitic people who are racially and culturally superior to other Africans. They have also effectively used cultural racism[47] in destroying or suppressing other peoples. Cultural racism and its contradictions may result in the extermination or/and continued subjugation of the dominated population group. Racism does not necessarily manifest itself by the discourse and claim of biological differences. Usually it combines the discourses of biological and cultural differences to justify unequal treatment of different population groups. The extermination of Jews by Germans, the continued subjugation of Palestinians by the Israeli state, the ethnic cleansing of Bosnians by Serbians, the destruction of Tutsis by Hutus, and suppression of Hutus by Tutsis are examples of extreme forms of cultural racism.

The Amhara state elites changed the name Abyssinia to Ethiopia in the 1930s for political reasons.[48] Most people do not know the difference between ancient Ethiopia and contemporary Ethiopia. Because of this historical misinformation, Africans who were colonized and enslaved by Europeans, except those who were enslaved and colonized by contemporary Ethiopians, wrongly considered contemporary Ethiopia (former Abyssinia) as an island of black freedom since they maintained formal political power. Most blacks "knew very little about the social and political conditions of Ethiopia. What they wrote or said about Ethiopia was at best a manifestation of their emotional state."[49] Most Africans were unaware that Ethiopia's political power came from an alliance with the colonizing European powers. In reality, the Ethiopia that participated in the slave trade and the scramble for Africa was not an island of black freedom. Instead, it has been "a prison house" in which Oromos and other colonized peoples have been brutalized. Despite the fact that Habashas are black, they consider themselves Semitic to identify themselves with the Middle East and dissociate themselves from Africa whose peoples they consider both racially and culturally inferior. For instance, when the Nigerian Daily Times interviewed Haile Selassie, the emperor of Ethiopia, about Ethiopian racial identity in the 1930s,

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[47]. Cultural racism can be defined as the conscious or subconscious conviction of the politically dominant population group that imposes its cultural patterns and practices through its social institutions in an attempt to destroy or suppress the cultural patterns and practices of the colonized and dominated population.

[48]. Recognizing the political and diplomatic significance of the name Ethiopia (the old name for the Black world), the Abyssinian state elites replaced officially the name Abyssinia with that of Ethiopia in the 1930s. However, the Ethiopian ideological history claims "the modern Ethiopian state as the direct heir to the Ethiopia mentioned in biblical and classical sources. Ethiopian and Western scholars presented Ethiopia as an entity that had existed continuously as an integrated and independent state for three thousand years." This ideological claim has enabled Ethiopia (former Abyssinia) to conceal the fact that Ethiopia is a neocolonial state that emerged during the partition of Africa by European powers. Ethiopia by allying with these powers participated in the partition and colonization of Africa. Successive Ethiopian state elites use the African and Semitic discourses both regionally and globally. Globally, they use the Semitic discourse and the discourse of Christianity to mobilize assistance from Europe, North America, and the Middle East. Skillfully, they have also used their blackness to mobilize other Africans, the African Diaspora, and black U.S. policy elites against Oromos and other colonized peoples. By confusing original Ethiopia (the Black world) with contemporary Ethiopia (former Abyssinia) Habasha elites have misled some historically naive people in Africa, Europe, North America, and the world.

[49]. William R. Scott, *The Sons of Sheba's Race: African-Americans and the Italo-Ethiopian War, 1935-1941,* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 26.

he said "that Ethiopians were not, and did not regard themselves as Negroes, as they were a Hamito-Semitic people."[50] Since the concept of race is a socio-political construct, it is essential to critically understand a historical context in which Ethiopian racism is produced and reproduced to dehumanize the colonized peoples in order to deny them access to Ethiopian state power and other privileges. In Ethiopian discourse, racial distinctions have been invented and manipulated to perpetuate the political objective of Habasha domination of the colonized population groups.

Habasha elites recognize the importance of racial distinctions in linking themselves to the Middle East, Europe, and North America to mobilize support for their political projects. Most Jews, Arabs, Europeans, and Americans see Habashas closer to themselves than the peoples whom they consider "real black." Also, the West, particularly the US, places Habashas on "an intermediate position between whites and blacks" and consider them closer to "the European race" or members of "the great Caucasian family."[51] There were Europeans who considered Habashas as a very intelligent people because of their racial affinity with the "Caucasian race."[52] There were also who saw Habashas as "dark-skinned white people" and "racial and cultural middleman" between Black Africa on one side and Europe and the Middle East on the other side.[53] One German scholar admired the intelligence of Habashas and noted that he never saw such mental capability among Negroes, Arabs, Egyptians, and Nubians.[54] These racist discourses are unchallenged in academic and popular discourses because they help reproduce Ethiopian colonial power and other privileges.

U.S. foreign policy elites, diplomats, and other officials recognize and defend such "racial pretensions of Ethiopia's ruling class."[55] One would expect that African American policy elites in the U.S. State Department, including George Moose, Irvin Hicks, Susan Rice, Condoleezza Rice, and Collin Powell, would think differently from their White counterparts and genuinely promote social justice and democracy in Africa. But African American policy elites, because of the distorted historical knowledge, and/or because of their class interests, have accepted the ideological discourse on Ethiopia that presented this empire as the home of black freedom when all blacks were under Euro-American colonialism and slavery and endorsed the racist U.S. policy toward Ethiopia and Oromia.

As some African kings and chiefs participated in the slave trade with European slave merchants to commodify some Africans and ship them to North America and other parts of the world, these African American elites collaborate with the racist structures that dehumanize African peoples. It is an irony of history that the lack of critical historical knowledge or class interest or the ideological confusion built into this racist policy has brought an alliance between the biological or ideological descendants of slavers and the descendants of slaves to victimize people like Oromos who have been victimized by colonialism and slavery. The current Ethiopian rulers are the ideological descendants of Ethiopian Warlords, such as Yohannis and Menelik, who participated in the massacre and enslavement of millions of Oromos and other indigenous groups.

To demonstrate the civilization and cultural superiority of Amharas and Tigrayans, racist scholars downplayed the blackness of Ethiopians to emphasize their similarities to European

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50. Alberto Sbacchi, *Legacy of Bitterness: Ethiopia and Fascist Italy, 1935-1941*, (Lawrenceville, NJ: The Red Sea Press, 1997), p. 25.

51. Quoted in ibid. p. 29; quoted in Harold G. Marcus, "Racist Discourse about Ethiopia and Ethiopians before and after the Battle of Adwa," Adwa Conference, AAU, March 1996, p. 5.

52. See Harold G. Marcus, *ibid.*

53. Racist Euro-American scholars who believe in racial distinctions use these kinds of racist phrases to show the significance of whiten-ness and denigrate blackness in human civilizations. For further discussion, see Mariam Maat-Ka-Re-Monges, *Kush: The Jewel of Nubia - Reconnecting the Root System of African Civilization*, (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 1997). pp. 23-29; see Harold G. Marcus, "Racist Discourse," *ibid*. p. 7.

54. Cited in Harold G. Marcus, "Racist Discourse," *ibid*. p. 6.

55. Cedric J. Robinson, "The African Diaspora and the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis," *Race and Class* 2, 1985, p. 53.

societies[56] In Ethiopian studies, Oromos were depicted as "crueler scourges" and "barbarian hordes that brought darkness and ignorance in the train" to Ethiopia;[57] they were also depicted as evil, ignorant, order-less, destructive, infiltrators, and invasive.[58] Oromos also were seen as "a decadent race" that was "less advanced" because of their racial and cultural inferiority. Therefore, their colonization and enslavement by the alliance of Ethiopians and Europeans were seen as a civilizing mission.[59] According to racist and modernist thinking, historical development is linear, and societies develop only from a primitive or backward stage to a civilized or an advanced stage. Oromos have been seen as primitive people are also considered as a collection of tribes or a single tribe or a `cluster' of diverse groups that cannot develop any nationalist political consciousness except "tribalism."[60]

Racist and modernist scholars have also denied the existence of a unified Oromo identity and argued that Oromos cannot achieve statehood because they are geographically scattered and lack cultural substance.[61] Since the creation of the Ethiopian Empire, Habasha elites claimed that they have a superior religion and civilization, and even sometimes expressed that they were not black and saw other Africans as "baryas" (slaves); in Abyssinia proper, Galla and "barya" have been used interchangeably.[62] The Ethiopian colonizers and Euro-American scholars called Oromos Galla, a derogatory name (equivalent to Nigger). The Oromos never accepted the name that was given to them by Ethiopians since it implied savagery, slavery, paganism, inferiority, and cultural backwardness. Alberto Sbacchi asserts that the Habashas "have traditionally looked upon the dark skinned people as inferiors and given them the name of `Shankalla' [sic].... The Black Americans were known as Negro [sic], which in Ethiopia was associated with slavery. Hence to the Ethiopians the Afro-Americans were Shankalla."[63] The popular discourse on Oromos is full of racist prejudices and stereotypes.

Habasha social institutions, such as family, school, media, government, and religion reproduce and perpetuate damaging racist prejudices and stereotypes among Ethiopian society.[64] These prejudices and stereotypes consciously or unconsciously influence Ethiopian and Ethiopian studies. Ethiopians, and particularly those Ethiopian scholars and Ethiopianists who

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[56]. See for example, Jordan Gebre-Medhin, *Peasants and Nationalism in Eritrea*, (Trenton, N.J.: The Red Sea Press, 1989).

[57]. See W.C. Harris, *The Highlands of Ethiopia*, (London, 1844), vol. 3, pp. 72-73; M.de Almeida, "History of Ethiopia," Some Records of Ethiopia 1593-1646, translated and edited by C.F. Beckingham and C.W.B and Huntingford, (London: Hakluyt Society, 1954), 111-139.

[58]. See Abba Bahrey, "History of the Galla*," Some Records of Ethiopia*, *ibid*; C.R. Markham, *A History of the Abyssinian Expedition*, (London, 1869); James Bruce, *Travels in Abyssinia and Nubia 1768-1773*, (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 19730, p. 86; Edward Ullendorf, *The Ethiopians*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 76; Harold G. Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 4.

[59]. See L. Fargo, *Abyssinia on the Eve*, (London: Putnam, 1935), p. 45; C.F. Rey, The Real Abyssinia, (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), p. 47.

[60]. See Harold G. Marcus*, ibid*, p. xii; Edward Ullendorf*, ibid*; Christopher Clapham, *Haile Selassie's Government*, (New York: Praeger,), p. 81; Patrick Gilkes, *The Dying Lion: Feudalism and Modernization in Ethiopia*, (London: Julian Fridman, 1975), PP. 204 and 206.

[61]. See fore example, Margery Perham, *The Government of Ethiopia*, 2nd edition, (London: Faber & Faber, 1969), p. 377; Christopher Clapham, *Haile Selassie's Government*, (New York: Praeger 1969), p. 81; C. Clapham, "Ethnicity and the National Question in Ethiopia," *Conflict and Peace in the Horn of Africa*, edited by Peter Woodward and M. Forsyth Brookfield, (Dartmouth: Vermont, 1994); Donald Levine, Greater Ethiopia, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994; Gebru Tareke, *Ethiopia: Power and Protest*, (New York: Cambridge University Press).

[62]. For further discussion, see Donald Donham and W. James, (eds.), *The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

[63]. Alberto Sbacchi, *Legacy of Bitterness*, p. 22.

[64]. In all racist societies, these prejudices and stereotypes have been reproduced and disseminated to perpetuate racism. For further understanding of the roles of these institutions, see Adalberto Aguirre, Jr. and David V. Baker, (eds.), *Sources: Notable Selections in Race and Ethnicity*, (Guilford, Connecticut: Dushkin/McGraw-Hill, 2nd edition, 1998), pp.189-310.

have been influenced by these racist assumptions, never respected Oromo culture and also opposed the Oromo struggle for social justice and human rights under different pretexts. Some assert that since Oromos are dispersed among other peoples, the question of national self-determination is not applicable to their cause; others argue that the assimilation of Oromos to Habashas both biologically and culturally prevent them from having a cultural identity that enables them to have national self-determination.[65] Further, some Ethiopian elites contest that since Oromos invaded Ethiopia, they do not deserve self-determination because the region that they call Oromia does not belong to them.[66] This assertion implicitly assumes that Oromos must accept their subjugation and second-class citizenship.

The political agenda of the destruction of Oromo society is not a new phenomenon. The West has supported this political agenda. The massive killing of Oromos during Abyssinian colonialism was never condemned as genocide. Denying the reality that contemporary Abyssinia/Ethiopia was the product of neocolonialism that was invented by the alliance of Ethiopian colonialism and European imperialism, the West praises Abyssinia (later Ethiopia) as the country that was never colonized in Africa. The idea that Ethiopia was not colonized laid the cornerstone for the ideology of Greater Ethiopia. Ethiopia was seen as "A civilized nation of an immense intelligence, the only one that is civilized without wearing trousers and shoes."[67]

The ideology of Greater Ethiopia that has been accepted and developed by European and American policy elites and their governments has been the bedrock of racism on which Ethiopia was built and still maintained.[68] When the French and British could not decide which of them would get Abyssinia, and were not willing to go to war with each other over it, each backed a different proxy leader; the British chose Yohannis of Tigray, and the French chose Menelik of Amhara. But when Yohannis died in 1889, the British and the Italians devised a different solution for sharing access to the region. The British and Italians struggled at Menelik's court to advise and control him and seek his favor; because of Menelik's failing health in 1906, France, Great Britain, and Italy devised the policy behind the Tripartite Treaty without Menelik's even knowing about it. This treaty states that "We the Great powers of Europe, France, Great Britain, and Italy, shall cooperate in maintaining the political and territorial status quo in Ethiopia as determined by the state of affairs at present existing and the previous [boundary] agreements."[69]

The foreign policy experts of Western countries not only provided technology and expertise in different fields, but they have been playing a critical role in formulating and promoting racist mythologies to justify the colonization and continued subjugation of the colonized subjects. For instance, the notion of claiming Abyssinia/Ethiopia as an ancient kingdom was originally suggested by an Italian expert in 1891: Francisco Crispi instructed an Italian agent in Addis Ababa "to inform Menelik that the European powers were establishing their boundaries in Africa and that the emperor should, with Italian assistance, circulate a letter defining his borders in order to guarantee the integrity of his empire. Crispi suggested that in the

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[65]. See Leenco Lata, "Peculiar Challenge to Oromo Nationalism," *ibid*, pp. 139-144.

[66]. See for example, Teklu Gerbee, "The Geda Militarism and Oromo Expansion," *Ethiopian Review*, October 1993, p. 50.

[67]. Quoted in Harold G. Marcus, "Racist Discourse", *ibid*. p. 7.

[68]. Bonnie K. Holcomb and Sisai Ibsssa, *The Invention of Ethiopia*, (Trenton, NJ: The Red sea Press, 1990), p. 1. When European imperialist powers, such as Great Britain, France and Italy, were competing to partition northeast Africa, according to Holcomb and Ibssa, they "were unable to resolve a stalemate over which of them would claim the area called the Horn of Africa. Having occupied the rest of Africa, they clashed over the occupation of the region that was strategic due to its location near the recently opened Suez Canal and near the headwaters of the Blue Nile. The solution to this conflict was to encourage, up to certain limits, the expansionist ambitions of the leaders of various Abyssinian kingdoms, then to establish a collective agreement among themselves to recognize and assist the resultant entity as a dependent colonial empire, claiming that an ancient `neutral' sovereign state existed there. Such a defense became the basis for the mythology of `Greater Ethiopia.'

[69]. Quoted in *ibid*, p. 8.

letter, Menelik ought to point out that Ethiopia was an ancient Kingdom which had been recognized as independent by the Christian states of Europe."[70]

The racist idea that Habashas were different from the rest of Africa lay at the core of European justification for empowering them to colonize and rule Oromos and other nations who were seen like other colonized Africans. In the 1930s, when Haile Selassie went to Europe and became the darling of the Western media, the ideology of Greater Ethiopia was refined and celebrated in Europe, America, and Ethiopia.[71] He was praised for his "extraordinary handsome face, next door to black, with high standing curly hair, a crisp black beard, a fine hawkish nose, and large gleaming eyes; he was also glorified for his "devotion to modernization."[72] The Ethiopian empire that was created with the alliance of European imperialist powers and Habasha warlords has maintained itself through an alliance with successive imperial superpowers, namely, Great Britain, the former Soviet Union, and the United States, that have provided protection to successive Ethiopian state elites and their governments.[73]

After colonizing Oromos and other nations with the help of European technology and expertise, Abyssinian colonial settlers in Oromia and other regions justified their colonial domination with racist discourse. With the establishment of their colonial authority in the colonized regions, Habasha settlers "assumed that their own innate superiority over the local residents accounted for this accomplishment."[74] Since then Habashas and their Euro-American supporters have contributed to "Ethiopian mythology [which] consists in part of the erroneous notions that [Abyssinian] society had reached a superior evolutionary stage at the time of conquest, making them able to move in and take over Oromia and others. The illusion plays a critically important role in holding the entire complex together, the ideology of Greater Ethiopia."[75]

The ideology of Greater Ethiopia[76] claims that Ethiopia was not colonized like other parts of Africa because of Habasha bravery and patriotism that made this empire unique in Africa; Ethiopian historical discourse claims that Ethiopian boundaries are sacred since they were established for 3000 years; Abyssinian "society represented an advanced level of social and economic organization" that enabled it to defend itself from European colonialism by eliminating slavery and protecting "all the peoples of greater Ethiopia from falling prey to European imperialism;"[77] Ethiopia claimed to play a significant civilizing mission by colonizing and dominating Oromos and other nations who were backward, pagan, destructive, and inferior. These racist mythologies of Greater Ethiopia helped the Haile Selassie government gain admission to the League of Nations in 1924. As a result, Ethiopia began to enjoy more recognition in Europe and North America, and "there was extended public discussion of Ethiopia's place in the world community and a great elaboration of the Ethiopian mythology initiated by European writers for a European public."[78] By joining the League of Nations, the Ethiopian empire, according to Evelyn Waugh, "had been recognized as a single state whose integrity was the concern of the world. Tafari's … new dynasty had been accepted by the busy democracies as the government of this area; his enemies were their enemies; there would be money lent him to arm against rebels, experts to advise him; when trouble was brewing he would swoop down from the sky and take his opponents unaware; the fabulous glories of Prester John

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70. Quoted in *ibid*, p. 141.
71. *Ibid*, pp.175-179.
72. Quoted in *ibid*.
73. *Ibid*, pp. 171-279; Asafa Jalata, *Oromia & Ethiopia.*
74. Bonnie K. Holcomb and Sisai Ibssa*, Ibid*, p. 111.
75. *Ibid*, p. 143.
76. For detailed discussion, see *ibid*. pp. 143-144; A. Jalata, *ibid.*; Gemetchu Megerssa, "The Oromo and the Ethiopian State Ideology in A Historical Perspective," *Papers of the xiiith International Conference of Ethiopian Studies,* Kyoto, 12-17 December 1997, vol. II, pp. 479-485.
77. Donald Levine, *ibid*, p. 16.
78. Bonnie K Holcomb and Sissai Ibssa, *ibid,* p. 176.

were to be reincarnated."[79] These essential components of racist discourse of Greater Ethiopia have remained intact.

Later "socialist" and then "democratic" discourse have been introduced by successive Habasha state elites and accepted by their Euro-American supporters without changing the colonizing and racist structure of Ethiopian society. A decade and a half ago, the Mengistu regime utilized a "socialist" discourse to ally itself with the Soviet bloc and to consolidate its power. The U. S. supported the Haile Selassie regime from the 1950s to the mid-1970s. It started to assist the Meles regime in 1991. Ethiopian racism and White racism have conveniently intermarried in the U.S. policy formulation and implementation in Ethiopia. When policy issues are discussed on Ethiopia Semitic civility, Christianity, antiquity, bravery, and patriotism of Amharas and Tigrayans are retrieved to valorize and to legitimize Habasha dominance and power; moreover the barbarism, backwardness, and the destructiveness of Oromos and others are reinvented to keep Oromos from access to state power. The combined racist views about Oromos and the racist assumptions of U.S. foreign policy elites effectively mobilize the U.S. State Department against the Oromo people.

The U. S., the Tigrayan-led Ethiopian State, and the Oromo National Struggle

The U. S. supported the creation of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF), and with Israel, it financed the flight of Mengistu in 1991, and supported the emergence of the Meles regime. It still provides all necessary assistance to the regime. U.S. foreign policy makers mainly support regimes like that of Ethiopia for perceived strategic and economic self-interest. As far as these policy makers believe that the U. S. self-interest is promoted, they are not interested to have a deep and critical understanding of the political context in which they involve. Currently the main rationale for U.S. policy makers to involve in Ethiopia is to maintain political order and to fight against "global terrorism." While ignoring the impact of state terrorism, the U. S. attempts to solve the problem of global terrorism is ineffective.

The major reason why the U. S. government cannot effectively deal with global terrorism is that it practices double standards, and condones the terrorism of friendly states such as that of Ethiopia and complains about other forms of terrorism.[80] As Eqbal Ahmad comments, as a global power the U. S. "cannot promote terrorism in one place and reasonably expect to discourage terrorism in another place."[81] Despite the fact the U. S. governments documents massive human rights violations in Ethiopia, it assists the regime militarily, financially, diplomatically, and technologically. The West in general and the U. S. in particular only gives lip service on the issues of democracy and human rights in Ethiopia. During the early 1990s, some scholars and political activists believed that the U. S., as the only superpower, would promote human rights and democracy in Oromia and Ethiopia and in other peripheral countries. But the practical reality in Ethiopia challenges the position of such scholars and activists.

U.S. officials are more concerned with political stability, neo-liberal economic reform, and the existence of regimes such as that of Ethiopia at any cost, and cared less for democracy and human rights. The Economist notes that Meles Zenawi "is regarded as one of Africa's `new leaders': he recently won an award in the United States for good government . . . Their [Western] governments tend to give priority to the Prime Minister's economic reforms rather than his record on human rights. "[82] The U. S. does not care about the Oromo struggle that promotes the principles of national self-determination and multinational democracy. For

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79. Evelyn Waugh, *Waugh in Abyssinia,* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex; Penguin Books Ltd, 1985), p. 16.
80. See Eqbal Ahmad, "Terrorism: Theirs and Ours," (A Presentation at the University of Colorado, Boulder, October 12, 1998, p. 7.
81. *Ibid.*
82. The Economist, 1997, p. 36.

Oromos, democracy is not a new concept, but it is part of their culture and tradition.[83] Unfortunately, the Meles regime is acceptable to the West as far as it can suppress popular opposition forces in order to establish political stability and implement the structural adjustment of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Oromos struggle for survival, self-determination, and democracy, and they oppose any dogmatic social or ideological system. Since they have been abused in the names of Christianity, Islam, socialism, democracy, and "free market", Oromos take things pragmatically and practically. The U.S. policy of "democracy promotion" or democratization of the polity drastically failed in Ethiopia. Bonnie Holcomb asserts that the democratization of Ethiopian polity or the introduction of elite democracy by the U. S. failed because of the fundamental contradictions that exist between the Ethiopian colonizers and the colonized peoples.[84] Many scholars assume that the West and the U.S. promote elite democracy when they are sure that those who will come to state power through election are not against the capitalist world system.[85] In the early 1990s, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and other independent Oromo organizations were ready to work within the system if fair and free election would take place in Ethiopia. Global powers ignored their own policy of democracy promotion, when the Tigrayan-led regime declared war on these organizations in 1992 to expel them from the Ethiopian political process.

Despite the fact that most international observers concluded that the June 21, 1992, elections "exacerbated existing tensions, reinforced the hegemonic power of the EPRDF while marginalizing other fledging parties, and were a central factor in the withdrawal of the OLF from the TGE [Transitional Government of Ethiopia] and return to war in the Oromo region," the West, particularly, the U. S. government is committed to keep the Meles regime in power despite the fact that the government lacks any political legitimacy[86] because of its authoritarian and terrorist behavior and practice. The decision by the U. S. to support the Tigrayan authoritarian-terrorist government has nothing to do with economic or political rationality and the principles of human rights and democracy.

If Oromos, the largest nation with a democratic cultural foundation, and other population groups are not against U.S. sponsored "democracy," why have the U.S. officials in the State Department chosen a minority group that gives lip service to democracy? Although the U. S. and other Western countries do not openly admit that the strategy of democracy promotion failed in Ethiopia, they have recognized that the Ethiopian crisis is expanding. The Tigrayan state elite and the U.S. political operatives and theorists conveniently convinced themselves that the Oromo and other peoples do not understand the genuine meaning of democracy.

These wrong assumptions underlie the Tigrayan elite and their U.S. backers' assumption that they could impose a Tigrayan form of colonial control on the Oromo and other peoples in the name of democracy. Receiving the green light from the U.S. and following his blind ambition for personal and Tigrayan interests, Meles Zenawi expelled all independent liberation fronts and political organizations from the Ethiopian political process through state terrorism and replaced

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[83]. Before their colonization, Oromos had an egalitarian democratic system known as gada. This system had the principles of checks and balances (such as periodic succession of eight years and division of power among executive, legislative, and judiciary branches), balanced opposition (among five parties), and power sharing between higher and lower administrative organs to prevent power from falling into the hands of despots. Other principles of the system include balanced representation of clans, lineages, regions, and confederacies; accountability of leaders; the settlement of disputes through reconciliation; and respect for basic rights and liberties.

[84]. Holcomb, Bonnie K., "The Tale of two Democracies: The Encounter Between US-Sponsored Ethiopian `Democracy' and Indigenous Oromo Democratic Forms," *The Journal of Oromo Studies*, 1997, 4/1 & 2: 73-77.

[85]. See for example, William I. Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, US Intervention, and Hegemony*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[86]. *National Democratic Institute for International Affairs and African-American Institute*, an Evaluation of the June 21, 1992, Elections in Ethiopia, (1992), p. 7.

them with puppet organizations that he and his group had already created under the umbrella of EPRDF. This is what democracy means for the TPLF/EPRDF and its international supporters.

It should surprise no one that Meles sought advice from Samuel Huntington, whose writings portray him as a Eurocentric, covert racist and a Christian chauvinist. Samuel Huntington, the U.S. policy ideologue, went to Ethiopia in 1993 to advise Meles Zenawi how to establish a Tigrayan party rule in the name of democracy.[87] It is clear from Huntington's book, The Clash of Civilizations, that he opposes the principles of democracy and cultural diversity and promotes Christian civilization at any cost. The U. S. policy as articulated by its ideologue, Huntington, has intensified the historical and contemporary contradictions between the Ethiopian colonizers and the colonized Oromo and others rather than solving them. As a result, Oromos who were willing to participate in democracy have been forced to intensify armed, cultural, and intellectual struggle. Rather than finding a just and democratic solution, the U. S. has openly allied with the Meles regime that practices state terrorism and engages in gross human rights violations.

State Terrorism and Gross Human Rights Violations

Today the Ethiopian colonial settlers led by the Tigrayan-dominated regime have dominated cities in Oromia and segregated the Oromo national majority in both urban and rural areas and kept them under "Ethiopian political slavery" by using the army, modern weaponry, the media, the telephone, the fax, the Internet, and other communication and information apparatus and networks. Using state terrorism, the Tigrayan authoritarian-terrorist regime has dominated and controlled Oromos and denied them the freedom of expression, association or organization, and the media, and all forms of communication and information networks. State-terrorism is a systematic policy of a government through which massive violence is practiced to impose terror on a given population group to change their behavior of political struggle or resistance.

The Oromo people are denied the freedom of self-expression and self-development and are forced to provide their economic and labor resources to the Ethiopian colonizers and their supporters, while living under deplorable conditions in the 21st century. Producing misinformation and lies in the name of democracy and disseminating them through its complex information and communication networks, the Tigrayan state elites try to hide the true characteristics of the Ethiopian regime that include state-terrorism, state rape, and hidden genocide to terrorize and control the Oromo and other peoples.

While engaging in political violence in the form of state terrorism, state rape, and hidden genocide to control the Oromo people and loot their economic resources, the Tigrayan state elites claim that they are promoting democracy, federalism, and national self-determination. Since the regime is weak, illegitimate, and lacks capacity, accountability, and professionalism, it engages in terrorism and hidden genocide to protect and consolidate its power. Bridget Welsh suggests that since weak states "lack the capacity to meet the demands and rights of citizens and improve the standard of living for the majority of population," they involve in political violence and engage in genocidal massacres to suppress the population groups that struggle for political and economic rights.[88] This regime is committed to enrich itself and to improve the living standard of the Tigrayan population group at the cost of the colonized population groups such as Oromos. Since most of the Oromo people, under the leadership of the OLF, are determined to challenge the racist policy of this regime, this government mainly targets them for destruction. As Lisa Sharlach attests, a politically "dominant group, frightened by what its members perceive as an

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[87]. See Samuel P. Huntington, "Political Development in Ethiopia: A Peasant-based Dominant-Party Democracy," *Report to USAID/Ethiopia on Consultation with the Constitutional Commission*, March 28 to April 1, 1993.

[88]. Bridget Welsh, "Globalization, Weak States, and Death Toll in East Asia," in *Violence and Politics: Globalization's Paradox,* edited by Kenton Worcester, Sally Avery Bermanzohn, and Mark Ungar, (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 67-68.

onslaught of … internal movements for democracy and socioeconomic change, harnesses the state apparatus to destroy the subordinate group together. This is genocide."[89]

The Oromo people have no protection from political violence since there is no the rule of law in the Ethiopian empire. They do not have personal and public safety in their homes and communities. Oromos live under Ethiopian settler colonialism that has taken away their sovereignty and exposed them to massive human right violations and absolute poverty by denying them their fundamental needs and rights. Because of the magnitude of the Oromo problem, it is impossible to provide a numerical face to devastating effects of political violence, hunger, poverty, suffering, malnutrition, disease, ignorance, alienation, and hopelessness. The following discussion demonstrates how the lack of political freedom, democracy, and an accountable government, and the denial of inalienable right to self-determination, and the lack of access to an information and technological apparatus have prevented the Oromo people from freely expressing, organizing, and defending themselves from state terrorism.

The state that engages in terrorism is not a protector of citizens; it rather violates civil and human rights through assassinations, mass killings, imprisonments, and displays of corpses on streets so that the remaining population accepts the violent state due to fear of terror and intimidation. The main assumptions of such a state are that it can control the population by destroying their culture of resistance and leaders. States that fail to establish ideological hegemony and political orders are unstable and insecure, and hence they engage in state terrorism.[90] The development of the Oromo national movement representing the largest national group in the Ethiopian empire has prevented the new colonial ruling class to establish its hegemony and consolidate its state. The TPLF/EPRDF government accepts state violence against Oromos and others as a legitimate means of establishing political stability and order, despite its adoption in its constitution the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and International Covenants on Human Rights.[91] State terrorism is associated with the issues of control of territory and resources and the construction of political and ideological domination.[92] The Meles regime practices state terrorism mainly against Oromos because they have ideologically, culturally and intellectually challenged Ethiopian cultural and ideological hegemony and also in the process of redefining the relationship between Oromos and Ethiopians (particularly Amharas and Tigrayans). Furthermore, since the Tigrayan regime mainly survives on Oromo economic resources, it uses terrorist actions mainly against the Oromo people.[93]

State terrorism manifests itself in this empire in different forms: It's obvious manifestation is violence in the form of war, assassination, murder, castration, burying alive, throwing off cliffs, hanging, torture, rape, confiscation of properties by the police and the army, forcing people to submission by intimidation, beating, and disarming citizens.[94] Former prisoners

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89. Lisa Sharlach, "State Rape: Sexual Violence as Genocide," in *Violence and Politics: Globalization's Paradox, ibid, p. 107.*

90. Annamarie Oliverio, "The State of Injustice: The Politics of Terrorism and the Production of Order," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, vol. xx xviii, numbers 1-2, June, 1997, pp. 48-63; Annamarie Oliverio, *The State of Terror*, (New York: SUNY press, 199; Jack Gibbs, "Conceptualization of Terrorism," *The American Sociological Review*, 54, June, 1989, pp. 329-340.

91. Article 10 of this constitution proclaims: "Human rights and freedoms are inviolable and inalienable. They are inherent in the dignity of Human beings. 2. Human and democratic rights of Ethiopian citizens shall be respected."

92. Annamarie Oliverio, "The State of Injustice," *ibid.* p. 52.

93 According to the Oromia Support Group, "Because the Oromo occupy Ethiopia's richest areas and comprise half of the population of Ethiopia, they are seen as the greatest threat to the present Tigrean-led government. Subsequently, any indigenous Oromo organization, including the Oromo Relief Association, has been closed and suppressed by the government. The Standard reason given for detaining Oromo people is that they are suspected of supporting the OLF."

94. See Sue Pollock, "Ethiopia- Human Tragedy in the Making: Democracy or Dictatorship?" *The Oromia Support Group,* 1996; Sue Pollock, "Politics and Conflict: Participation and Self-determination in *Ethiopia: Conquest and the Quest for Freedom and Democracy*, edited by Seyoum Y. Hameso**,** T. Trueman, and T. E. Erena,

testified that their arms and legs were tied tightly together on their backs and their naked bodies were whipped. Large containers or bottles filled with water were fixed to their testicles, or if they were women, bottles or poles were pushed into their vaginas.

There were prisoners who were locked up in empty steel barrels and tormented with heat in the tropical sun during the day and with cold at night. There were also prisoners who were forced into pits so that fire could be made on top of them. TPLF/EPRDF soldiers have openly shot thousands of people in rural Oromia and left their bodies for hyenas, or buried them in mass graves, or threw their corpse off cliffs. There are other methods of killings, including burning, bombing, cutting throats or arteries in the neck, strangulation, and burying people to their necks in the ground. Mohammed Hassen estimates that since 1992 about fifty thousand killings and sixteen thousand disappearances (euphemism for secret killings) took place in Oromia.[95] He also notes that 90 percent of the killings are not reported.[96]

To hide these criminal practices from the world community, the Meles government "does not keep written records of its extrajudicial executions and prolonged detention of political prisoners."[97] The regime also kills Oromos who engage in a peaceful demonstration. For instance, on March 25, 1992, in the town of Watar, Hararghe, the soldiers of the regime massacred 92 Oromos and wounded more than 300, and many of these people died later.[98] In 1995, the government soldiers burned houses and killed 70 Oromos in the two villages of Siree, and in the same year, many Oromo communities were burned and several Oromo farmers and herders were either killed or imprisoned in Wabbie, a subdistrict of the Bale region.[99] The TPLF/EPRDF soldiers killed hundreds of Oromos at Awaday in Hararghe and Meta Robi in Shawa in the early 1995; in 1996 more than one thousand Oromos in Borana were summarily executed.[100]

In November 2001, one hundred Oromos were executed in Borana and Bale by the armed forces that claimed that they were members of the OLF. Further, from 2002 to 2006, the regime killed hundreds of demonstrators and jailed thousands of them for peacefully demonstrating against fraud elections and oppressive policies. Prompted by apparent hate for Oromos, the TPLF soldiers never spared even pregnant women or youth. They killed several pregnant women and hundreds of Oromo children between the ages of 12 and 16.[101] From 2000 to 2006, the regime has killed hundreds of Oromo students who have engaged in peaceful demonstration; it has also imprisoned and tortured thousands of them or expelled them from elementary and high schools and colleges.[102]

State terrorism manifests itself in different forms. State rape is one of them. The way the Tigrayan soldiers have treated Oromo women and girls demonstrates widespread inhumane behavior. Bruna Fossati, Lydia Namarra and Peter Niggli report that "in prison women are often humiliated and mistreated in the most brutal fashion. Torturers ram poles or bottles into their vaginas, connect electrodes to the lips of their vulva, or the victims are dragged into the forest and gang-raped by interrogation officers."[103] In addition to the effects of mental and bodily tortures, through raping women, these TPLF soldiers and officers are spreading AIDS in Oromo

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(London: TSC Publications, 1997), pp. 81-110; Trevor Trueman, "Democracy or dictatorship," in *Ethiopia*, *ibid,* pp. 141-150; *Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch/Africa*, 1997; *Survival International*, 1995; *The Oromia Support Group*, 1997 series)

95. Mohammed Hassen, "Is Genocide against the Oromo in Ethiopia Possible*?"* *ibid*, p. 27.

96. *Ibid.*

97. *Ibid*, p. 30.

98. *Ibid*, pp. 31 and 71.

99. *Ibid*, p. 47.

100. *Ibid*, p. 31.

101. See The Oromia Support Group, August/September 1996.

102 Asafa Jalata, "State Terrorism and Globalization: The Cases of Ethiopia and Sudan," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology,* Vo. 46, No. 1-2: 79-102, 2005.

103. Bruna Fossati, L. Namarra, and Peter Niggli, *ibid*, p.10.

society. Lisa Sharlack argues that the state-sanctioned use of sexual violence is a tactic of genocide that the dominant ethnonational group practices for destroying the subordinate ethnonational group.[104] She indicates that as a campaign to commit genocide the West Pakistan army raped thousands of the Bangladesh women, the Serbian army raped the women of Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, and the Hutu men raped Tutsi women.

Genocide studies ignore "the full extent of the humiliation of the ethnic group through the rape of its women, the symbols of honor and vessels of culture. When a woman's honor is tarnished through illicit intercourse … the ethnic group is also dishonored. The aftereffects of rape-forced impregnation, psychological trauma, degradation, and demoralization go beyond the rape victims themselves."[105] To demoralize, destroy, and to show that Tigrayans are a powerful group that can do any thing to Oromos, Tigrayan cadres, soldiers, and officials have raped Oromo girls and women. Most of the rape survivors have contracted diseases, such as sphills, gonorrhea, HIV/AIDS, and others. What Catharine MacKinnon says, referring to the ethnic cleansing that occurred in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, applies to the condition of the rape of Oromo women: "It is also rape unto death, rape as massacre, rape to kill and to make the victims wish they were dead. It is rape as an instrument of forced exile, rape to make you leave your home and never want to go back. It is rape to be seen and heard and watched and told to others: rape as spectacle. It is rape to drive a wedge through a community, to shatter a society, to destroy a people. It is rape as genocide."[106]

An Oromo journalist who wants to remain anonymous also characterizes the use of state rape as a mechanism of genocide.[107] He explains that the Tigrayan army uses rape in its secret campaign to destroy the foundation of Oromo families. The soldiers have collected young Oromo girls and women into concentration camps and gang rape them in front of their relatives, fathers, brothers, and husbands to humiliate them and the Oromo people. Another aspect of terrorism is the destruction of an Oromo leadership. The Meles regime believes that Oromo intellectuals, businessmen and women, and community and religious leaders are the enemy of "the Ethiopian Revolution." In its organ known as Hizbawi Adera, the regime propagates that these Oromo leaders have endangered the processes of peace, democracy, and development by promoting what it calls narrow nationalism[108] Hizbawi Adera asserts that "only by eliminating the Oromo educated elite and capitalist class will the Oromo people be freed from narrow nationalism."[109] The Tigrayan-led government has engaged in destroying Oromo merchants and intellectuals by labeling them "narrow nationalists" and the enemy of "the Ethiopian Revolution" through killing and impoverishing.[110]

One prominent Oromo businessman, who was forced to run away from his family, property and country and now lives impoverished life in Djibouti, describes his predicament: "They stole 162,000 Birr in cash, took my cattle, and slaughtered my herd of goats, 150 animals. Both my vehicles, a land cruiser and a small lorry, were confiscated. Soldiers moved into my home, and my warehouse became the new prison in Kobbo."[111] Hundreds of Oromo business people have been harassed, killed or imprisoned and robbed of their properties. The regime has destroyed prominent Oromo intellectuals, religious figures, community leaders and businessmen by practicing extrajudicial killings on the streets, massive imprisonment, torture and disappearance. When it attempts to eliminate the Oromo elite through hidden genocide to deny

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[104]. Lisa Sharlack,"State Rape: Sexual Violence as Genocide," *ibid*, p. 107.
[105]. *Ibid*.
[106]. Catharine A. MacKinnon, "Rape, Genocide, and Women's Human Rights," *Harvard Women's Law Journal* 17 (1994), pp. 11-12.
[107]."Human Beings and their Lives," 2002, pp. 1-33.
[108]. Hizbawi Adera, a TPLF/EPRDF political pamphlet, December1996-February 1997, Vol. 4, No. 7
[109]. *Ibid*
[110]. See *Hizbawi Adera*, an EPRDF political pamphlet), Tahisas to Yekatit, 1989 Ethiopian Calendar.
[111]. Quoted in Bruna Fossati, L. Namarra, and Peter Niggli, ibid, p. 34.

the Oromo a leadership, this racist regime prepares the Tigrayan children for the position of leadership by providing better education while denying appropriate educational opportunity for the Oromo children.[112] This regime is consolidating a racialized division of labor. The regime engages in genocide, too.

The systematic destruction of some Oromos and the Oromo leadership are characterized as hidden genocide because the world community does not yet recognize this intentional destruction. Article II of the United Nations Convention defines genocide as "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group."[113] Kurt Jonassohn explains genocide as the planned destruction of any economic, political or a social group.[114] According to Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn, "GENOCIDE is a form of one-sided mass killing in which a state or other authority intends to destroy a group, as that and membership in it are defined by the perpetrator."[115] Chalk and Jonassohn identify two major types of genocide:[116] The first type is used to colonize and maintain an empire by actually terrorizing people perceived to be real or potential enemies. In this case, the main purpose of practicing genocide is to acquire land and other valuable resources.

The maintenance of colonial domination by state elites requires the establishment of cultural and ideological hegemony that can be practiced through genocidal massacres and a belief or a political or ideological theory to legitimate their state power by preventing the resistance of the dominated group. This is the second type of genocide known as ideological genocide. Jonassohn notes that ideological genocides develop "in nation-states where ethnic groups develop chauvinistic ideas about their superiority and exclusiveness."[117] The Ethiopian regime engages in genocidal and terrorist acts as Chalk and Jonassohn explained above with the intention of destroying part of the Oromo nation who happened to be nationalists and leaders. It considers Oromia as part of its empire, controls all Oromian resources, and practices terrorism and genocide on the Oromo people since it perceives them as its potential or real enemies. The Tigrayan elites are imposing their political ideologies, such as "revolutionary democracy,' "federalism" to legitimate Tigrayan supremacy and state power through genocidal massacres in order to control the Oromo population and their resources by eliminating the Oromo leadership.

Through the discourse of democracy the regime denies its political crimes. What Jonassohn describes about conspiracy of "collective denial" of genocide is applicable to the condition of genocide in the Ethiopian empire: "There are many reasons for this: (a) in many societies such materials are not written down, or are destroyed rather than preserved in archives; (b) many perpetrators have recourse to elaborate means of hiding the truth, controlling access to

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[112]. According to Hassen, "Only fractions of the Oromo are educated. By 1995, according to government sources, enrollment was only 20 percent for primary and 12 percent for secondary schools . . . Out of an estimated population of thirty million in Oromia 0.1 percent received the third level education in 1994 . . . By 2002, all secondary school students in Oromia will graduate from 10th grade instead of the usual 12th grade. Oromo students start learning English in the seventh grade and they take [high] school leaving exam in English in tenth grade. Students in Tigray start learning English in second grade and they take [high] school leaving exams in English in 12th grade. They have more chance for passing [high] school leaving examination than Oromo students. This means that the Oromo students will not have any more opportunity for college and university level education. Only students in the privileged state of Tigray will have that opportunity in the future. The TPLF dominated regime is deliberately leaving behind Oromo children from the main stream modern education." Mohammed Hassen, "Is Genocide Against the Oromo in Ethiopia Possible?" *Paper Presented at the Fourth International Biennial Conference of the Association of Genocide Scholars*, Radisson Hotel Minneapolis, Minnesota, June 10, 2001, pp. 34-35.

[113]. Quoted in Kurt Johansson (with Karin Solveig Bjornson), *Genocide and Gross Human Rights Violations: In Comparative Perspective,* New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1998, p. 9.

[114]. *Ibid*.

[115].Frank Chalk and Kurt Johansson*, History and Sociology of Genocide: Analyses and Case Studies*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990, p. 23.

[116].See Kurt Johansson and Frank Chalk and Kurt Johansson, *Ibid*., pp. 13-14; 23; ibid.

[117].Kurt Johansson, *ibid*, p. 23.

information, and spreading carefully contrived disinformation; and (c) historically, most genocides were not reported because . . . there appears to have existed a sort of conspiracy of 'collective denial' whereby the disappearance of a people did not seem to require comment or even mention."[118] With the collaboration of the West and the imperial interstate system the Meles regimes hides its crime against humanity in Ethiopia. In this empire, where there is no freedom of expression and the media, people choose to be quiet to save their lives even if the government eliminates their relatives.

The Ethiopian state elites who have been engaged in gross human rights violations and genocide like other criminal leaders in peripheral countries "not only go unpunished, they are even rewarded. On the international scene they are accorded all the respect and courtesies due to government official. They are treated in accordance with diplomatic protocol in negotiations and seated in the General Assembly of the United Nations. When they are finally ousted from their offices, they are offered asylum by countries that lack respect for international law, but have a great deal of respect for the ill-gotten wealth that such perpetrators bring with them."[119]

Those who were released from prisons paid a huge amount of `ransom money' collected by relatives for TPLF soldiers and agents.[120] "The persecutions of suspected and real political opponents and the widespread campaigns of intimidation against the Oromo population," Fossati, Namarra and Niggli write, "produce a considerable booty which is pocketed by the government's representatives on the ground."[121] It seems that the TPLF leaders have implicitly decided that Meles and his close associates use state resources and international connection to enrich themselves while regional and local officials and soldiers use violence and repression to loot and accumulate wealth.[122] Fossati, Namarra and Niggli note that "some privileged members of the TPLF have managed in dubious circumstances to privatize and run former state enterprises and are now successful in business. They are considerably better off than their former little `comrades in arms' who do the dirty work of repression."[123]

The military and political leaders of TPLF/EPRDF have emerged as a new capitalist class through illegal means and dominate the Ethiopian political economy. Using state power, this new class has expropriated state corporations by the name of privatization and established joint businesses with either local investors or foreign corporations.[124] Through looting and expropriation, the Tigrayan-dominated government and its satellite organizations transferred to themselves the largest and fastest growing companies. The plan of developing Tigray at the cost of Oromia and other regions is clear. Impoverishing people by transferring their wealth and capital from non-Tigrayans to Tigrayan elites and Tigrayan society and their local and international collaborators through using state machinery are a form economic violence. Thousands of Oromos have lost their lands through eviction and their cattle through looting; Oromo forests have been set on fire in an attempt to destroy the Oromo Liberation Army. This regime uses economic violence to impoverish and destroy Oromo society. Oromos are not even allowed to have a meaningful relief association in Ethiopia and neighboring countries.

The Tigrayan-dominated regime banned independent Oromo organizations, including the Oromo Liberation in 1992 and declared war on these organizations and the Oromo people. It even outlawed musical groups and professional associations, and closed down Oromo newspapers. In its attempt to make Oromos voiceless, like the previous Ethiopian governments, the Meles government has left Oromos without any form of organization. Only the organizations

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118.*Ibid*, p. 11.
119.*Ibid*, p. 24
120. *Ibid.*
121. *Ibid,* p. 23
122. See Assefa Negash, *The Pillage of Ethiopia by Eritrean and their Tigrayan Surrogates*, (Los Angeles: Adey Publishing, 1996),
123. Bruna Fossati, L. Namarra, and Peter Niggli*, ibid*, p. 35,
124. See *The Indian Ocean Newsletter*, October 19, 1996.

and the media that are owned and controlled by the Tigrayan government remained intact to impose the Tigrayan colonial and racist authority on the Oromo majority. Realizing that the Ethiopian government and international organizations care very little about the welfare of Oromo society, a few Oromo leaders created the Oromo Relief Association, ORA, in exile as an independent humanitarian Oromo association in the late 1970s to assist Oromo refugees in the Horn of Africa.[125]

Assuming that the political change of 1991 would allow a peaceful and democratic political resolution for the Oromo problem, ORA moved its head office to Finfinne and shifted its program from relief work to rehabilitation and settlement activities, and developed projects that included health, educational, agricultural and afforestation activities.[126] The Meles regime closed the ORA regional offices in August 1995 and its headquarters in February 1996 and confiscated all its properties. The regime has denied the Oromo people to have autonomous organizations in order to keep them under Ethiopian political slavery. The ORA activities were banned not only in Ethiopia, but also in Djibouti, Somalia and Kenya. One thousand three hundred fifty-two ORA orphans moved to Oromia from Sudan, when ORA decided to locate its headquarters in Oromia in 1991.[127] Some of these children were killed by TPLF soldiers or drowned by big rivers while being chased by these soldiers, and others were captured and taken to the Didessa concentration camp where they were beaten, tortured, raped, and some died of hunger and infection.[128]

Using the leverage of Western countries, the Meles regime pressures neighboring governments to return or expel Oromo refugees from their countries. The alliance of the West with this regime has frightened neighboring countries, such as Djibouti, Kenya and Sudan and turned them against the Oromo struggle and Oromo refugees. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) has even failed to provide reasonable protection for thousands of Oromo refugees in Djibouti. Probably following the instructions of the Ethiopian and Djibouti governments or due to the fear of these governments, the UNHCR provides no material help to Oromo refugees in Djibouti. Fossati, Namarra and Niggli note that: "The Oromo council of elders told us they believed they were entitled to a small portion of the international aid available to refugees, but did not even get a glass of water from the UNHCR and had been completely forgotten . . . All the Oromo that we spoke to complained again and again that they were so poor that it was even difficult to bury their dead properly. The community, they said, should at least be able to guarantee a burial, since it is the one thing a human being cannot do for himself."[129] Hussein Sora, a young Kenyan Oromo lawyer, accused the Meles regime for engaging international terrorism and compiled a report on the criminal activities of the Ethiopian security forces in Kenya since 1992. According to this report, the TPLF forces assassinated prominent Oromo refugees, bombed the houses of some Kenyan Oromos and abducted civil servants, and shot some citizens in Kenya.[130]

This lawyer died the same year he compiled and distributed the report to the Kenyan authorities and international organizations; the agents of the Ethiopian government were suspected of killing him by poisoning. The TPLF/EPRP forces have continued to enter into Kenya murdering and looting the economic resources of some Kenyan Oromos by accusing them of harboring the Oromo Liberation Army. The Tigrayan soldiers have been killing hundreds of Kenyan Oromos by entering into Kenya. Entering into Somalia and Kenya, the agents of this regime assassinated prominent Oromo leaders, such as Jatani Ali, Mulis Abba Gada, Sheik

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125. Terfa Dibaba, "Humanity Forsaken: The Case of the Oromo Relief Association (ORA) in the Horn of Africa," *Paper Presented to the Oromo Studies Association annual meeting at the University of Minnesota,* 1997.

126. *Ibid*.

127. See The Oromia Support Group, August/September, 1996.

128. *Ibid*.

129. *Ibid,* p. 44

130. Cited in The Oromia Support Group, 1997.

Mohammed Saido, between 1991 and 2001. When it comes to Oromos, international organizations care less even if international laws are broken. Oromos are even denied a sanctuary from neighboring countries and are denied the right to be refugees. They have been assassinated or murdered by the regime, denied burial rights, and eaten by hyenas and other wild animals. Since Oromo refugees are not welcomed by neighboring countries and international organizations, there are thousands of `internal' Oromo refugees in Oromia and Ethiopia.

Discussion and Conclusion

With increasing intensity of the Oromo national movement led by the OLF, the Tigrayan authoritarian-terrorist regime is determined to engage in mass killings and terrorism. The regime is concerned with the existence of the OLF and the support and the sympathy this organization enjoys from the majority of the Oromo people. What bothers the regime is that the more it terrorizes the Oromo people by killing or imprisoning thousands of them by claiming that they are the supporters of the OLF, the more Oromos are determined to embrace Oromo nationalism and the OLF. As a result, Oromos and the OLF have almost become synonymous. Therefore, it is impossible to destroy the OLF without destroying the Oromo people. Further, the attempt of the OLF to build a broad coalition with various political organizations has worried this minority regime. Recently, the OLF has initiated the formation of the Alliance for Freedom and Democracy with organizations of different population groups to implement the principles of national self-determination and multinational democracy in Ethiopia. This innovative political strategy, if properly and carefully implemented, will shorten the tenure of this regime.

Like successive Amhara-dominated regimes, the Meles government has racialized/ethnicized the Ethiopian state by making Tigrayan ethnicity the core of this repressive state and by preventing the construction of a legitimate state that can be accountable, democratic and reflect a multinational society. Without an accountable, democratic and legitimate state, various population groups in this empire may face disastrous conditions similar to Bosnia, Rwanda, and former Yugoslavia. If the current Ethiopian state terrorism and massive human rights violations are allowed to be continued by different population groups and their respective elites and the U. S. and other Western countries that support the Meles regime, these conditions can lead to a dangerous disaster. Further, the social and cultural systems that traditionally satisfied the social and material needs of these peoples have been broken up by massive human rights violations, state terrorism, and the intensification of globalization. Concerned peoples and their leaders and global community need to avert these looming dangers.

I propose four concrete and immediate political actions to be taken by concerned groups and individuals to start addressing these complex and dangerous problems before they are too late. First, the elites of the Ahmaras and Tigrayans must recognize the past and present crimes that their successive governments have committed to the colonized nations, oppressed groups and classes in general and to the Oromo people in particular and take a courageous political position similar to that of the white elites of South Africa in the early 1990s. This requires accepting responsibility for the crimes that haven committed against humanity and being ready to accept the democratic majority rule and the rule of law. Second, If Habasha elites are not ready for the South African model of conflict resolution, they must be ready to face the Eritrean model of national self-determination. Third, the OLF and other national liberation organizations and political parties with their respective ethnonational groups must further build and consolidate the forum of the Alliance for Freedom and Democracy to implement the genuine principles of national self-determination and multinational democracy. Four, on its part, the world community needs to promote the principles of genuine self-determination and peaceful conflict resolution and encourage the formation of a democratic and legitimate multinational state that can prevent the transformation of a low-level conflict into a full-fledged genocidal war. Since state terrorism and ethnonational challenges are increasing in the Ethiopia Empire, the world community needs

to become capable of mediating these processes and to develop procedures and criteria by which to resolve these conflicts fairly and democratically before it is too late. Concerned scholars, democrats, activists and humanitarians and others have social and moral responsibility to expose the crimes that are committed in this empire in the name of democracy, and search for just, durable and democratic ways of conflict resolution.

Chapter 13

The Duality of Ethiopianinsm and it Impacts on Oromo Society[131]

The critical examination of the essence and duality of Ethiopianism in relation to Ethiopian (Amhara-Tigrayan) and global politics demonstrates the negative impact of this ideology on the processes of identity formation, democratic state building, and development in Ethiopia. The duality inherent in the concept of Ethiopianism shifts back and forth between claims of a Semitic identity when appealing to the white, Christian, ethnocentric, occidental hegemonic power center and claims of an African identity when cultivating the support of Africans and the African Diaspora while, at the same time, ruthlessly suppressing the history, culture and identity of indigenous Africans of the colonized ethno-nations within the Ethiopian Empire. Successive Ethiopian state elites have effectively used Ethiopianism to colonize Oromos and others and to exploit their economic resources by denying them access to Ethiopian state power through political violence. Oromos are the largest national group and estimated at 40 million of the 77 million Ethiopian populations. The second largest national group is Amhara, which lost state power in 1991. The current Ethiopian regime is led by Tigrayan elites that emerged from the Tigrayan minority, which is less than five million.

Amhara and Tigrayans who consider themselves Semitic have suppressed their blackness by claiming racial and cultural superiority to blacks in general and the indigenous Africans they colonized in particular (Jalata, 2001). Successive Ethiopian state elites have used the discourses of civilization, race, culture, and religion to justify and rationalize the colonization and dehumanization of the indigenous Africans, such as Oromos, and have selectively utilized the politics of blackness without actually practicing this aspect of Ethiopianism. The duality of Ethiopianism and the politics of building contemporary Ethiopia (former Abyssinia) as an empire on the foundation of racial/ethnonational hierarchy have prevented successive Ethiopian state elites from building a viable country. Consequently, Ethiopia has remained one of the most impoverished countries in the world, and has become famous for its recurrent famines and a series of internal and external wars.

The Emergence of the Modern Ethiopian State and the West

The practice of creating and supporting a neocolonial state in accordance with the interests of the West started with the emergence of the modern Ethiopian state in Africa (Jalata, 1993, 2001). The creation of the modern racialized Ethiopian state and the emergence of the Ethiopian Empire occurred within the expansion of the European-dominated capitalist world economy into Africa during the last decades of the 19th century (Jalata, 2001). Because of their Christian ideology and their willingness to collaborate with European imperialist powers, such as Great Britain, France,

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and Italy, successive Amhara-Tigrayan rulers obtained access to European technology, weapons, administrative and military expertise, and other skills needed for the construction of the modern state and the colonization of Oromos and others (Holcomb and Ibssa (1990, p.1). The main reason for this colonial expansion was to obtain commodities such as gold, ivory, coffee, musk, hides and skins, slaves and land (Donham and James, 1986; Bailey, 1980, p. 2). At one time, Menelik, the founder of the Ethiopian Empire, and his wife owned 70,000 enslaved Africans (Pankhurst, 1968, p. 75).

While obtaining slaves and economic resources, the emerging Ethiopian state committed genocide on Oromos. The Oromo population was reduced from ten to five million through war, slavery, massive killings, disease, and war-induced famine (Bulatovich, 2000, pp. 68-68). Menelik and his followers expropriated three-fourths of Oromo lands and reduced the survived Oromos to tenants and servants (Jalata, 2005; Holcomb and Ibssa, 1990). Contemporary Ethiopia emerged as an empire by claiming the name of ancient and historic Ethiopia (the black world) with the help of the West during the partition of Africa, and justified its genocide, enslavement, colonization, and the continued subjugation of Oromos and others by the discourse of race. It used to be called Abyssinia until the 1930s, when Haile Selassie changed it to Ethiopia in his Constitution for political expediency by confusing contemporary Ethiopia (former Abyssinia) (Donham, 1986) with ancient Ethiopia, the black world, mentioned in the Bible.

Contemporary Ethiopia, the West, and the Discourse of Race

Denying the reality that contemporary Ethiopia was the product of neocolonialism that was invented by the alliance of Ethiopian colonialism and European imperialism, the West praises Abyssinia/Ethiopia as the country that was never colonized in Africa. The idea that Ethiopia was not colonized laid the cornerstone for the ideology of "Greater Ethiopia." The Ethiopian ruling elites and their Euro-American supporters have contributed to "Ethiopian mythology [which] consists in part of the erroneous notions that [Abyssinian] society had reached a superior evolutionary stage at the time of conquest, making them able to move in and take over Oromia and others … The illusion plays a critically important role in holding the entire complex together, the ideology of Greater Ethiopia" (Holcomb and Ibssa, 1990, p. 143). The ideology of Greater Ethiopia claims that Ethiopia was not colonized like other parts of Africa because of Amhara-Tigray bravery and patriotism that made this empire unique in Africa.

Furthermore, the ideology of Greater Ethiopia is based on the following assumptions: Ethiopian boundaries are sacred since they were established for 3000 years; Abyssinian "society represented an advanced level of social and economic organization" that enabled it to defend itself from European colonialism by eliminating slavery and protecting "all the peoples of greater Ethiopia from falling prey to European imperialism" (Levine, 1994, p.16); and Ethiopia played a significant civilizing mission by colonizing and dominating Oromos and other nations who were backward, pagan, destructive, and inferior. The ideology of Greater Ethiopia that has been accepted and developed by European and American policy elites and their successive governments has been the bedrock of racism on which Ethiopia was built and still maintained (Holcomb and Ibssa, 1990, p.1).

The foreign policy experts of Western countries have not only provided technology and expertise in different fields, but they have been playing a critical role in formulating and promoting racist mythologies to justify the colonization and continued subjugation of the colonized subjects. The racist idea that Amharas and Tigrayans are different from the rest of Africa lay at the core of European justification for empowering them to colonize and rule Oromos and other nations who were seen like other colonized Africans. The Ethiopian Empire that was created with the alliance of European imperialist powers and Amhara-Tigrayan warlords has maintained itself through an alliance with successive superpowers, namely, Great Britain, the

former Soviet Union, and the United States, which have provided protection to successive Ethiopian state elites and their governments (Jalata, 1993; 2005).

The Amhara and Tigrayan colonial settlers in Oromia, Oromo country, have justified their colonial domination with racist discourse. With the establishment of their colonial authority in the colonized regions, these settlers "assumed that their own innate superiority over the local residents accounted for this accomplishment" (Holcomb and Ibssa, 1990, p.111). The essential components of racist discourse of Greater Ethiopia have remained intact. "Socialist" and then "democratic" discourse has been introduced by successive Ethiopian state elites and accepted by their Euro-American supporters without changing the colonizing and racist structure of Ethiopian society. When policy issues are discussed on Ethiopia Semitic civility, Christianity, antiquity, bravery, and patriotism of Amharas and Tigrayans are retrieved to valorize and to legitimize their dominance and power.

Moreover, the barbarism, backwardness, and the destructiveness of Oromos and others are reinvented to keep Oromos and others from access to state power. The combined racist views about Oromos and others and the racist assumptions of U.S. foreign policy elites effectively mobilize the U.S. State Department against the indigenous Africans. As it supported the Haile Selassie government between the mid-1950s and 1974, the U.S. government supports the current Ethiopian authoritarian-terrorist regime that is characterized by extreme militarization and repression, tight control of information and resources in the form of foreign aid, domestic financial resources, political appointments; and direct ownership and control of all aspects of state power, including security and military institutions, judiciary and other political bodies, and financial institutions (Jalata, 2000).

Because of its racist policies, the Ethiopian state has different policies within Abyssinia proper, the homeland of Amhara-Tigray, and the colonized regions such as Oromia. The Ethiopian state has been authoritarian to Amhara and Tigray national groups from which it emerged, and terrorist to racialized peoples, such as Oromos, Afars, Sidamas, Ogaden-Somalis, Annuaks, and others. Therefore, I have characterized this state as an authoritarian-terrorist regime (Jalata, 2005). The Ethiopian state is owned by Tigray-Amhara elites who control all aspects of state power and use state terrorism to maintain their power and privileges. Successive Ethiopian elites have used Ethiopianism effectively to marshal support from the West and to hide the crimes against humanity.

The Duality of Ethiopianism

Ethiopian elites boast that their country, Ethiopia, was not colonized like that of other Africans. They refuse to accept the fact that the Ethiopian Empire has been an indirect colony of Euro-America. Despite the fact that Amhara-Tigrayan elite's claim that Ethiopia has been the defender of African freedom, they never hesitate to express their disdain for formerly enslaved or directly colonized Africans. These elites claim that they have a superior religion or civilization, and even sometimes express that they are not black and see formerly enslaved or colonized Africans as "baryas" (slaves) (Jalata, 2001; Sorenson, 1993). William R. Scott (1993, p. xv)), an African American, who participated in a student work-camp in Ethiopia in 1963, expresses his painful encounter with Ethiopian racism as the following: "I was called barya (slave) by young, bigoted Ethiopian aristocrats, who associated African-Americans with slavery and identified them with the country's traditional servant class." Amharas and Tigrayans have also degraded the humanity and culture of the indigenous Africans they have colonized and dominated (Sbacchi, 1997, p. 22).

Imitating their white mentors, Menelik and his followers saw themselves as gods who were sent to "civilize" Oromos and other indigenous Africans via slavery and colonialism. The Ethiopian colonizers started to dehumanize Oromos by changing their name into Galla. As the names of various African peoples who were enslaved and brought to America were changed to

Negro, and as the names of various peoples in America were changed to Indian with their colonization and destruction, Oromos were given the name Galla. These names were invented in the process of removing these peoples from their respective cultural and historical roots and making them the target of destruction, enslavement, colonialism, and continued subjugation. The appellation Galla was given to Oromos to characterize them as slaves, pagan, uncivilized or barbaric, inferior, and ignorant. Amhara and Tigrayan elites have effectively used the discourse of cultural racism in destroying or suppressing and exploiting their colonial subjects.

Cultural racism can be defined as the conscious or subconscious conviction of the politically dominant population group that imposes its cultural patterns and practices through its social institutions in attempt to destroy or suppress the cultural patterns and practices of the colonized and dominated population (Bowser and Hunt, 1996). Cultural racism and its contradictions may result in the extermination and/or continued subjugation of the dominated population group. The extermination of Jews by Germans, the continued subjugation of Palestinians by the Jews, the ethnic cleansing of Bosnians by Serbians, the destruction of Tutsis by Hutus, and the suppression of Hutus by Tutsis are examples of extreme forms of cultural racism. However, racist ideology usually combines the discourses of biological and cultural differences to justify unequal treatment of different population groups. The discourses of race and racism emerged with the development of the racialized capitalist world system via racial slavery and European colonialism (Jalata, 2001). The processes of expropriation, slavery, and colonialism resulted in hierarchical organization of world populations through the creation of an elaborate discourse of racism to maintain the system.

Let me provide a pragmatic definition of racism. As the meaning of race is complex, so is that of racism. Racism is a discourse and a practice in which a racial/ethnonational project (i.e., slavery, genocide, colonialism, continued subjugation) is politically, culturally, and "scientifically" constructed by dominating elites in the capitalist world system to justify and naturalize racial/ethnonational inequality in which those at the top of social hierarchy oppress and exploit those below them by claiming biological and/or cultural superiority. Simply put, racism is an expression of institutionalized patterns of colonizing structural power and social control. Race and racism are socially, politically and culturally constructed to maintain the identities and privileges of the dominant population groups and their power through policy formulation and implementation. They are sociopolitical constructs since all human groups are biologically and genetically more alike than different (Malik, 1996, Jalata, 2001).

Ethiopian elites and some Ethiopianists have tried to prove the racial and civilization superiority of Amharas and Tigrayans by Semitizing and linking them to the Middle East and Europe (Baxter, 1994, p.172). Recognizing the political and diplomatic significance of the name Ethiopia, the old name for the Black world, (Budge, 1928), the Abyssinian state elites replaced the name Abyssinia with that of Ethiopia. Successive Ethiopian state elites use the African and Semitic discourses both regionally and globally. Globally, they use the Semitic discourse and the discourse of Christianity to mobilize assistance from Europe, North America, and the Middle East. Skillfully, they use their blackness to mobilize other Africans, the African Diaspora (Scott, 1993; Harris, 1986), and Black U.S. policy elites against Oromos and other colonized peoples. Ethiopian state elites have attempted and used the influence of the African Diaspora for their political and economic interests particularly in the U. S. by capitalizing on the emotion they have for the name Ethiopia. By confusing ancient Ethiopia with contemporary Ethiopia (former Abyssinia) Amhara-Tigrayan elites misled some historically naive people in Africa, Europe, North America, and the world.

Most people do not know the difference between ancient Ethiopia and contemporary Ethiopia. Consequently, Africans who were colonized or enslaved by Europeans, except those who were enslaved and colonized by contemporary Ethiopians, wrongly consider contemporary Ethiopia (former Abyssinia) as an island of black freedom since they have maintained formal political power with the help of Euro-American powers. Most blacks "knew very little about the

social and political conditions of Ethiopia. What they wrote or said about Ethiopia was at best a manifestation of their emotional state" (Scott, 1993, p. 26). Other Africans are unaware that Ethiopia's political power came from allying with the colonizing European powers. Despite the fact that Amharas and Tigrayans are black, they consider themselves Semitic to dissociate themselves from Africa whose peoples they consider both racially and culturally inferior. John Sorenson (1998, p.29) expresses this racist attitude as "a multiplicity of Ethiopians, blacks who are whites, the quintessential Africans who reject African identity."

Amhara-Tigray elites recognize the importance of racial distinctions and link themselves to the Middle East, Europe, and North America to mobilize support for their political projects. These racist discourses are unchallenged in academic and popular discourse because they help reproduce Ethiopian ethnocratic and colonial state power. U.S. foreign policy elites, diplomats, and other officials recognize and defend such "racial pretension of Ethiopia's ruling class" (Robinson, 1985, p.53). To demonstrate the civilization and cultural superiority of Amharas and Tigrayans, racist scholars downplayed "the African-ness of ancient … [Abyssinia] . . . to emphasize its similarities to European societies" (Sorenson, 1998, p. 29). John Sorenson (1998, p. 234) expounds that "along with the emphasis on a Great Tradition in Ethiopian history, came a specific configuration of racial identity. As in other discourses of race, this configuration merged power with phenotypic features in order to devalue the Oromo and other groups as both 'more African' and 'more primitive' than the Amhara [and Tigray]. The Oromo were presented as warlike, essentially `people without history' and without any relationship to the land."

The Impacts of Ethiopianism on Oromos

In Ethiopian studies, Oromos were depicted as "crueller scourges" and "barbarian hordes [that] brought darkness and ignorance in the train" to Ethiopia (Harris, 1844, pp.72-73); they were also depicted as evil, ignorant, orderless, destructive, infiltrators, and invasive (Abba Bahrey, 1954); Bruce, 1973; Ullendorf, 1960; Marcus, 1994). Oromos were also seen as "a decadent race" which was "less advanced" because of their racial and cultural inferiority (Fargo, 1935, p. 45). Therefore, their colonization was seen as a civilizing mission. Racist and modernist scholars have also denied the existence of a unified Oromo identity and argued that Oromos cannot achieve statehood because they are geographically scattered and lack cultural substance (Perham, 1969, p. 377; Clapham, 1994; Levine 1994). Generally speaking, both Ethiopian elites and their Euro-American counterparts have built Ethiopianism as a racial project at the cost of indigenous Africans, such as Oromos. The participation of Amharas and Tigrayans in the scramble for Africa and in the slave trade encouraged them to associate themselves with Europe and the Middle East rather than black Africans.

The popular discourse on Oromos is full of racist prejudices and stereotypes. When Amharas and Tigrayans want to show the inferiority of Oromos on the racial/ethnonational hierarchy, or to deny them their humanity, they debase an Oromo and her/his nationality by asking "sawu nawu Galla?" (Is he/she a human being or a Galla?). This query shows that Amharas and Tigrayans consider Oromos as inferior human beings. Even Christianity is used to promote racism in Ethiopia. For instance, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church publication denounced sexual relations between Ethiopians and Oromos and others by saying that Jesus would punish those who had sexual intercourse with "the cursed, the dumb, the Moslems, the Galla, the Shankilla, the Falasha, the horse, the donkey, the camel and all those who committed sodomy" (quoted in Lata 1998, p. 143). Oromos, Ethiopian Jews, Muslims, and various peoples were categorized with beasts, such as horses, donkeys and camels.

The implicit intention of the Orthodox Church was to draw a racial/ethnonational boundary between Abyssinians and non-Abyssinians to maintain the racial/ethnonational purity of the former. These prejudices and stereotypes consciously or unconsciously have influenced Ethiopian studies. Ethiopians, particularly those Ethiopian scholars and Ethiopianists who have

been influenced by these racist assumptions, never respected Oromo culture and also oppose the Oromo struggle for social justice, democracy, and human rights under different pretexts. Since some Ethiopian elites consider Oromos as "invaders" of Ethiopia, they contest that they do not deserve self-determination because the region that they call Oromia does not belong to them (Gerbee, 1993, p. 50). This assertion implicitly assumes that Oromos must accept their subjugation and second-class citizenship, or they must leave Ethiopia before they will be totally annihilated for continuing to demand self-determination and democracy. The political agenda of the destruction of Oromo society is not a new phenomenon.

The West has been supporting this political agenda. The massive killing of Oromos by Abyssinian colonialism was never condemned as genocide. Just as genocide committed by Menelik and his followers escaped world condemnation, so is the ethnic cleansing that is systematically committed by the Meles regime today. Currently, Ethiopianism hides the true nature of the Tigrayan-led minority regime in Ethiopia. Supported by the West, mainly by the U.S., and using political violence, this regime has dominated and controlled the Oromo people and others and denied them the freedom of expression, association or organization, as well as access to the media and related forms of communication and information networks (Jalata, 2005, p. 86). The Meles regime has used various techniques of violence to terrorize Oromos who are engaged in the struggle for liberation and democracy.

To hide these state crimes from the world community, the Meles government "does not keep written records of its extra-judicial executions and the prolonged detention of political prisoners" (quoted in Hassen 2001, p. 33). The regime has killed or imprisoned thousands of Oromo students because they have engaged in peaceful demonstrations (Zia-Zarifi, 2004, p. 1). With the intensification of the Oromo national movement, the regime has engaged in massive human rights violations, terrorism, and hidden genocide. While engaging in state terrorism in the form of war, torture, rape, and hidden genocide to control the Oromo people and others and loot their economic resources (Fossati, Namarra and Niggli, 1996), the Tigrayan state elites claim that they are promoting democracy, federalism, and national self-determination. This regime also committed genocide on the Annuak people of Gambella in 2003 and 2004 (Jalata, 2005, p. 89). The Tigrayan state elites use Ethiopianism to claim the unity of the colonizer and the colonized population groups in the Ethiopia Empire while committing serious crimes against humanity. There is no wonder that all the colonized population groups reject the ideology of Ethiopianism. Particularly Oromos have developed *Oromummaa* (Oromo culture and nationalism) to oppose Ethiopianism and to dismantle racial/ethnonational hierarchy and Ethiopian settler colonialism and its institutions.

Oromummaa

Oromummaa as an aspect of Oromo culture, nationalism, and vision builds on the best elements of Oromo traditions, and particularly endorses an indigenous Oromo democracy known as the *gada* system. Before their colonization, Oromos had the *gada* government to organize and order their society around political, economic, social, cultural, and religious institutions. Bonnie Holcomb (1991, P. 4) notes that the system "organized the Oromo people in an all-encompassing democratic republic even before the few European pilgrims arrive from England on the shores of North America and only later built a democracy."

The *gada* democracy had the principles of checks and balances (through periodic succession of every eight years), and division of powers (among executive, legislative, and judicial branches), balanced opposition (among five parties), and power sharing between higher and lower administrative organs to prevent power from falling into the hands of despots (Baissa, 2004; Legessee, 2006). Other principles of the system included balanced representation of all Oromos, accountability of leaders, the settlement of disputes through reconciliation, and the respect for basic rights and liberties (Jalata, 2005, p. 19). Currently, the Oromo movement led by

the Oromo Liberation Front struggles to restore this popular Oromo democracy. Those who endorse and glorify Ethiopianism are attempting to undermine this democratic paradigm.

Oromummaa as an intellectual and ideological vision places the Oromo man and woman at the center of analysis and at the same time goes beyond Oromo society and aspires to develop global *Oromummaa* by contributing to the solidarity of all oppressed peoples and by promoting the struggle for self-determination and multinational democracy. Hence, *Oromummaa* is a complex and dynamic national and global project. As a national project and the master ideology of the Oromo national movement, *Oromummaa* enables Oromos to formulate their cultural centric political strategies and tactics that can mobilize the nation for collective action empowering the people for liberation. As a global project, it requires that the Oromo national movement be inclusive of all persons, operating in a democratic fashion. This global *Oromummaa* enables the Oromo people to form alliances with all political forces and social movements that accept the principles of national self-determination and multinational democracy in the promotion of a global humanity that is free from all forms of oppression and exploitation. In other words, global *Oromummaa* is based on the principles of mutual solidarity, social justice, and popular democracy.

The foundation of *Oromummaa* is built on overarching principles that are embedded within Oromo traditions and culture and, at the same time, have universal relevance for all oppressed peoples. The main foundations of *Oromummaa* are individual and collective freedom, justice, popular democracy, and human liberation that are built on the concept of *saffu* (moral and ethical order) and are enshrined in *gada* principles. Although, in recent years, many Oromos have become adherents of Christianity and Islam, the concept of *Waqaa* (God) lies at the heart of Oromo tradition and culture. In Oromo tradition, *Waqaa* is the creator of the universe and the source of all life.

The universe created by *Waqaa* contains within itself a sense of order and balance that is to manifest in human society. Although *Oromummaa* emerges from Oromo cultural and historical foundations, it goes beyond culture and history in providing a liberative narrative for the future of the Oromo nation as well as the future of other oppressed peoples, particularly those who suffer under the Ethiopian Empire. *Oromummaa* challenges the idea of glorifying African monarchies, chiefs, or warlords that collaborated with European slavers and colonizers and destroyed Africa by participating in the slave trade and the project of colonization. Those African scholars who degrade African democratic traditions just as their Euro-American counterparts devalue the Oromo democratic system and consider indigenous Africans such as Oromos primitive and "stateless."

Challenging the view of Euro-American racist and "modernist" scholars, Asmarom Legesse (2000, p. 30) asserts that "since monarchy was in decline in most Europe, and the transition to democracy became the epitome of Europe's highest political aspirations, admitting that some varieties of democracy were firmly planted in Africa in the 16th century when in fact they were not fully established in Britain, the United States and France until the 17th or 18th century would have made the ideological premise of the 'civilizing mission' somewhat implausible. The idea … that African democracies may have some constitutional features that are more advanced than their European counterpart was and still is considered quite heretical." Learning about Oromo society and its struggle, with its complex democratic laws, elaborate legislative tradition, and well-developed methods of dispute settlement can present a new perspective for African politics.

Conclusion

Successive Ethiopian state elites have built their power on the foundation of racial/ethnic hierarchy that has been rationalized and justified by racism. They have maintained their legitimacy and survival through external connections and domestic political violence. Since they

have failed to remove the political obstacles that have facilitated external dependency and state violence, they could not build multinational democracy, peace, stability and development in Ethiopia. The successive regimes of Menelik, Haile Selassie, Mengistu and Meles have continuously pursued destructive policies that intensified war, terrorism, underdevelopment, and poverty. Since the Ethiopian state has been supported by powerful global powers, there have been connections between the discourse of racism, state violence and global tyranny in Ethiopia.

The policies of the West have also become major obstacles for the struggle for self-determination and multinational democracy. Without an accountable, democratic and legitimate government in Ethiopia, all population groups may soon face dangerous conditions similar to Bosnia or Rwanda. It is not without reason that Ethiopia is identified as one of eight African countries that genocide alert identified in 2004. Therefore, before events are going to explode, all concerned liberation fronts and political groups or parties must start to search for an acceptable solution together for the complex political problems in the Ethiopia Empire. The recent creation of Alliance for Freedom and Democracy is an encouraging beginning. Furthermore, all progressive and peace loving peoples in general, and Africans and the African diaspora in particular, have moral obligation to support the struggle for self-determination, multinational democracy, peace, and development in Oromia, Ethiopia, and beyond. I believe that this symposium in the name of Martin Luther King, Jr., a great visionary and charismatic leader, can contribute a lot to this noble project.

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Chapter 14

Oromummaa fi Dargagoota Oromoo[132]

Waa hunda dura Waldaan Dargaggoota Oromiyaa Minisootaa (the Oromia Youth Association of Minnesota) har'a asitti na afeeruu isaaf baayyeen galatoomfadha. Dargaggooti Oromoo kan Oromummaa qaban abdii egeree Oromiyaa ti. Har'a dargaggooti akka keessanii, kan Oromummaan dhaabatan, Oromiyaa mara keessatti fincila diddaa gabrummaa fi sochii bilisummaa finiinsaa jiru. Barattooti Oromoo Oromiyaa keessatti bara 2000 irraa qabanii harka qullaa, diina qawwee hidhate dura dhaabbatanii mirga ummata Oromoo falmaa jiru. Keessumaa immoo yeroo ammaa nyaaphaa fi Oromoota galtuu ta'an Gobanoota aara galfii dhowwachaa jiru. Bara 2005 irraa kaasanii dhaadannoo "Gadaan gadaa bilisummaa ti" jedhu qabatanii waldhaansoo finiinsaa jiru. Barattooti Oromoo fi sab-boontoti biraan reebamaa, hidhamaa, ajjeefamaa wareegamaa kafaluun dhiiga isaaniin seenaa Oromoo barreessaa akka jiran ifaa dha. Murnoota hawwaasa Oromoo hafaniifis fakkeenya gaarii taa'aa jiru.

Ijoolleen Oromoo kan bilisummaa saba isaaniif dhaabbatan warra Oromummaa qaban qofa akka ta'es wal nama hin gaafachiisu. Namooti Oromoodha ofiin jedhan, Oromummaa hin qabne biyya keessaa fi ala jiran tokko tokko meesha motummaa Tigree ta'uun ummata Oromoo fi Adda Bilisummaa Oromoo irratti duulaa jiru. Kaan immoo aadaa kachachalaa, akkasumas dantaa mataa isaaniif dhama'u. Kanaafuu waa'ee Oromummaa fi sab-bonummaa akka gaariitti baruun dirqama dargaggoota Oromoo irra jiruu dha. Amma Ijoo dubbii afur irrattin haasa'uu barbaada.

Isaanis tokkoffaan uummata Oromoo kan ilaalu, lammafaan Oromummaan maal akka ta'e, sadaffaan Oromummaa fi sab-bonummaan Oromoo hidhata isaan qaban, afrafaan dirqama dargaggoota Oromoo irra jiru kan ilaalu dha. Dura mee waayee ummata Oromoo, jaarraa baayyeedhaaf akkaataa isaan itti diinota ofirraa dhowwaa turanii fi isaan jaarraa kudha sagal gara boodaatti humnoota Habashootaa kan faranjiin gargarameen cabe haa ilaallu.

Ummata Oromoo fi Oromiyaa

Ummati Oromoo akka saba tokkootti sirna gadaa jalati of ijaaree waggooti dhibba baayyeef diinoota isaa of irraa dhowwee walabummaan jiraachaa ture. Yeroo sana Oromiyaa akka biyyaatti ijaare. Oromiyaan kan dhalate sirna polotikaa gadaa jalatti ture. Booda yeroo sirni gadaa iddo baayyeetti cacabuun, iddo tokko tokkotti sirni mootii dhalate humni polotikaa Oromoo laafuu calqabe. Keessumaa jaarraa kudha sagal keessa sirni mootii Oromiyaa keessaa iddo baayyeetti biqilan sirna gadaa baayyee laaffisan. Jaarraa kudha sagal keessa sirni Kaappitaalisimii Awurooppaa irraa gara Afirikaatti babalachaa ture. Kun Habashootaaf carraa isaan duraan qabaachaa hin turre kenneef.

Habashooti waggoota dheeraaf humna Oromoo dura dhaabbachuu hin dandeenye qawwee, loltootaa fi gorsa faranjii irraa argataniin Oromoo dura dhaabbatan. Matootii gosaa fi qondaalota Oromoo kan akka Goobaanaa Daanceefaa malaan ofitti qabatan. Akka kanaan gara

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waggaa shantamaa olii Oromoo irratti duulani, Oromiyaa cabsanii biyya Abisiiniyaa kan booda Ethiopia jedhanitti dabalatan. Waggoota shantamman kana keessa Oromoonni miliyoona shanii ol akka dhumaan seenaatu ragaa baha.

Oromiyaa , biyya Oromoo, diigani bakka baayyeetti qoodanii maqaa adda addaa keenaniif. Shawaa, Harargee, Wallo, Wallagga, Sidaamoo, Arsii, Ilu Abbaboor, Kafaa xaqlaayi gizaati kan jedhuu fi kkf jedhanii moggaasan. Oromoota kaan immoo Gojjaamii fi Tigraayitti kutan. Seenaa, aadaa fi Afaan Oromoo balleessanii ummata tokko iddoo adda adaatti hiranii wal lolchiisuu wal jibbisiisuu imaammata godhatan. Har'a illee Oromooti imaammata Habashootaa kanan afaan faajja'an baayyeetu jiru. Yaadaa fi ilaalcha hamaa akkasii amma Oromummaa fi sab-bonummaan bishaatee ija godhatutti guutummaatti ballessuun hin salphatu.

Oromooti iddoo baayyeetti sirna Habashootaa didanii fincilaa turan. Lolli Rayyaa fi Azabo, Afran Qalloo, Shaggar, Baalee fi Arsii, Sibuu, Guduru fi kan biraa fakeenya fudhachuutu danda'ama. Keessumaa lolli Baalee bara jaatamoota keessa turee fi dhalachuun Waldaa Maccaa-Tuulamaa biqiluu sab-bonummaa Oromoof guddina Oromummaaf kara saaqan. Waldaan Muuziqaa Arfan Qal'oo kan Dirree Dhawaatti baruma jaatamoota keessa dhalate gabbina Oromummaaf sab-bonummaf qooda guudda gumaachan. Sochii bara baayyeef iddo adda addatti deemaa turetu bara torbaatamoota keessa dhalchuu Adda Bilisummaa Oromoof haala aanjesse. Addi Bilisummaa Oromoos karaa ykn boochoo Oromummaaf sab-bonummaan ittiin guddatu babalise.

Egaa warra seenaa kana hin beekne, warra Oromummaa fi sabbonummaa hin qabne dha kan Adda Bilisummaa Oromoo jibbu. Olola hamaa halkanii fi guyyaa irratti oofu. Jaarmootiin polotikaa Oromoo walaba ta'an , kan tokko irraa hafe, hundinuu ABOnis keessaa bahan. Oromummaa, sab-bonumma fi tokkummaa Oromoo cimsuuf jaarmootiin Oromoo agoobara ULFO jedhamu jalatti of ijaranii jiru. Garuu, jabina isaanii hojiin mul'isuu hin dandeenye. Kanaaf ABOs ana malee isa jedhu dhiisee, jaarmooti Oromoo biraas ABO jibbuu fi abaaruu dhiisanii tokkummaa Oromoo jabeessuun diinoota irratti bobba'uun dirqama ta'a. Jaarmayaa tokko qofa qabaachuun akkuma abbaa irree (dictatorship) baballisuu danda'u, jaarmootii baayyee qabaachun tokkummaa Oromoo laaffisuu danda'a. Oromoo hunduu kana baree polotikaa keenya madala (balance), haqaa, walqixxummaa fi dimokiraasii irratti ijaaruu qabna. Oromummaa, sab-bonummaa, tokkumma fi dimokiraasiin hundee polotikaa Oromoo ta'uu qaba. Bilisummaan daandi kanaan malee hin dhufu.

Oromummaan Maal?

Oromummaan akka ilaalcha seenaa, aadaa, polotikaa fi sab-bonummaa Oromootti daandi bilisummaa saaqa. Daandiin bilisummaa kun wanta Oromoon marti wal wajiin qaban irratti ijarama. Oromummaan akka ilaalcha sab-boonummaatti Oromoo humna polotika taasisuun bilisummaa namummaa (human liberation) goonfachiisuu danad'a jedhamee amanama. Akkasumas akka ummati Oromoo waayee ofi baratee, ummatoota biraa wajjin of madaalee, wanta irra hir'ate guuttatee mirga isaaf garaa guutuun lolatu isa kakaasa.

Oromummaan seenaa, aadaa fi karaa bilisummaa Oromoo ti. Kanaafuu seenaa Oromoo isa diinni awwaale mul'isuun, aadaa isaa tuffatame deebisee ijaaruun, namummaa Oromoo dhiitamee bilisoomisuun, Oromummaa dha. Oromummaan ilaalcha ittiin motummaa fi dhaabbattoota ("institution") koloneeffattoota Habashaa Oromiyaa keessaa ittin buqqisani dha. Akkasumas ilmaan Oromoo dubartii dhiira, beekaa fi wallaalaa, sooreesaa fi deegaa utu hin jeedhin, qomoo fi gosaan laga utuu hin lakaa'in, sirna Oromoo kan gadaa fi "dimokiraasii" haqaan akka ijaaran karaa bana.

Kana gochuuf ummatummaa Oromoo isaa iddo baayyeetti caacabe deebisee ijaara. Poolitikaa Oromoo keessatti gandaa fi laga lakkaa'uun, nyaaphaaf meeshaa ta'uun, ummata biraatti of jijjiiruu yaaluun gadi aantummaa ta'uu mulisa. Oromooti wanta akaanaa beekaas ta'e,

utuu hin beekin hojjetan waldhaansoo bilisumaaf godhamutti guufu dha. Keessumaa warri polotikaa keessa jiran cubbu akkasii irraa of eeggachun dirqama Oromummaa ti.
Orommummaan dhiiga, gandummaa fi laga irratti hin ijaaramu. Kanaafuu biyyummaa, seenaa, aadaa, afaan, bilisummaa fi feedha ummata Oromoo hundaa irratti hunda'aa. Kun hunduu kan ta'uu danda'u yoo Oromoon aka ummata tokkootti of ijaaree jaarmayaa cimaa fi bishaataan geggeefame qofa. Jaarmaa bishaataa fi cimaan akeeka (policy) ummati Oromoo irratti walii galan baasee ummata irratti hojjechisa. Jarmoota Oromoo keessaa kanatti dhihoo kan jiru Adda Bilisummaa Oromoo ti.

Haa ta'u malee innis hir'ina tokko tokko qabu irraa kan ka'e bilisummaan Oromoo amma har'atti bubbule. Wanta hir'ate baruun, waldhaansoo qajeelchuun, dirqama daraggoota Oromoo ti. Tokkummaa Oromoo jabeessuf jaarmootiin Oromoo ULFO keessa jiranis jaarmaa maqaa irra gara jarmaa bishaataa fi ciimaatti dafanii of geeddaruu qaban. Kana gochuuf Oromummaaf sab-bonummaa hundeefachuu qabu. Addi Bilisummaa Oromoos rakkoo keessa darbee fi keessa jiru qoratee, hubatee, dafee of fooyeesuu qaba. Ammaa kaasee akka mootummatti hojjechuu danda'uu qaba.

Oromummaa fi Sab-bonummaa Oromoo

Oromummaan hundee namummaa Oromoo ti. Oromoon akkuma ummata biraa aadaa, seenaa fi afaan ofii qaba. Akkuma ummata kaanii aadaa, seena fi afaan isaa eeggachuu fi guddifachuu fedha. Akkasumas ulfina ykn kabaja isaa tikfachuu barbaada. Kana hunda goochuuf yookis argachuuf beekumsa bilisaa (liberation knowledge) fi jaarmayaa Oromoo walaba qabaachuun dirqama. Jaarmayaa walabi kun immoo kan diina cininee madeessuu danda'u ta'uu qaba. Kan hojiidhaan waldhaansoo Oromoo gara fuula duraatti tarkanfachiisu ta'uu qaba.

Beekumsa iddo lamatti hiruu dandeenya. Tokkoffaan beekumsa ittin nama of wallaalchisanii fi gowwoomsanii ittiin bitanii dha. Lammaffaan beekumsa dhuugaa irratti hunda'ee dha. Beekumsa bilisa malee Oromummaan dagaaguu hin danda'u. Beekumsi bilisa ta'e Oromoon akka ummataatti kaleessa eessa akka ture, hara'a maal keessa akka jiru, bor eessa akka ga'uu danda'u xiinxalee haqaan mulisa. Beekumsi dhuuga ummati Oromoo mootumma gadaa tokoo jalatti akka bulaa ture, akka gadaan hundee aadaa Oromoo fi seena Oromoo ta'e, akka Oromiyaan itti dhalatte, waa'ee ilaalchaa (Oromo world views), waayee "philosophy," waayee hundee amantii Oromoo sirriiti nama barsiisa. Utu waayee dubbii cicimaa kana hin barin Oromummaa fi sabboonummaa guutuu qabaachuun hin danda'amu.

Akkasumas akka mootummaan Habashootaa faranjoota wajin walii galanii ummata Oromootti roorrisa turanii fi hara'aallee akka itti jiran nuhubachiisa. Kana hundumaa xiinxalanii baruun Oromummaa fi sabbonumma nukeesatti dagaagsa. Tooftaa fi tarsimoo bilshinaan walabummaf akka lolanu nugargaara. bilisummaa booda Oromiyaa akkamii akka ijaarru karaa nuu saaqa. Jireenyi halagaa jala buluu rakkisaa fi dhiphina akka ta'e nuuf mirkaneessa. Biyya qabaachuun, bilisummaaf dimokiraasii qabaachuun jireenya guutuuf gamachuu ta'uu nu yaadachiisa.

Beekumsi bilisaa akka Oromootti of tuffachuu jalaa bahanii ummatoota biraas fakkaachuus dhiisan gargaara. Oromoon ummattoota biraa gadi akka hin taane hubachiisa. Ummati Oromoo ummattoota Habashaa fi faranjootaa gadi illee akka hin tane nu barsiisa. Seenaan, aadaa fi amantii Oromoo kan Habashootaa fi kan faranjootaa gadi akka hin taane nuu dhugoomsa. Oromoo Oromummaa guutuu qabu akka nama tokkotti akka of kabaju, ummata isaa ija ulfinaan akka ilaallu nutti mul'isa. Oromummaan dhugaa jechuun kana ta'usaa nu yaadachisa. "Barcuma ulfinaa abbaatu of jala baata" isa Oromoon jedhu maal akka ta'e nuuf ibsa.

Oromooti Oromummaa hin qabne garuu kabaja ofiifis hin qaban, ummata isaaniifis hin qaban. Ummata biraa fakkachuuf halkanii guyyaa kaatu. Qarshiif jedhanii meeshaa diinaa ta'urraa duubatti hin deebi'an. Kanaaf Oromoon Oromummaa hin qabne biyyaafis ummataafis

gatii hin qaban. Kaleessa Oromooti akkasii Amaaraa fi Sumaalota ummata Oromoo irrati bobbaasaa turan. Har' a immoo Tigreen maqaa OPDO jedhuun Oromoo keessaa namoota garaaf bulan ijaarrattee kanuma dalagaa jirti. Oromooti akkasii buddeena, horii jedhanii diinaaf ergamuu ykn muudamuu bira hin darban. Jarri akkasii akka Oromummaan guddachaa, waldhaansoon cimaa adeemuun guyyaan halkan itti ta'a. Boodi isaaniis salphina, badiisa fi rakkina.

Oromoota beekumsa bilisa qabantu Waldaa Maccaa fi Tuulamaa bara jaatamoota keessa, bara torbaatamaa keessa immoo ABO ijaare. Jaaramayaan bilisa Oromoo aadaan, afaan, seenaan Oromoo awwala keessaa ba'ee akka dagaagu godha. Namummaa Oromoo isa tufatame deebisee ijaara. Waayee abbaa biyummaa ummata Oromoo barsiisa. Hawwaasa Oromoo isa nyaaphi garagar diigee garaa fi dugda godhe akka isaan ummata tokko ta'an barsiisee, deebisee ijaara. Yoo Oromooti garagar faca'an caalaatti akka isaan garbummaaf saaxilaman itti agarsiisa. Seenaa ofii beekuun, afaan ofii dubbachuun, aadaa ofii guddisuun, tokkummaa ofii namummaa ofii jabeessuun maal akka ta'e ummata Oromoo keessatti hojiin agarsiisa.

Daandii Waldaa Macaa fi Tuulamaa fi Addi Bilisummaa Oromoo baasaniin Afaan Oromoo qubeen barreefamuu calqabe, seenaa fi aadaan Oromoo awwalcha keessaa ba'an guddachuu jalqaban, Oromoon baayyeen of baranii waayee Oromiyaa fi abba biyyumma isaanii beekan falmachuu jalqaban. Har'a bilisummaa Oromoo dhugoomsuuf barattooti Oromoo waldhaansoo hadha'aa gochaa jiru.

Oromoota lakkoobsaan baayyee hin taanetu Waldaa Maccaa fi Tuulamaa fi Adda Bilisummaa Oromoo ijaare. Baayyeen isaanii lubbuu isaanii ummata Oromoo bilisoomsuuf dabarsanii kennan. Kan hafan amma illee waldhaansoo hadhawaa kana biyya keessaa fi alatti itti fufanii jiru. Jagnoota Oromoo kumaan lakka'amantu waldhaansoo bilisummaa Oromoo irratti wareegame. Kanaaf Dargaggooti Oromoo gaheen keenya maal jedhani of gaafatanii deebii hatatamaa ofumaan itti kenuun dirqama seenaa isaan irra jiruu dha.

Xuumura

Oromummaa fi sab-bonummaa qabaachuun fedhii ummata Oromoo eeguun mul'ata. Fedhiin ummata Oromoo maalfa'ii? 1) Nyaapha jalaa ummata Oromoo baasuuf of ijaaruu, qabsaa'uu. 2) Tokkumma ummata Oromoo ijaaruu, tiksuu. 3) Safuu, namummaa fi kabaja ummata Oromoo tiksuu. 4) Oromiyaa bilisoomsuuf karaa danda'ameen halkanii fi guyyaa hojjechuu. 4) Ummata Oromoo iddo hundaatti dammaqsuu, ijaaruu fi akka inni haqa isaaf falmatu kakaasuu. 5) Gadaan Oromoo akka inni bifa haaraan ijaaramu gochuu. 6) Waldhaansoon Oromoo walqixxummaa fi dimokraasii dhugaa irratti akka ammaa kaasee ijaramu carraaquu. 7) Rakkina Oromoota gidduu jiru ifatti irratti mari'achuun karaa dhugaan hiikuu. 8) Beekumsa bilisa horachuun beekumsa cunqursaa hundeen buqqisuu. 9)Afaan, seena fi aadaa Oromoo xiinxaluu, beekuu fi guudisuu. 10) ABO fi ULFO karaa maraan gargaaruu.

Fedhi ummata Oromoo dhugoomsuuf, dargaggooti Oromoo of ijaaruuf waldhaansoo ummata isaaniif baayyee hojjechuutu irraa eegama. Halkanii guyyaa barumsatti jabachuun, waa'ee Oromoo fi biyya lafaa barachuun dirqama dargaggoota Oromoo ti. Nama waa beekutu biyyaaf bu'aa baayyee buusuu danda'a. Garuu, barumis Oromummaa fi sab-bonummaa hin qabne ofittummadha. Namootiin tokko tokko maqaaf baratanii har'a meeshaa Tigree ta'an warra Oromummaa fi sab-bonummaan sammuu isaani keessa hin jirre dha. Dargaggooti Oromoo yaada yaraa kan akka qomoo, lagaa, fi amantiin Oromoo hiruu irraa of eeggachuun barbaachisaa dha. Har'a yaadota salphaa akkasiin kan macha'an baayyeetu jira. Warra akkasii ifatti dura dhaabbachuun dirqama seenaa ti.

Dargaggooti Oromoo jagnooti kuma kumaan laka'aman lubbu isaanii keennuun Oromummaa fi sab-bonummaa akka ijaaran hubachuu qabu. Fakkeenyaaf, jagnoota Oromoo warra akka Haile Mariam Gamada, Mamo Mazamir, Elemo Qilxu, Magarsa Bari, Baro Tumsa, Mohe Abdo, Demise Techane, Nadhi Gamada, Sanbato Lubo, Gamachis/Zakkaariyaas Mulata,

Gutama Hawas, Saartu Yusouf, Ibsitu Marga, Aradoola Abdalla, Juukii Bareento, Mohamed Aman, Dr. Temesgen, Lama Warqee, Dagaga Baissa, Ebissaa Adunya, Kasahun Habte, Yoseph A. Batii, Hunduma Kaba, Balcha Tola, Musxafa Idris, Waqo Tola, Terefe Qumbi, Gudisa Anissa, Shamsi Shambo, Zara Shek Bakiri, Sofiya Mohammed, Jaraa Uddessa, Roba Hanale, Bulti Gurmessa, Alamu Kiisii, Mammee Qasim, Kadir Adam, Hassan Rashid, Surur Ismael, Zahari Ali, Chalala Bekele, Tesfaye Nega, Yegazu Edea, Kumala Mirkana, Tesfaye hundessa, Habib Kadir Gobana, Lamessa Boru, Jirenya Ayana, Badhasa Dilgassa fi kan hafan Oromummaaf sab-bonumma dagagasuuf jagnummaan qabsa'anii wareegama seena qabeessa wareegaman.

Egaa dargaggooti Oromoo dhalooti ammaa akeeka isaan wareegamaniif bakkaan gahuuf qabsaa'uun dirqama seenaatu irra jira. Maqaa jagnoota Oromoo hundaa asi irratti barreesuuf iddoon hin ga'u. Warra kana fakeenyan kaase. Dhiiga jagnoota kumootaatu har'a Oromummaa fi sab-bonummaan akka lalisu godhe. Oromummaa fi sab-boonummaa bara 1991 keessa ummata Oromoo bira ga'e. Jagnootii baayyeetu itti wareegame, hidhame. Tolatti hin argamne. Sammuu Oromoo isa Habashooti laaqan, laashessanii fi doomisan deebisanii ijaaruun salphaa hin turre. Har'a illee hojiin kun hin dhumanne. ABOn kana hunda wan hojjeteef uutuba waldhaansoo Oromoo ta'eera.

Oromoo bilisa baasuuf, ABOn dhadhabbii isaa baree of fooyeesun dirqama. Dadhabiinsa ofii beekee dafee of hin sireessu taanaan ummata Oromoo bilisa baasuu hin danda'u. Ummati Oromoo marti dhaaba kana cimsuun, waldhaansoon sirreesuun dirqama. Dhaabi kun kan Oromoo maraa ti malee kan namoota geggeessanii qofaa miti. Waldhaansoo keesatti hirmaachuun, sirna dimokraasiif seeraan buluun, geggeessitooti ABO akka Isaayasii fi akka Malas ta'urraa ammaa kaafnee dhoowuu qabna. Isaan kabjna, isaan jallanna, garuu akka isaan hawwa ummata Oromoo maraa irrati hojjetan mirkaneesuun kan keenya.

Seera gadaa fi dimokiraasii afaanumaaf akka Habashootaa dubbatan hin barbaannu. Amma irraa kaafnee gorsuu fi eeguu qabna. Wanti jennu hunduu hojiin mul'achuu qaba. Seerri hundee Oromummaa fi sab-boonummaa ta'uu qaba. Gatii seera beekuuf, Oromoon "Seerri ilmoo irra nama marara" jedha. Waldhaansoo keesatti hirmachuun waanta sirrii hin taane qajeelchaa adeemuu qabna. Waldhaansoo ala teenyee komii baayyisuun gatii hin qabau. Kana dargagooti Oromoo akka gaaritti hubachuu qabu.

Bilisummaan Oromoo abjuu jagnoota Oromoo har'a dhugoomaa jira. Itti dhihaachaa jirra. Ijoolleen Oromoo baayeen kana hoji irra oolshaa jiru. Kaan qawwee qabatee, kaan harka qullaa dhaabbatee waldhaansoo finiinsaa jiru. Ummata dammaqee, of bare, of ijaare du'a hin sodaanne kan qabsoo irraa deebisu ykn dhowwu hin jiru. Mootummaan Tigree iyyuu kana beeka. Dargaggooti Oromoo dirqama guuddaa isin irra jiru hubachuudhaan ka'uu qabdu. "Kan kunoo jedhan kuunnooti hin jedhin hin hafan" jedhama mitii ree! Bilisummaan Oromoo dhiyaachaa jirti, akka isheen daftee argamtuuf halkanii guyyaa hojjechuutu nu irraa eegama.

Dargaggoota Oromoo Waldaa Dargaggoota Oromiyaa Minnesota keessatti ijramtaniif kan hin ijaaramin, har'a as kan jirtan Waaqayyo ija irraa isin haa hambisu! Guddadhaa mul'adhaa. Sochi barattoota Oromoo Oromiyaa keessaa karaa dandeessan hundaan gargaaruun dirqama keessan. Waldaa keessan asitti cimsaa waldaan dargaggoota Oromoo addunyaa akka ijaartaniif waamicha isiniif godha. Galatoomaa!

Chapter 15

Leadership and Organizational Issues in the Oromo National Movement[133]

At the 2005 Oromo Studies Association (OSA) annual conference that was held in Washington, D.C., I presented a paper and suggested the establishing of a committee to identify and investigate major leadership and organizational problems that undermine the unity and performance of the Oromo national movement. This year OSA president accepted this suggestion and assigned me to form the committee to identify and study these problems. However, since eighteen individuals[134] who were selected and agreed to be part of this committee were scattered all over North America and Europe, we could not come together because of several reasons. Despite these difficulties, ten of the committee members participated in identifying some major Oromo leadership and organizational problems that have slowed the progress of the Oromo national movement.

All of these individuals were from the Oromo diaspora, and nobody was included from Oromia due to logistic and security reasons. Therefore, the information we have obtained from this survey is limited in scope and mainly reflects the experiences of the Oromo diaspora. This preliminary research only helps in providing a limited feedback for Oromo formal and informal leaders, communities, and organizations on multiple levels and serves as a stepping-stone for future research.

These ten individuals participated in this project by answering the following questions: 1. Does the condition of the Oromo struggle allow you to fully contribute your fair share to the struggle in any capacity? If not, why? 2) A) Describe the nature of Oromo political leadership. B) When you compare Oromo political leadership qualities with that of other societies how are they similar or different? Why? C) Why do you think that Oromo elites are factional in their ideologies and political activities? D) Why do you think that formally educated Oromos have not yet provided solid leadership for the Oromo society? 3) What factors have prevented the Oromo from establishing strong institutions and political organizations in the diaspora and Oromia? 4) A) What internal factors have prevented Oromo nationalists from consolidating their organizational capacity to politically and militarily challenge their enemy in Oromia? B) Why did Oromo organizations unable to win enough allies for the Oromo national movement both on regional and global levels? 5) Why did Oromo elites and political leaders fail to fully mobilize Oromo human resources to promote the Oromo national struggle? 6) A) What are the strengths and weaknesses of Oromo fronts and political parties? B) Compare and contrast these fronts and

[133] Paper Presented at the 2006 OSA Annual Confernece, the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, July 29-30.

[134] These eighteen individuals are Hussein Adam, Redwan Abdurahaman, Abebe Adugna, Ibssa Ahmed, Ibssa Abdi, Mohammed Hassen Ali, Abebe Challa, Teferi Fufa, Kulani Gudina, Ibssa Gutama, Wolde Yohanis H. Huriso, Baissa Lemu, Daraara Maati, Amsale Merga, Abarraa T. Qana'a, Dima Noggo Sarbo, Boru Tedecha and Addisu Tolesa.

parties with the liberation fronts and political parties of other societies? 7) Suggest steps that should be taken to reduce or eliminate all problems that you have mentioned above.

The answers that the ten respondents provided clearly demonstrate what kind of leadership and organizational problems the Oromo national movement is confronted with. These problems can be broken into five sub-themes. The first sub-theme identifies and explains the main characteristics of Oromo elites and leaders. The second sub-theme addresses the issues of internal factors and general problems of institutions and organizations. The third sub-theme explains why the Oromo national movement has not yet mobilized the entire Oromo nation to liberate itself from brutal Ethiopian colonialism. The fourth sub-theme identifies some strengths and weaknesses of Oromo fronts and political parties. The final sub-theme puts forwards some steps that must be taken to reduce or eliminate leadership and organizational problems in the Oromo society.

Characteristics of Oromo Elites and Leadership

A revolutionary segment of Oromo elites initiated the Oromo national struggle with great determination, and has continued it despite multiple challenges from internal and external enemies that have faced the movement. One respondent noted, "The Oromo have many brave leaders and a few charismatic leaders." Another respondent mentioned, "The Oromo have produced individual leaders who have great competency in military, education, and business." This respondent emphasized that the Oromo have yet to produce competent collective political leadership. He further noted that, "the reason why Oromos are not creating solid leadership is more reflective of the fuzzy vision and the lack of total commitment for realization of the cardinal objective of liberation. Where vision and mission lack clarity, people should not expect a miracle."

The majority of respondents identified the following weaknesses of Oromo elites in general and the political leadership in particular: Oromo elites and leadership are characterized by ineffectiveness and vague national political ideology, rigidity, lack of dynamic leadership quality, inability to address and resolve conflict, division and disorganization in leadership, lack of concern for grass-roots movement and narrow emphasis on military means, lack of trustworthy working relationship and communication skills, and lack of accountability. They also said that the Oromo elites are disorganized and lack focus on national issues, and they are conflict ridden and spend most of their time and energy on petty issues. Some of the respondents also enumerated that the Oromo elites and their political leadership are not visionary and are burdened with a "victim mentality" which emphasizes what others have done to the Oromo; they are incoherent in political visions and messages and lack a strong sense of modern organizational and institutional accountability. In addition, the respondents also stated that Oromo elites do not have a sense of urgency in relation to time and do not have a mechanism for self-evaluation in relation to performance. According to the majority of the respondents, the Oromo political leadership has to yet develop the capacity to mobilize the majority of the Oromo for political action both in Oromia and the diaspora; Oromo political leaders do not closely interact with people at the grassroots levels to build trust and connections. Consequently, according to some of these respondents, the leadership could not influence the behavior of their people effectively.

According to most of the respondents, the major weaknesses of the Oromo political leadership emerge from the weaknesses of Oromo elites who are factional in their ideological and political activities. They noted that some Oromo elites are not politically and ideologically mature enough to differentiate narrow partisan politics from national interest; they fight against one another rather than fighting against the enemy of the Oromo nation. These respondents also noted several external forces work on Oromo elites to divide them on religious, regional, and ideological bases. They also mentioned a few negative behavioral elements that have stifled the potentials Oromo elites and leadership. Accordingly, some Oromo elites struggle to claim fame

and recognition before they register any thing positive for the national cause; they engage in insulting, belittling, and defaming those Oromo nationalists who have accomplished something for their people. A few of Oromo elites have big egos for themselves and disrespect one another; they do not separate ideas from persons, messages from messengers and personal interests from the national interest.

One respondent mentioned that "Oromo politics [lacks] a more civil and intellectual discourse that helps in clearly understanding the ideological line that various groups of Oromo elites propose for the resolution of the Oromo question." Continuing his comment this respondent asserted that "failure of respecting organizational and democratic principles, lack of discipline, and failure of fulfilling ones responsibilities on the part of some Oromo political activists have led to proliferation of Oromo political organizations… In some cases, just because personal political ambition of some Oromos [are not] fulfilled within an organization, they create other splinter groups. It is also a common occurrence to see the drift of Oromo elites to one political group or another based on personal acquaintance or loyalty to political figures and not on ones' conviction on a principle or an ideology one upholds." Another respondent said, "Oromo elites are factional because they are affected by their democratic and egalitarian culture. Extreme democracy sometimes borders on anarchy. It is the culture that is affecting their activities and organizations." Identifying and studying the main causes that contribute to the development of factionalism in Oromo elites and leadership and finding an appropriate solution must be an important agenda for Oromo scholarship.

Most Oromo elites are factional because they were uprooted from their Oromo cultural roots and baptized by Abyssinian and Euro-American cultures. However, they are neither culturally Oromo nor Abyssinian nor Euro-American. The system of colonial education disarmed the Oromo elites by denying them national psychological make-up and national cultural and ideological tools. The Oromo elites have varied religious, political, educational and social experiences. Most educated Oromos have given superficial and lukewarm support for the Oromo national movement. Some of the reasons why most of them did not join the Oromo movement are their low level of political and national consciousness, lack of open and conducive national forum, lack of appropriate and effective recruitment system, the lack of charismatic and persuasive leaders who can go beyond their narrow party circles, the influence of the ideology of Ethiopianism, lack of concern for the unity and suffering of the Oromo people, and organizational ineffectiveness to persuade and attract.

Serious and responsible Oromo elites must recognize that the liberation of the Oromo people requires political unity on common denominators and principles by going beyond political boundaries and by overcoming divisions. For this political unity to emerge and become practical, open dialogue, communication, and trust are necessary. Furthermore, replacing common sense politics with research-based knowledge is essential. Without fully developing Oromummaa, Oromo elites cannot build political unity and formidable organizations. Oromo nationalist elites should be knowledgeable, accountable, and promoters of the Oromo national interest.

Oromo political leaders need to change their styles of leadership since the changing circumstances require a new approach. They need to be closely connected to the Oromo in general and the Oromo diaspora in particular by changing their attitudes about them. The methods of organizing the Oromo diaspora must be different from the way of organizing the Oromo who live under Ethiopian political slavery without the freedom of association and organization. In the diaspora, democracy should flourish among all Oromo communities and all sectors; particularly, Oromo women and youth should be democratically organized to unleash their potentials. Oromo political organizations and various Oromo diaspora communities should openly communicate to establish a global Oromo solidarity network based on effective community organizations. Ineffective Oromo organizations cannot survive in this competitive environment since they will be evaluated by what they do rather than what they say.

Internal Factors and Institutional and Organizational Issues

There are several factors that have hindered the establishment of stronger institutions and political organizations in the Oromo society. In Oromia, the Oromo people live under political slavery and are denied the right of association, organization, and the media. The ruthless Habasha political system does not tolerate the free operation of Oromo institutions and organizations in Oromia. Under these conditions, it is difficult to build institutions and organizations. However, the condition of the Oromo diaspora is completely different. The Oromo who live in the diaspora have the rights and capacities to build strong institutions and organizations. Despite the fact that they have created institutions and organizations, they could not play a decisive role in the Oromo movement because of the weaknesses of their institutions and organizations.

Most respondents identified the following internal factors for not consolidating the organizational capacity of the Oromo national movement. These factors include lack of cohesive national leadership with a practical national ideology, limited organizational and administrational capacity of the leadership, hidden competition among the leadership to the extent of using religion and locality at the cost of the national movement, lack of pragmatism in developing organizations, ideological differences, and the lack of consensus building on a common denominator.

One respondent pointed out that "it is the lack of a well developed overriding Oromian national objective and national ideology that have prevented Oromo nationalist organizations from consolidating and coordinating the liberation struggle." On a similar line, another respondent said that we Oromo elites "never reclaimed our lost traditional political system or developed a new or adopted one. Without building a national political system in which every group plays its own game (as the five *gada* parties did) that serves the interests of our society, dreaming to build a nation is a paradox." He also added that, "without a strong national unity, without unity of purpose, without trust and common feelings, without a clear visionary leadership, and without the existence of a common center, Oromo elites cannot consolidate their organizational capacity to politically and militarily challenge their enemy."

The Oromo political leadership has never been well connected with educated Oromos. According to one respondent, "Oromo students in North America and Europe who took initiatives and did meager diplomatic activities were frustrated and even dismantled systematically. The Oromo Students Union in Europe became a mass organization of the OLF in 1985. Fifteen years later it was begging the OLF leadership for guidance, and in 2005 it was systematically dismantled." The OLF foreign office mismanaged its relations with the organization of Oromos in North America in the 1990s, and created conflict between the OLF and the Oromo diaspora community.

Oromos in North America have had their own unique problems. Some respondents assert that Oromos in the diaspora still practice their culture and traditions which they have brought from colonial Oromia, rely on oral traditions and communications, and practice little written and formal documentation (such as minutes, record-keeping, documentation of decisions, follow-ups, etc.) that are indispensable for modern organizations and institutions. Oromo diaspora communities are amorphous and could not build strong institutions and organizations on clear objectives and clear lines of accountability for decision-making, resource utilization and results.

There are other reasons for the lack of effective institutions and organizations in Oromo diaspora groups; these reasons include the lack of adequate Oromo media or resources of information, deficiency of commitment from Oromo political, academic, and religious organizations for the well being of the Oromo community, low level of national consciousness, lack of cohesive national leadership with commitment and determination, lack of common political and national vision, the misuse of civic and religious institutions, duplication of

responsibility or the absence of division of tasks, division and conflict within the Oromo community, perpetual attack on Oromo heritage and psychology by the enemy and their Oromo collaborators, and ideological confusion that equates personal interest with the national interest

One respondent identified that, "the decentralized nature of Oromo society and culture has been acting against centralization and hierarchical authority and control. It has been easier for the Oromos to form series of small organizations instead of an overarching strong umbrella organization." Of course, like in any nation, decentralization without an overarching political centralization has been very risky for Oromos. One of the main reasons why the Oromo people lost their sovereignty by the alliance of Ethiopian colonialism and global imperialism was the decentralization of *gada* authorities during the nineteenth century.

After dismissing almost all Oromo liberation fronts as irrelevant, one respondent recognized the OLF as a quasi-liberation front. In his words, "the OLF was a quasi-organization, a daboo, where every participant did as … [he or she wished]. On top of this, OLF meant the polit-bureau of the central committee. It was only these two bodies that were responsible to move the organization from food distribution to commanding the army, and … administrating the bureau work. The structure was only on the paper. There were no real members except in the army. People who were associated with the organization were called "nama keenya," our men, to avoid the use of the word member; the leaders were very far away from the grassroots." He continued to say, "You cannot simply get up and mobilize national human resources like a burial ceremony. Some preconditions must be there to start with. There existed no organizational nervous system that connects the brain, the leadership, and the grassroots, [and] the people together. An organization is a group of people clubbed together to do something which has a clear vision and to achieve this vision [it must have] elaborated rules and regulations in its constitution."

Most educated Oromos have not contributed to the Oromo national movement since they have preferred to work for the Ethiopian system or sided with Ethiopian organizations. One respondent commented that most of "the educated [Oromos] abroad or at home have not practically joined the struggle… They [are] rather committed in fault findings in the works of those who committed their lives for the cause. The great majority of the educated Oromos … have not directly committed themselves to the challenge of the organizational problems." The respondent further says that many of them "have been serving … the [Ethiopian] state machine, the arch enemy of the Oromo people's struggle. This has weakened the political and military organizational capacity of the camp of the Oromo struggle."

Since the Oromo movement has not yet militarily, organizationally, and politically challenged the internal and regional enemies of the Oromo nation, the international community is not yet pressured to fairly deal with the Oromo national issue. Because of internal divisions and the lack of understanding of international politics, the Oromo diaspora community has failed to be an international ambassador for Oromia. One respondent noted as follows: "Some diaspora elites are so entangled in petty local and regional politics and never [think] about Oromo issues past the local or regional boundaries. The political leadership has failed to mobilize the elites for lack of aggressive approach to recruit them. Most of the elites shy away from fully participating in the Oromo politics."

The Oromo political leadership must study the connection between the internal factors of Oromo society and the capacity of Oromo organizations. Without mobilizing the majority of educated Oromos by resolving the contradictions among them through developing *Oromummaa* among this section of Oromo society, the Oromo movement cannot fully resolve its internal problems. The Oromo political leadership should develop new political approaches that can attract the educated section of Oromo society to join the Oromo national movement. To accomplish this political objective, the leadership needs to reinvent itself through developing new visions, tactics, and strategies.

Underutilization of human Resources and the Inability to mobilize the nation

The human resources of Oromo nationalists in the forms of labor, knowledge, time and money are underutilized in the Oromo national movement. Seven respondents mentioned that the condition of the Oromo struggle does not allow them to fully contribute to the struggle. The reasons these respondents provided include the loose organizational nature of Oromo society, ineffective ways of conducting organizational affairs, a vague and ambiguous relationship between community organizations and fronts due to a confused and unclear division of labor, the inability of fronts to enlist the support of professionals in their areas of specialization, the failure to establish a functioning relationship between fronts and their constituencies lack of a strong national organization that can mobilize Oromo human capital, lack of clear policies and guidelines on several issues from the leadership, conflicting and contradictory messages from the Oromo political leadership, lack of confidence in leadership, and unhealthy competition for leadership.

What we learn from the majority of these respondents is that Oromo organizations have not yet developed the capacity to fully utilize the material and intellectual resources of their members, supporters, and sympathizers. Without recognizing the existence of this major problem and sufficiently learning about it in order to seek a practical solution, no front can effectively and efficiently advance the Oromo national struggle towards success.

Our enemies, because of their organizational effectiveness and their regional and international support, have mobilized and used the economic and human resources of our nation; they have accomplished these objectives through a brutal military force and ideological manipulation. Without developing a comparable political and military strength and ideological maturity, the Oromo movement cannot effectively challenge Ethiopian settler colonialism and its local, regional, and international supporters.

Most Oromo elites and leaders lack the clear understanding of these problems; hence, they engage in divisive politics, join the enemy camp, or remain passive. They are not coherent, persuasive and inspiring. They are too egocentric and poor at conflict management. As one respondent pointed out, "Oromo political leadership and elites themselves are not well organized and they have no communication network among themselves"; consequently, they could not effectively mobilize the human and material resources of the nation.

The Oromo political leadership must recognize that their main role is to enable the Oromo people by organizing them to fight and liberate themselves. It is a must that the leadership mobilizes and coordinates the Oromo human and material resources for the national cause. A few leaders and thousands of guerrilla fighters cannot liberate forty million Oromos. So the leadership needs to design new political and organizational strategies and approaches that can mobilize the entire nation and its sectors, such as women, farmers, workers, youth, intellectuals and various professional groups to be ready for self-defense.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Oromo Fronts and Political Parties

Independent Oromo political organizations have commitment for the Oromo national cause despite many years of mounting criticisms against them; they are sacrificing and committing themselves for the collective well-being and betterment of the Oromo nation; they are interested in developing the Oromo national heritage, such as culture, history, language. Further, they have interests in developing Oromummaa, and they have made the Oromo struggle alive. One respondent noted that the "consistent commitment of the OLF to the struggle under even difficult circumstances has made it to enjoy the support of an overwhelming majority of the Oromo people."

Unfortunately, these organizations have the following weaknesses. They have not yet built strong communities and institutions that back up the struggle; these organizations have failed to organize educated Oromos in the diaspora to seek constructive ideas and support from

them; they have also failed to manage and resolve internal conflicts properly in a timely manner. Some of them pursue their own political interests at the expense of the Oromo collective national interest; they lack long-term visions and flexibility as necessitated by change in regional and global politics. One respondent pointed out that these organizations disseminate inconsistent political messages, and they do not have mechanisms of measuring progress; they do not have a sense of urgency of time in what they are trying to do. Oromo political organizations are different from the fronts and parties of other societies because the struggle of the Oromo people has more complex problems since the colonial state is located in Oromia. Most of the Oromo are rural, scattered and uneducated people; they are religiously, regionally and culturally diverse. All these factors have increased the complexity and the problem of the Oromo national struggle. The international community has a special relation with Ethiopia and it has not even recognized the existence of the Oromo and Oromo people until recently. The Oromo national struggle does not have regional and global supporters. There is not any colonized society that has liberated itself without substantive regional or global supporters.

Urgent Measures and Recommendations

Recognizing that all Oromo elites and leaders have an ideological problem must be priority. Before we criticize others and their organizations, every Oromo should ask himself or herself to evaluate his or her contributions to the Oromo national struggle. Saving the Oromo nation from historical shame requires that the Oromo elites and leaders recognize and agree that they have failed to pull out the nation from its ideological, organizational, and leadership crises. If we care for the Oromo people, we must stop any unproductive feud against one another over non-existent political power and think about the survival of the nation; we must work as a united political force. It is only then that we can fully and effectively mobilize all available Oromo material and human resources for the Oromo national struggle.

Developing Oromummaa as the key Oromo ideology and national ethos, which all Oromo individuals, institutions, and organizations will use, and building the Oromo national capacity are essential. Increasing organizational and institutional accountability, effectiveness and efficiency, and evaluating performance are also necessary. Individuals and organizations should be evaluated on what they propose and do. The Oromo national movement needs specialization and professionalization. The processes of specialization and professionalization will assist to reframe Oromo national issues in practical ways. We need to develop four activist group leaders or task forces in our national movement. The first task force may be called the Oromummaa Project Group. This group will engage in developing the culture and ideology of Oromummaa as national and international projects. This group will research and develop various Oromo social and cultural experiences as the self-representation of the Oromo nation to develop public policies that will help further flourish Oromummaa as national and transnational projects. This approach will help mobilize potential constituents and supporters for the Oromo national project on national, regional, and international levels.

The second task force may be called the Human Resource Mobilization Group. This group will search for new ways to end the underutilization of Oromo human resources in general and that of Oromo activists in particular. This group will suggest steps that can help in building the networks of Oromo civic and political organizations. This task group will also develop ways of forming an Oromo national solidarity network. The Oromo solidarity network will increase Oromo interactions among themselves and with numbers of actors engaged in transnational activities; Oromo activists need to go beyond physical, social, and cultural distances to persuade civil society actors in every society or country to influence states and international organizations. This is only possible by creating an Oromo transnational solidarity network by using religions, cultures, politics and other activities. Both national and transnational solidarity networks must

work hand in hand as a powerhouse of knowledge, information and policies to inform the Oromo national movement on national and global levels.

The third task force may be called the Organizational Capacity Task Group. By engaging in organizational and behavioral research, this group will develop ways of building culture of organizational accountability and effectiveness. It can also help in developing the procedures of performance evaluation of activists, leaders and organizations. This group will study the weaknesses and strengths of the Oromo movement, and suggest ways of building strengths and eliminating or reducing weaknesses. This group can also help in developing ways of improving the habits and behavior of activists and leaders by suggesting means of increasing their performance in the national movement.

The fourth task group can be called the Public Policy Group. This group will work on national strategies and security issues. By studying regional and global politics in relation to the national interest of Oromia, this group will develop possible political scenarios for the Oromo national movement.

OSA (Oromo Studies Association), as a scholarly organization, can develop these policy issues for the Oromo national movement. Therefore, the committee recommends that OSA courageously take these challenges to form these four task groups under its umbrella. It also recommends that all Oromo political and civic organizations cooperate with OSA to help in the formation and activities of these task groups. These task groups should persuade Oromo organizations to use their work in broadening and deepening the Oromo national movement. Finally, the committee suggests that the findings and recommendations of these four task groups should be presented at every OSA annual conference.

Chapter 16

Commemorating Fallen Oromo Heroes and Heroines[135]

Why do we commemorate this national day? What is the importance of having heroes and heroines in Oromo society? What criteria distinguish Oromo individuals who have sacrificed their lives for the liberation of their people and their country? There are five major reasons why we commemorate this day. First, this day allows us to remember those Oromo heroines and heroes who sacrificed their lives to restore Oromo culture, identity, and human dignity that were wounded by Ethiopian colonialism. Second, this commemoration day assists us to recognize the dialectical connection between martyrdom, bravery, patriotism and *Oromummaa*. Third, this day reminds us that we have historical obligations to continue the struggle that Oromo martyrs started until victory. Fourth, it causes us to recognize that Oromo heroes and heroines are still fighting in Oromia today. Fifth, this commemoration day reminds us that Oromo liberation requires heavy sacrifices, and those who have given their lives for our freedom are our revolutionary models which have created a dignified Oromo history.

The Price of Restoring Oromo Culture, Identity and Human Dignity

Until Oromo heroes and heroines created the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) by paying ultimate sacrifices, Oromo peoplehood, culture, language, and history were dumped into the trashcan of Ethiopian history for more than a century. When the OLF was established, these heroes and heroines manifested their cumulative experiences of Oromo patriotism and bravery. These heroes and heroines had clearly understood the significance of Oromo culture, history, language, and identity in building *Oromummaa* and victorious consciousness to consolidate the Oromo national struggle for achieving Oromian statehood and democracy. They mobilized Oromos to understand and embrace Oromummaa wholeheartedely. Consequently, *Oromummaa* has been watered and flourished by the tears of ordinary Oromos and the blood of Oromo martyrs.

In addition to committing genocide on Oromos between the 1860s and the 1930s by massive and indiscriminate killings, hand and breast cutting, hunger and starvation, disease, slavery, and resource expropriation, Ethiopian colonialists partitioned Oromo identity into colonial regions and attacked Oromo peoplehood by changing their collective name into Galla. The enemies of the Oromo people labeled Oromo history, culture and religion as primitive and useless in order to destroy and replace them with that of Ethiopians. The ultimate sacrifice that OLF leaders and members paid for with their lives enabled Oromos to restore their collective name, Oromo, and the name of their country, Oromia, and to initiate the process of the revitalization of Oromo identity, culture, and language.

I cannot list the names of hundreds of thousands of Oromo sons and daughters who have sacrificed their lives and built the Oromo national movement by spilling their blood and scattering their bones in Oromian forests, valleys, mountains, and Somalia deserts as well as in Ethiopian prisons. Furthermore, those Oromo leaders and members who by luck have survived

[135] Paper presented at the Washington and Atlanta Oromo Communities , April 14 and 21 (respectively), 2007.

and continued the difficult and complex struggle deserve recognition and respect for what they have done for their people. Without them, the multiple enemies of the Oromo nation would have destroyed the OLF a long time ago. The Oromo leaders and members, who ignited the fire of *Oromummaa* or Oromo nationalism, whether dead or alive, have been the foundation and pillar of the Oromo national movement.

The history of the restoration of the names, such as Oromo and Oromia, has been written in the blood of Oromo heroines and heroes. That is why the majority of Oromos who realize this fact have accepted the OLF as their leader, hope, protector, and guiding star. Consequently, the fallen Oromo heroines and heroes have made the OLF an embodiment of Oromo survival and victorious consciousness. It is not an exaggeration to say that because of the Oromo heroes and heroines who have built the OLF the sleeping great nation, Oromia, has awoken. As a result, there is no government, even with its terrorism that can defeat the victorious consciousness of the Oromo people. The blood and flesh of Oromo heroes and heroines are flourishing *Oromummaa*.

Courage, Death, and *Oromummaa*

Agitating, educating, organizing, and mobilizing a colonized and dehumanized nation for liberation requires courage, determination, bravery and self-sacrifice without fear of suffering and death in the hands of the enemy and their collaborators. Several decades ago when Oromo heroes and heroines had initiated the Oromo national struggle, even to mention the name Oromo was a serious political crime. Nobody could dare to mention the names such as Oromia and the OLF. Today because of the sacrifices that our heroines and heroes have paid, our enemies are forced to abandon the name Galla and to recognize the names Oromo and Oromia.

Even Oromo collaborators such as the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO) claim that they are Oromos and they administer Oromia. However, they merchandize the Oromo issues to make money and live luxurious lifestyles. Today, there are also members of the Oromo Diaspora who have engaged in such dehumanizing activities by ignoring the sacrifices Oromo heroes and heroines have paid to restore their wounded humanity. The Oromo heroes and heroines have rejected being the tools of their enemies and abandoned the idea of promoting their personal interests at the cost of their nation. They have left their families, wives, husbands, houses, professions, children, and other important things by choosing Oromo human dignity and freedom.

By making these kinds of difficult choices, they have confronted suffering and death. They have been the movers and shakers of Oromo history; they have opened a new historical chapter in our history and showed to us new possibilities by taking risky and courageous actions. Oromummaa has developed from such activities and it is flowering because of such courageous activities. Today, Oromo heroes and heroines are engaged in the struggle in Oromia; members of the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), Oromo students and other activists are our contemporary heroes and heroines who are intensifying the struggle. All Oromos all over the world who demonstrate their support and sympathy by contributing whatever they can for these brave men and women are also engaged in patriotic and brave activities of blossoming *Oromummaa*.

Unfortunately, there are some individual Oromos who are trying to destroy Oromo bravery and patriotism by receiving positions and money from the enemy of the Oromo people. For such individuals, *Oromummaa*, Oromo freedom and human dignity are meaningless since they worship money, luxuries lifestyles, and easy access to power. Since some Oromos lack political consciousness such mercenary Oromos can easily mislead them. Mercenary Oromos are the opposite of Oromo heroes and heroines. There are millions of Oromos between these two extremes.

There are three kinds of Oromos today. The first group of Oromos has moral and political courage and struggle to enable the Oromo nation to achieve human liberation and democracy. The second group of Oromos is those Oromos who do not hesitate to sell their brothers and

sisters for money by joining the Habasaha camp. The third kind of Oromos is passive Oromos who are blinded by ignorance or religion and do not participate in the Oromo struggle for national liberation. We, Oromo nationalists, should isolate the second kind of Oromos from Oromo society and educate and mobilize the third kind of Oromos to join the Oromo national movement. This is the continuation of the work of fallen Oromo heroes and heroines.

Remembering Martyrs and Fulfilling Historical Obligations

Since Oromo heroines and heroes have died while courageously fighting for the liberation of their people, we should not let their efforts and lives waste in vain. They were accomplished individuals in whatever professions they were involved. They were among the best and brightest Oromos who were proud of their nation and its culture, history and humanity. They preferred to fight against the injustice of Ethiopian colonialism and decided to face any consequences. Following the footsteps of these heroes and heroines, today millions of Oromos in Oromia are fulfilling their historical obligations by fighting through cultural, political and military fronts against Meles Zenawi's authoritarian-terrorist regime.

While the OLA is confronting the enemy of the Oromo nation in Oromian valleys, forests, and mountains, the qubee generation is confronting the enemy in garrison cities, school compounds, and college/university campuses. Other Oromo nationalists are also paying necessary sacrifices in money, time, expertise and other contributions by supporting the OLF and the OLA. What should be the contributions of Oromos in the diaspora?

We, Oromos in the diaspora, should follow the footsteps of the fallen and surviving Oromo heroes and heroes by contributing anything we can to support the Oromo national struggle. If fallen Oromos have paid with their lives to liberate us, how can we fail to contribute our time, money and expertise to liberate our beloved country, Oromia, and ourselves as well? How can we sleep when our mothers, daughters and sisters are raped? How can we be at peace when genocide is committed on our people? How can we live when our fathers and mothers are disrespected and beaten? We, Oromos in the diaspora, must be the backbone of the Oromo national movement financially. Since our people live under Ethiopian political slavery and because there is no country that supports the Oromo struggle, we must fulfill our historical obligations by supporting the Oromo national struggle.

Recognizing Contemporary Heroes and Heroines

All Oromos who contribute to the Oromo national struggle in every capacity are our revolutionary heroes and heroines; they are making Oromo history. Specifically those who are engaging in organizing Oromos in Oromia and engaging in the Oromo national movement in general and the armed struggle in particular are the most dedicated and effective heroes and heroines since they are engaging in risky activities with courage and patriotism. These committed nationalists cannot effectively accomplish the mission of the Oromo national struggle without moral, political, ideological and material supports from the Oromo diaspora. Therefore, conscious and committed elements of the Oromo Diaspora are the blood and sinew of the Oromo national struggle.

Recognizing this important fact, the Tigrayan authoritarian-Terrorist regime has hired hundreds of mercenary Oromos who are against the Oromo struggle by spreading rumors against the OLF and its members, collecting information, attacking prominent personalities, spreading regional or religious divisions, and by recruiting innocent Oromos to join the OPDO. There are websites and Internets that have been created for these purposes. Oromo nationalists should not be quiet and allow these mercenaries to undermine the contributions of our heroes and heroines. We must defend our cause and movement.

The Importance of Having Heroines and Heroes

Any society that does not recognize and celebrate its heroines and heroes does not have an effective mechanism of measuring achievement and excellence. In Oromo society, during the practice of the *gada* system, bravery, patriotism, oratory, cultural knowledge and expertise in leadership, organization and warfare were highly appreciated. As soon as Oromo society lost its independence and came under Ethiopian colonialism, the Ethiopian colonialists created submissive leaders who had no respect for *gada* principles, *saffu* (ethical and moral order), and social justice. The OPDO is the contemporary submissive group that does not care about the welfare of Oromo society.

Members of this group engage in destruction of Oromo society by following the order of the Tigrayan-led regime. The Ethiopian colonial system has been destroying the Oromo heroines and heroes while promoting the most despicable elements of Oromo society as its leaders. Without restoring the authentic Oromo heroes and heroines to their historical place, the Oromo nation cannot achieve its liberation and develop itself by overcoming hunger, illiteracy, diseases, poverty and underdevelopment. Those Oromos who do not protect the Oromo national interest cannot be Oromo heroines and heroes.

Oromo heroines and heroines create new possibilities and opportunities for their people; they show their people that no other people are better than them and no other culture, history, and language are better than that of the Oromo. By demonstrating their bravery, talent and expertise, they prove that Oromos are not an inferior people. They teach their people that Ethiopian colonialism has only brought to them temporary defeat and it can be overthrown by the Oromo national struggle. They have the capacity to unleash the potentials of Oromos that have been chained by the ideologies of colonialism, imperialism, and racism. They equip their people with the knowledge of liberation by challenging the knowledge of domination that distorts the worldview of the Oromo people through ideology. Our victory is inevitable because the blood and flesh of the fallen Oromo heroines and heroes have produced young Oromo revolutionaries who are engaged in carrying out the mission of the Oromo national struggle.

Martyrdom, Revolutionary Models, and Missions

Most of Oromo heroines and heroes were philosophers, military leaders, cultural and religious experts, merchants, students, farmers and agricultural experts, teachers, and doctors. It is a must that we learn about the lives and worldviews of these individuals. First, we must collect their names, photos, stories, and study about them. Second, we must write series of articles and books on them. We must appreciate Burqaa for starting to work on these issues. Third, we must create a website on which we exchange ideas on these heroes and heroines. Fourth, we must financially support these projects and contemporary heroes and heroines who are fighting and dying in Oromia.

We must emulate our true leaders and use this emulation as a single standard against which we measure our contemporary and future leaders. The spirits of these heroines and heroes only expect us to pay necessary sacrifices to fulfill the missions they died for. Only if we fulfill our historical obligations can we liberate Oromia and our people. Victory belongs to those who plan strategies and tactics and take concrete actions.

Conclusion

Our fallen heroines and heroes were the shining stars of the Oromo struggle that blossomed Oromummaa by their blood and flesh. Our martyrs have lost their lives while dreaming and fighting for freedom, justice, democracy and development of their people and their country. We have moral and national responsibilities to purse the objectives for which our heroines and

heroes sacrificed their lives by any capacity we can. Not contributing to the Oromo national movement is tantamount to walk on the blood and flesh of these martyrs.

The Oromo national movement is a very dangerous project. Tens of thousands of our people have been imprisoned, tortured, raped, and received all forms of abuse from successive Ethiopian governments in general and that of the Meles Zenawi in particular. The Tigrayan-led government has been systematically targeting and killing all Oromo leaders and those who have potentials of leadership while promoting the most despicable elements of Oromo society and the children of colonial settlers as leaders of the Oromo nation. The more this criminal regime engages in genocide, the more the Oromo people have rejected this regime and its puppets. Particularly, Oromo students have demonstrated their courage, love, and respect they have for fallen Oromo heroines and heroes by rejecting this racist and terrorist regime. Recently, a few Oromo generals, colonels, and hundreds of Oromo soldiers from the Ethiopian colonial army are defecting and joining the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA).

While commemorating our fallen heroes and heroines, we must also remember our current ones who are engaging in the bitter struggle and those who are suffering in Ethiopian prisons. We must double our support for the OLA that is engaging in implementing the missions of the fallen Oromo heroines and heroes in Oromian forests, valleys, mountains, and Ethiopian garrison cities. We should sustain the spirits of our fallen heroes and heroines by taking concrete actions everyday.

It is our national responsibility to educate, mobilize and recruit passive or unconscious Oromo individuals to join the Oromo national movement. Such actions must start in families by educating and training children; husbands and wives must teach one another and their children the essence of *Oromoummaa*. The spirits of our heroes and heroines require that all of us must be grass-root leaders who engage in a systematic struggle to fight those agents of the enemy or those misled individuals who undermine the Oromo national struggle intentionally or unintentionally.

All Oromo nationalists must be cadres, teachers, students, leaders, followers, fighters, financiers, ideologues, organizers, defenders and promoters of the Oromo cause. We should not keep quiet when certain individuals attack our organizations, leaders, communities and Oromo peoplehood to satisfy their troubled ego or their masters. If we do some of these activities in our daily lives, the spirits of our fallen heroes and heroines will survive through our actions and lead us to march to our national victory.

Chapter 17

The Oromo National Movement: Where was it and where is it now?[136]

The main objective of this paper is to mark the initial stage of the Oromo national struggle, assess its achievements, and hint its future direction. Until the birth of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), which mainly emerged from the political experiences of the Macha-Tulama Self-Help Association, Oromo peoplehood, culture, language, and history were dumped into the trashcan of Ethiopian history for almost one century. In addition to committing genocide on Oromos between the 1860s and the 1930s by massive and indiscriminate killings, hand and breast cutting, hunger and starvation, disease, slavery, and resource expropriation, Ethiopian colonialists partitioned Oromo identity into colonial regions and attacked Oromo peoplehood by changing their collective name into Galla. The ultimate sacrifice that OLF leaders and members have paid with their lives enabled Oromos to restore their collective name, Oromo, and the name of their country, Oromia, and to initiate the process of the revitalization of Oromo identity, culture, and language.

A few of the best, brightest, farsighted, and brave Oromo individuals who were brought together from different corners of Oromia in the 1960s and 1970s by colonial education, bureaucracy, and commerce created the OLF. Leaders like Haile Mariam Gamada, Elemo Qilixu, Ramadan Hussein Kalil, Mamo Mazamir, Tadasa Biru, Ahmed Buna, Magarsa Bari, Baro Tumsa, Demise Techane, Yigazu Benti, Aboma Mitiku, Mohee Abdo and others paid with their lives to lay the foundation and form and build the OLF. In this paper, I cannot list the names of hundreds of thousands of Oromo sons and daughters who have built and maintained this organization by spilling their blood and scattering their bones in Oromian forests, valleys, mountains, and Somalia deserts as well as in Ethiopian prisons. Furthermore, those Oromo leaders and members who by luck have survived and continued the difficult and complex struggle deserve recognition and respect for what they have done for their people. Without them, the multiple enemies of the Oromo nation would have destroyed the OLF a long time ago. The Oromo leaders and members, who ignited the fire of *Oromummaa* or Oromo nationalism, whether they were dead or are alive, have been the foundation and the pillar of the Oromo national movement.

The history of the restoration of the names, such as Oromo and Oromia, has been written in the blood of Oromo nationalists and revolutionaries. That is why the majority of Oromos who realize this fact have accepted the OLF as their leader, hope, protector, and guiding star. Consequently, the OLF has become an embodiment of Oromo survival and victorious consciousness. Because of this, the enemies of the Oromo people from all sides attack this organization by magnifying its weaknesses and hiding its strengths in order to discredit it so that they can continue to dominate and exploit Oromo economic resources. Despite all these

[136] Paper presented at the OLF Semi-Annual Conference, March 3 to 4, 2007, Seattle, Washington.

challenges, the OLF has survived, inviting and mobilizing the entire Oromo nation to participate in its national liberation struggle. Since the invitation card was written in Oromo blood, most Oromos have accepted the invitation and declared that "ABOn dhaba keenya." [The OLF is our organization.] In the absence of international support and sanctuary from neighboring countries this organization has achieved this great victory by relying on its people.

It is not an exaggeration to say that because of the OLF the sleeping great nation, Oromia, has awoken. As a result, there is no government, even with its terrorism that can defeat the victorious consciousness of the Oromo people. If any people are politically conscious and organized, it is impossible for any political force to dominate and control them for a long period of time. I can confidently assert that most Oromos are politically conscious today, yet this political consciousness has not been fully transformed into organization capacity.

I have been participating in, observing, and studying the Oromo national movement led by the OLF since the mid-1970s. It was a great opportunity for me to have the chance to listen and discuss in Finfinnee with a few firebrand young Oromo leaders who came from different corners of Oromia and who spoke in *Afaan Oromoo* with beautiful variety of accents. I recognized then both the diversity and unity of the Oromo nation and the beauty of the Oromo language and culture.

In the atmosphere of Oromo political consciousness and cultural renaissance, the OLF was born. At the beginning, the name OLF was a mystery for most Oromos and others. Most educated Oromos did not believe that a few nationalist and revolutionary Oromos could dare to embark on this dangerous national project. Such educated Oromos lacked self-confidence and were influenced by the propaganda of the oppressors of the Oromo nation.

The OLF has been feared and hated by the enemies of the Oromo nation since its birth. Both the Haile Selassie and Mengistu governments decided not to mention the name OLF and called it "Sargo Gab" (enemy infiltrators) because they thought that the OLF name would attract the Oromo people, the largest nation in the Ethiopian empire. What was amazing was also that the Somali government hated the OLF and killed or imprisoned a few of its leaders, members, and sympathizers because it wanted to incorporate some Oromo territories into Somalia. After the OLF was born, it has survived these difficult and challenging conditions.

From the beginning, the OLF focused on five major activities: (1) exposing the nightmare of colonial defeat and building the dream of victory, (2) raising political consciousness and overcoming dehumanization in Oromo society, (3) developing the process of Oromo self-actualization, (4) mobilizing resources and building organizational capacity, and (5) developing the foundation of a new state to liberate and develop Oromo society. As we shall see below, these are serious and challenging tasks that the OLF and the Oromo nation were and still are confronted with in their march toward liberation and democracy.

Exposing the Nightmare of Colonial Defeat and Building the Dream of Victory

After their colonization by Abyssinia/Ethiopia, Oromos were told that they were Ethiopians who were also Galla, which embodied the characteristics of slaves, pagans, savages, servants, and the inferior. A few Oromos were assimilated as collaborators by associating themselves with Ethiopia by accepting Amhara culture and language and distancing themselves from the Oromo identity. Some Oromos were confused between the identities of Ethiopia and the so-called Galla, and tried to avoid the latter by identifying themselves through the colonial regions or by calling themselves Muslims or Christians. The process of de-Oromization was very effective in urban areas where the colonial settlers and their collaborators were concentrated. This process was also intensified in schools and churches.

In schools, the history of Amharas and Tigrayans and their warlords was glorified while that of Oromos was either ignored or denigrated. A few Oromos were given the opportunity to

gain an education in exchange for being used as intermediaries between the Ethiopian state and Oromo society. As the number of Oromo students increased and as more students joined colonial schools from rural areas knowing their Oromo culture and language, resistance to colonial education and colonialism increased. Some of these students reached maturity in the 1960s and 1970s and began to build the organizational capacity to resist Ethiopian colonialism. Politically conscious Oromos, such as bureaucrats, army officers, soldiers, students, merchants, and farmers established the Macha-Tulama Self-Help Association in the early 1960s. At the same period, the Bale Oromos initiated armed struggle against the Ethiopian state. However, the association and the armed struggle were suppressed.

In the late 1960s, the Oromo student magazine Kana Beekta? (Do you know this?) was created. This clandestine magazine provided Oromo intellectuals with information for a period of time. In addition, various important historical documents and political pamphlets were secretly produced and circulated among Oromos in the late 1960s and the early 1970s. One such document, "The Oromos: Voice against Tyranny," appeared in May 1971. It raised the central issue of the Oromo as the colonial question and hinted at the direction of the future Oromo political agenda. The birth of the OLF in 1973 facilitated the gradual restoration of the Oromo cultural foundation on which Oromo peoplehood and nationalism have been constructed.

The Oromo national movement led by the OLF also produced critical scholars who took up their pens to tear down the cultural, intellectual, and historical foundations of Ethiopian colonialism. Consequently, Oromo history that was erased until the 1960s is restored; Oromos are becoming part of the global humanity. While challenging the nightmare of colonial defeat, the OLF has inculcated the dream of victory in the minds of the majority of the Oromo people. Overall, OLF leaders, members, supporters and sympathizers have engaged in the revitalization of Oromo history, culture, worldview, and language to facilitate the self-actualization of the Oromo nation, which was once erased from the world's historical records.

Raising Political Consciousness and Overcoming Dehumanization

The Ethiopian colonial system has suppressed and distorted the humanity and dignity of the Oromo people. Consequently, a few Oromos have lost their humanity and become agents of the Ethiopian colonial system, turning against their people for money and luxurious lifestyles. One of the great challenges of the OLF has been transforming Oromos who have lost their dignity and humanity by the brutal attack of the Ethiopian colonial system. The dehumanized Oromos who have become agents of Ethiopian colonialism have tried to be more Ethiopian than Amharas and Tigrayans, and some of them have never hesitated to attack the Oromo national movement. Such Oromos have imprisoned or killed their brothers and sisters with impunity by becoming the agents of the Ethiopian government. This is what OPDO members are doing to Oromos today. They do this to make their Tigrayan masters happy and to enjoy luxurious lifestyles at the cost of Oromo lives. Until the Oromo society develops an internal mechanism to control these collaborators, it will be very difficult to consolidate the Oromo national movement.

The Ethiopian colonial state has destroyed any possible independent Oromo leadership and created an Oromo collaborative class. For more than a century, Oromo society has been denied the opportunity to create its own leadership. Successive Ethiopian governments have created a parasitic or dependent leadership that lost its humanity and self-respect. The emergence of the OLF as an independent Oromo leadership threatens this parasitic leadership. The Oromo national struggle attempts to cut this cancerous umbilical cord that connects Oromo society to Ethiopian colonialism. One of the weaknesses of the Oromo national movement is the lack of strategy and capacity to uproot this parasitic leadership that serves the interest of the Ethiopian colonial state at the cost of the Oromo nation.

There are also other Oromos who lack political consciousness; such Oromos have lost hope and become fatalist and passive. They do not know that they have power to change their

status. The process of releasing Oromos from the chains of the Ethiopian colonialism involves developing victorious political consciousness and self-actualization. Releasing the potentials of passive Oromos is required to mobilize all resources and energize the Oromo national movement. This national movement needs to develop policy initiatives to help develop Oromummaa as a victorious consciousness in all sectors of Oromo society.

Developing the Process of Oromo Self-actualization

Those Oromos who have developed a victorious consciousness and have engaged in the process of self-actualization believe that regardless of what happens to them as individuals, their people can liberate themselves through persistence and harsh struggle. They believe that the Oromo people have the power to liberate themselves regardless of endless problems the Oromo national movement faces. They also believe that the Oromo cause is not for sale and not for individual advancement at the cost of the Oromo nation. Most OLF members who have the highest form of victorious consciousness have engaged in armed struggle and paid ultimate sacrifices with their lives. Others have paid in time, energy, money and other endeavors to liberate their nation from the yoke of colonial oppression and exploitation.

The OLF promises to lead the Oromo people to regain their country and to restore their democratic political system known as gada. Most Oromos believe in these promises. Why it is important to have a country in which you will have a democracy? The assumption is that if the OLF facilitates the process of liberation and lays the foundation of a democratic government, the Oromo people will regain the freedom of self-actualization through education, security, peace and development. Most Oromo nationalists believe like their ancestors who had enjoyed freedom under the *gada* system, they will have the freedom to self-expression without any restriction, the freedom to form and change governments, the freedom to glorify heroes and heroines and control traitors, the freedom to rebuild Oromo democratic institutions on the graveyards of colonial institutions, and the freedom to build educational institutions that will train all Oromo children with scientific knowledge without discrimination on the bases of religion, region, gender, class, and other categories.

The OLF needs to develop a new policy to overcome more effectively the dehumanization of some Oromos and release their human potentials for liberation. The more Oromos become politically conscious, the more they will involve in the Oromo struggle by engaging in building organizational networks. Transforming the political consciousness of Oromos into organizational capacity is one of the most serious challenges that are facing OLF. This organization has focused for three decades on restoring Oromo identity and developing Oromo-centric political consciousness. Since these objectives are partially met, the remaining main step is to build the OLF organizational capacity to replace colonial institutions in Oromia. As a self-reliant organization, the OLF needs to mobilize its human resources to build itself. The complete self-actualization of Oromos and their liberation go hand in hand.

Mobilizing of Resources and Building Organizational Capacity

Despite the fact that there are still dehumanized Oromos who serve the enemy of the Oromo people by betraying the Oromo national cause, most Oromos have started the process of self-actualization by endorsing the Oromo national struggle for freedom and democracy. One of the great victories of the OLF is its mobilization of Oromo students to engage in the Oromo national movement. If young people passionately support a movement, its victory is highly possible.

The OLF has also respect and support from most Oromo Diaspora groups. However, it has not yet fully developed strategies of more involving these groups in the Oromo national struggle to channel their financial and intellectual resources toward the struggle. Unfortunately, the OLF pays more attention to those negative elements or agents of the enemy who have made their main task criticizing its activities. It needs to understand that if the OLF engages in these

kinds of difficult national tasks, it will always have its admirers, supporters, as well as its critics. It is unfortunate that the more the OLF takes progressive steps, the more attacks it receives from its opposition and the agents of the enemy. The OLF should realize that this is the sign of its strength and not of its weakness. The more the OLF recognizes the differences between legitimate criticisms and negative ones and the more it positively responds to the former criticisms, the better the organization will be. The OLF should be ready to entertain genuine criticisms to overcome its shortcomings.

We know that the OLF is facing a monumental task in mobilizing about forty million Oromos and their human and financial resources to build their organizational capacity. Involving most Oromos in their national struggle in every capacity requires multiple and complex tasks. Without dealing with these issues, the OLF cannot accomplish its historical mission: liberating the Oromo nation and transforming Oromia into statehood. I suggest that the OLF should engage in self-evaluation and self-transformation while consolidating its achievements and mapping the future direction. The processes of self-evaluation and self-transformation can change OLF's organizational culture and values.

Oromo organizational culture and values cannot be changed without transforming Oromo self-concepts at the individual, interpersonal, and collective levels. The Oromo political leadership as well as the population as a whole must adopt these changes. Members of the Oromo political leadership need to be effective political leaders who can engage in the processes of cognitive liberation and self-emancipation; they must struggle to develop themselves and their followers' personal leadership skills such as self-control, discipline, ability to communicate, and a deep sense of social obligation and commitment. Effective leaders have the capacity to understand that the oppressed are capable of self-change through educational and popular participation in the struggle. These leaders believe in a democratic conversation and recognize that leaders and followers possess both "leading" and "led" selves.

The combination of the processes of cognitive liberation and self-emancipation along with liberation knowledge or expertise, technological capability or skills, modern organizational rules and codes, courage, and determination are needed to build an effective strong political leadership. Yet the Oromo leadership cannot find all these qualities from a few individuals. Therefore, the leadership needs to combine the experiences of political leadership and public intellectuals with the knowledge and commitment of the general populace to develop a liberative society based on *Oromummaa* principles. Leadership networks and chains should engage in a conversation with the Oromo people to develop a new organizational culture that facilitates the institutionalization of Oromo democratic experiences in ways that are compatible with contemporary technological and political conditions. Oromo nationalists, public intellectuals, and the Oromo people as a whole must challenge the tendency of exclusivist leadership, political anarchism, and fragmentation to reinvent the Oromo national political leadership anchored in *Oromummaa* and *gada*.

The Oromo national political leadership should practice the principles of *Oromummaa* and *gada* and at the same time must specialize and professionalize the Oromo national movement. The processes of specialization and professionalization can by reframing assist Oromo national issues in practical ways. The political leadership needs to develop four activist group leaders in the Oromo national movement. The first activist group should engage in frame bridging by identifying some Oromo sectors and organizations that share similar political concerns and grievances and facilitates ways of forming the organizational base for the Oromo national solidarity network. This group should create a common platform for Oromo sectors and organizations to form a national solidarity network to take a collective or national action to advance the Oromo national struggle. The second activist group should design cultural and political policies that help in deepening and broadening *Oromummaa* as national and international projects. Called the frame amplification group, this group research and develop various Oromo social and cultural experiences as the self-representation of the Oromo nation for

developing public policies that will further flourish *Oromummaa*. This approach will help to mobilize potential constituents and supporters for the Oromo national project on regional, national, and international levels.

The third activist leadership group should develop new principles, ideas and values for the Oromo national movement. As the frame extension group, it should focus on domestic, regional, and international policy formations. The fourth activist leadership may be called the frame transformation group. This leadership groups should study the weaknesses and strengths of the Oromo movement, and suggest fundamental transformations in the organizations of the movement. All these framing groups can help in improving the habits and behavior of the leaders, followers, and the organizational capacity of the Oromo national movement by suggesting how to improve their performance. These four leadership groups should produce new ideas or information, principles, knowledge and policies. There is no easy way to victory. The Oromo political leadership must work hard day and night to transform itself in order to lay the foundation of a new state.

Developing the Foundation of a New State

The main targets of the Oromo national struggle are to raise political consciousness, expand political networks, and mobilize human and financial resources for building organizational capacity to achieve Oromo political victory. These goals, if achieved, will allow laying the foundation of a new democratic state that can stand by itself or be part of a multinational democratic state. All political organizations within and outside of the Oromo society can be an integral part of this political process as far as they accept and practice the principles of national self-determination and democracy. The era of the authoritarian-terrorist regime of Meles is finishing, and the regime only survives because of the lack of organizational and political readiness on the part of Oromos and others. In addition, the global supporters of this regime have begun to search for an alternative government. The OLF needs to understand these challenges and develop pragmatic policies that properly and adequately address the internal politics of Oromo society and that of Ethiopian and global politics.

This new political development requires seven immediate actions: the first action is the consolidation of the OLF by expanding its leadership capacity by actively involving its members, supporters and sympathizers in developing new ideas and transforming them into concrete policies. The second action is mobilizing and organizing Oromo women and youth. The third action is to make a national call and persuade Oromo intellectuals to participate in the Oromo national struggle in the capacity they choose. The fourth action must be developing new mechanisms of consolidating the support of various Oromo diaspora communities by developing innovative organizational approaches. The fifth action must deal with the idea of building political alliance both domestically and regionally.

Although some Oromo political groups are irresponsible with their activities, the OLF needs to find ways of working with them to release their political potential. In dealing with Habasha political organizations, cautious steps must be taken since they are not ready to recognize the crimes their successive colonial states have committed against the Oromo people and others. These groups have also refused to recognize the rights of national self-determination. While allying with them on specific political goals, the OLF needs to recognize that there is always a possibility for a political and military confrontation with them in the future.

Sixth, the OLF needs to develop a positive policy that will establish a special, friendly relationship with the Southern peoples since their fate is similar to that of Oromos. The Oromo people must compromise with these colonized peoples so that Habasha political organizations cannot use them against the Oromo national movement. Seventh, while consolidating Oromo self-reliance, the OLF needs to develop a pragmatic international policy that helps in gaining moral, political, and financial support for the Oromo cause. Recognizing the importance of these

actions and implementing them will more prepare the OLF to better lay the foundation of a new state.

Concluding Remarks

The Oromo national movement led by the OLF has achieved several victories. The OLF has already begun to lay the foundation of a new state that is taking the Oromo nation into a promised land. To achieve its main political objectives, however, the OLF needs to transform its organizational capacity to confront and overcome multiple challenges it faces as a national liberation front. The Oromo liberation struggle has reached at a new stage that necessitates the OLF to evaluate its old and current policies and activities and to develop more innovative approaches to face new challenges. These new innovative approaches should include the total mobilization of the Oromo people to engage in their national liberation struggle by any means necessary to determine their national destiny. Most Oromos and their supporters must actively participate in these national efforts. If Oromo nationalists and their supporters truly believe in the liberation of the Oromo people who are targeted for destruction and genocide, they should build the OLF and its policy and army. Kan jabinaan ijaramee, kan beekumsaan qaramee, kan loolitu ciima qabutu mo'aa.

Chapter 18

The Deepening of *Oromummaa* and Oromo Politics: What should be done to accomplish victory?[137]

The deepening of *Oromummaa* while the Oromo people are facing genocide, terrorism, and massive human right violations demonstrates that the Oromo national movement is on the road to victory. The determination of Oromo nationalists in fighting for their rights on multiple fronts on one side and the brutal attempts by the Meles regime to suppress the Oromo national struggle on the other side have facilitated the flourishing of *Oromummaa*. The globally financed and regionally supported Tigrayan military power could not and now cannot destroy the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) or suppress the Oromo national movement. By engaging in an Oromia-wide protest movement against Ethiopian settler colonialism and its main institution, the Meles government, most Oromo students, supported by their parents and other Oromo groups, have proved to the world that Oromo nationalism has reached a new decisive stage. This protest movement is the culmination of the Oromo national struggle.

This paper deals with four interrelated issues: First, it explores the process of the deepening of *Oromummaa*. Second, it identifies and examines the roles of Oromo liberation organizations and communities in the diaspora. Third, the paper suggests and explains some roles that Oromo nationalists, liberation organizations, and the Oromo diaspora communities should play to overcome the weaknesses of the Oromo national movement. And fourth, it suggests ways of transforming *Oromummaa* into Oromo national power to uproot Ethiopian settler colonialism and its institutions and to create an Oromian democratic state that may be sovereign or part of a multinational democratic state.

Background

Millions of determined Oromo nationalists have sacrificed their lives to develop Oromummaa and to liberate their people from all forms of exploitation and oppression. Some have stood up and given their precious lives without the fear of death for freedom, justice and democracy. Others have faced torture, rape, humiliation, and imprisonment.

[137] Paper Presented to the Ohio Oromo Community, June 4, 2006.

There have been thousands of Oromo heroes and heroines who have been engaging in armed struggle. Further, there are also Oromos who live in exile and have never forgotten the struggle of their people. Such people have been contributing to the Oromo struggle from a distance. Currently, Oromo students are continuing the legacy of the Oromo national struggle and contributing to the deepening Oromummaa.

Oromo nationalists in general and Oromo students in particular are tired of being mistreated and abused by Tigrayan state elites and their collaborators. The Oromo people are also tired of blatant oppression, exploitation, and political violence. The Meles government targets the Oromo people for their economic resources and political resistance. The Oromo have no protection from this political violence since there is no rule of law in Oromia and Ethiopia. They do not have personal and public safety in their homes, communities, and in their own country. They are exposed to systematic genocide, state terrorism, massive human rights violations, and absolute poverty. In order to destroy the Oromo struggle, the Meles regime banned independent Oromo organizations and institutions. The regime even outlawed musical groups, human rights organizations, and professional associations to silence the Oromo nation.

The repression and destruction of the Oromo society have also involved state sanctioned rape. State sanctioned rape is a form of terrorism. The use of sexual violence is a tactic of genocide that the Tigrayan state elites and their soldiers practice in humiliating and destroying the Oromo society. Tigrayan officers and soldiers have collected Oromo girls and women into concentration camps and gang raped them in front of their relatives, fathers, brothers and husbands to humiliate them and the Oromo people; these actions have helped in the spreading of diseases, such as syphilis, gonorrhea, and HIV/AIDS in the Oromo society.

The Tigrayan-led regime has also engaged in destroying the foundation of the Oromo society through its economic policies and practices. While the Tigrayan elites who depended on international food aid in the 1980s are rich and powerful today, the Oromo who had never faced famine before are facing recurrent famines and absolute poverty. Millions of Oromos have lost their lands through eviction and their cattle through looting. This regime uses economic violence to impoverish and destroy the Oromo society. The recognition by most Oromos that their nation is targeted for destruction is fueling the resistance struggle and the deepening of *Oromummaa*.

The Deepening of *Oromummaa*

In the 1970s, when I was a student at Finfinne University, Oromo nationalism was only embraced by a few Oromo students, who manifested their Oromoness by talking in Afaan Oromoo and by organizing in Oromo student circles. Overall, the size of Oromo university students was very small. Most of these students were not politically conscious, and they passively refused to join an Oromo underground movement because some of them preferred to join Ethiopian organizations. Most Ethiopian students and professors considered speaking in *Afaan Oromoo* and manifesting Oromoness as a political crime. During this period, a few elements of Oromo elites were engaged in the Oromo underground movement.

The transformation of the Oromo resistance into a liberation struggle through the formation of the OLF in the 1970s restored and popularized the names Oromo and Oromia. The demise of the Macha-Tulama Self-help Association and the suppression of the Bale Oromo armed struggle in the 1960s had facilitated the birth of the OLF. It took several decades of struggle to make the names Oromo and Oromia acceptable to some Oromos who had earlier lost their identity to the colonial Ethiopian state. Further, the participation of the OLF in the Transitional Government of Ethiopia between 1991 and 1992 opened a door for the organization to introduce Oromummaa to the larger Oromo population. Although the imposed withdrawal of the OLF from the transition government was an indication of a military defeat, the continuation of the Oromo struggle and the survival of the OLF have demonstrated the cultural victory of the Oromo people. Consequently, Oromummaa started to flourish and spread in Oromo society like a wild fire.

Both the continuation of the Oromo national struggle under difficult circumstances and the increased brutalization of the Oromo by the Meles regime have contributed to the blossoming of *Oromummaa*. These contradictory processes have been clearly understood by one sector of Oromo society: Oromo students. Although these students are still under Ethiopian political slavery, they have been learning in their native language from elementary to the university level since the early 1990s. *Afaan Oromoo* has become the lingua franca of Oromia except in garrison cities where the majority of the populations are colonial settlers and their collaborators.

Amharas and their language and culture have no significant impacts on the current young Oromo generation. This generation has also rejected and despised the authority of the Tigrayan authoritarian-terrorist government. These conditions are some indicators of the great victory of *Oromummaa*. Furthermore, the designation of the map of Oromia, although still under a colonial administration, is a great forward advancement for the development of a pan-Oromo identity. Consequently, *Oromummaa* has now flourished as an ideological vision and a cultural marker of the Oromo nation. However, the Oromo national movement has a long way to go to transform *Oromummaa* into organizational capacity.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Oromo Liberation Organizations

Oromo liberation organizations have strengths as they have weaknesses. Among these liberation organizations, the OLF is the strongest comparatively although it has its weaknesses. Almost all Oromo liberation organizations branched out of the OLF because the organization did not yet establish mechanisms of resolving emerging contradictions within its members. Those Oromo nationalists who left the OLF and formed other organizations could not, however, exceed the OLF. In fact, their political performances are rather disappointing. These organizations lack financial and professional resources; they do not receive international assistance, and the help they get from the Oromo is limited. To continue the struggle under such conditions indicates the moral strength and the commitment of some of these organizations. However, most of these organizations are nominal, and they do not demonstrate their effectiveness. When one compares the OLF with other organizations, the OLF has a better structure, potential capacity, and impact although it has a lot of weaknesses too.

Rather than joining the enemy camp by receiving money and power, these organizations have chosen to stay in the Oromo movement. However, the fragmentation of Oromo politics has allowed the enemy to implant its agents in these organizations and turn Oromo activists against one another. That is why numerous insults and attacks are targeted towards the OLF and its leadership rather than towards the Meles regime. Shortsighted activists and political opportunists also engage in such destructive political behavior. There are Oromo groups or individuals who believe that attacking the OLF and its leadership and prominent Oromo activists is the way of participating in the struggle.

There are Oromos who use religions or other factors as a pretext for not participating in the Oromo national movement. In addition, there are also Oromos who simply do not care about their country and people, and therefore do not show an interest in Oromo politics. Particularly the Oromo diaspora communities have failed to fully fulfill their national obligations. When most Oromos in Oromia have formed an iron unity to resist the Meles regime, most Oromos in the diaspora are passive or waste their time arguing and fighting about minor or irrelevant issues. Rather than becoming ambassadors to the international community, such Oromos have remained politically passive. One of the greatest weaknesses of the Oromo movement is the lack of international solidarity.

The Oromo diaspora communities could have at least solved this problem had they acted in a mature way. They could have also financially and professionally consolidated the Oromo struggle by supporting the movement in Oromia rather than trying to create liberation fronts in North America or Europe. The Oromo diaspora communities should be realistic and support organizations that are engaged in struggle in Oromia. If we have problems with the OLF we should have opened dialogues with its leadership so that the organization can solve its problems and open itself to the Oromo diaspora community.

My message for the OLF leadership is that they must have moral and political courage to communicate with Oromos in the diaspora who oppose them either to attract them to their side or to reduce hostilities. The OLF leadership should also learn how to communicate and dialogue openly and democratically with its members, supporters, and sympathizers. The old ways of doing business must change in order to make the OLF dynamic and powerful organization. The OLF has not yet proved itself that it could do by reframing the Oromo national struggle in a way that can bring about a political transformation in the Oromo national movement. Since the OLF is almost synonymous with the Oromo national movement, it must abandon its vanguard position and learn how to deal with all Oromo forces based on gada principles. Political fragmentation will end by further deepening Oromummaa through a democratic dialogue and consensus building among Oromo political elites and communities. Without eliminating or reducing conflict among some Oromo organizations and political elites, it is very difficult to overcome the main challenges of the Oromo national movement.

Main Challenges to the Oromo National Struggle

Today there are five major challenges to the Oromo national movement. The first challenge is to realize that the political behavior that the Oromo elites manifest and practice is contradictory to the Oromo *gada* system of popular democracy. If we are struggling to establish a just and democratic society, we must learn from our democratic

traditions and practice them starting from today. We cannot afford to learn from the autocratic traditions of the Oromo *moti* system that contributed to the demise of Oromo democracy and the emergence of Oromo traitors or collaborators. The practice of a broadly based democratic decision-making process and the implementation of the rule of law should be an integral part of the Oromo national movement.

The second challenge is to overcome political fragmentation by developing and practicing a unity of purpose among Oromo elites, sectors, and organizations. Prominent Oromo nationalists and independent Oromo organizations must openly discuss and participate in this process. The formation of ULFO was for this purpose. However, its progress has been limited. This umbrella organization must be revitalized as the platform of unity of purpose, dialogue, Oromo democracy, and an Oromo solidarity network. Those member organizations that cannot fulfill their obligations should merge with the organization of their choice. It is fruitless to count nominal organizations as liberation fronts.

The third challenge is the reframing of the Oromo question by understanding the complex global, regional, local, as well as organizational problems that are currently facing the Oromo nation in order to galvanize the mobilization of most of the Oromo on a common political platform. At this moment, this platform must be the overthrowing of the Tigrayan-led Ethiopian government and the destruction of Ethiopian colonialism. The fourth challenge is the formation of political alliances with organizations and liberation movements that accept the principles of national self-determination and multinational democracy. Since the capital city of Oromia, Finfinne has been the home of the Ethiopian state, the emergence of Oromo national power and the demise of the Ethiopian colonial state will put Oromo representatives at the leadership position in the region. Therefore, the Oromo national movement should start to develop policies and approaches that are necessary in actually implementing the true principles of national self-determination and multinational democracy.

The fifth challenge is to start the process of designing forms of governments for Oromia and other regions that are willing to form a multinational democratic government. Oromia should have its own state whether it stands by itself or voluntarily joins a multinational democratic state. Various Oromo intellectual and professional groups must start to research and develop public policies on government, economy, culture, language, as well as foreign relations. One of the great weaknesses of the Oromo national movement is the lack of research and science based policies to advance the Oromo national interest. These are complex challenges that serious Oromo nationalists and organizations must understand and find appropriate solutions in order consolidate the Oromo national movement. If we want victory, we must stop fighting on petty issues and start confronting these challenges as a nation. These challenges will be overcome through the processes of building organizational capacity and Oromo national power.

Transforming *Oromummaa* into National Power

Transforming *Oromummaa* into national power requires serious political and organizational work. Whose responsibility is this? All Oromo nationalists have moral and national obligations to transform *Oromummaa* into Oromo national power. But practically

speaking, since the OLF has been the initiator and the center of the Oromo movement, it must first start to reframe the Oromo national struggle by reassessing its weaknesses and building on it strengths. Beginning in 1991, the OLF has changed the political landscape of the Oromo people, but it has failed to transform itself into a mass movement. Prior to the 1990s, the majority of Oromos were not nationalists. Today, the majority of Oromos are nationalists, and they declare that the OLF is our organization.

There are still Oromos who are in the enemy camp. There are also those who have grievances against the OLF whether they are legitimate or not. A few Oromos have started organizations to compete for political power while others who support or sympathize with the OLF do not endorse the way it runs its political affairs. In addition, there are OLF members who believe that their ideas and suggestions are not incorporated into the agenda of the Oromo national struggle. They, as a result, only passively support the struggle. This means all their resources are not fully utilized to advance the Oromo national struggle.

Realizing all these problems, the OLF should reframe its approaches to release the arrested potential of the Oromo people. Therefore, I recommend that the OLF, all independent Oromo organizations in Oromia and the diaspora, intellectuals, professionals and all Oromo sectors should start to search for a way of establishing Oromo solidarity network. This solidarity network should identify and discuss relevant Oromo national issues in civil society as well as on institutional and organizational levels to reach a common understanding in transforming *Oromummaa* into Oromo national power.

Oromo national issues should be reframed by resonating the social and cultural beliefs and the daily experiences of our people. Our people are religiously, culturally, regionally, and professionally diverse, and we must be sensitive to these diversity. Oromo women are the most oppressed sector of our society, and we must start to address their triple oppression - class, gender, and national oppression- to fully mobilize and involve them in the Oromo national movement. *Oromummaa* should be practiced as a democratic movement to prove to our people that our liberation destroys all forms of oppression. Further, we must demonstrate to the global community that *Oromummaa* is an integral part of a global humanity.

Although *Oromummaa* is the foundation of the Oromo national movement, we must struggle to transform the particular into something universal based on the principles and practices of national self-determination and multinational democracy. The Oromo people are only fighting against injustice and exploitation that have been integral parts of Ethiopian settler colonialism and its political and cultural intuitions. The Oromo people do not hate any people, and they only hate oppression and exploitation.

As we struggle against an opportunist and collaborative class in our society, we must reject the defensive and particularistic political approach, which denies the Oromo national movement a transnational solidarity that we need to be successful in our national struggle. We should not ignore the notion of democracy although it has been misused and abused by the Habasha political elites. As the largest population group in the Horn of Africa, we should rather introduce the real meaning and practice of democracy through revitalizing the concept of Oromo democracy.

We should overcome our simplistic approaches to the Oromo national struggle since our people are in a very difficult and complex situation. We must reframe our

movement on multi-levels and struggle through different approaches. The idea that only one political approach is right should be abandoned. However, we should make it clear to our friends and enemies that there are central fundamentals that we cannot compromise: the survival of Oromia and its state as the Oromo design them. We must also be ready to make an agreement with other nations based on the principles of national self-determination and multinational democracy. In fact, the Oromo political leadership should be a pioneer in mapping a new political arrangement.

What Specific Steps Must Be Taken?

The Oromo national movement needs specialization and professionalization. The processes of specialization and professionalization assist to reframe Oromo national issues in practical ways. We need to develop four activist group leaders in our national movement: 1) we need an activist group in our movement that will engage in frame bridging. This group will search and identify some Oromo sectors and organizations that share similar political concerns and grievances and will facilitate ways of forming the organizational base for the Oromo national solidarity network.

2) We need to form a special activist group that will engage in developing concepts of *Oromummaa* as national and international projects. This group may be called the frame amplification group. This group will research and develop various Oromo social and cultural experiences as the self-representation of the Oromo nation to develop public policies that will further flourish *Oromummaa* as national and transnational projects. This approach will help to mobilize potential constituents and supporters for the Oromo national project on national, regional, and international levels. 3) The Oromo national movement also needs a special group that can introduce new ideas to the movement from time to time. This group may be called the frame extension group. The main task of this group is to develop new principles, ideas, and values for the movement. This group may focus on regional and international policy formations.

4) The movement needs a frame transformation group that studies the weaknesses and strengths of the Oromo movement and suggests fundamental transformations in the organizations of the movement in particular and in the national movement in general. This framing group can help improve the habits and behavior of leaders and members by suggesting how to increase their performance in the national movement.

These four groups should produce new ideas or information, principles, knowledge and policies frequently and release communiqués through high-tech apparatuses, such as Internet connection and various media networks. The Oromo solidarity network must establish an information guerrilla movement to challenge and refute those networks or individuals that disseminate wrong and useless information about the Oromo people and their national struggle. Another role of this solidarity network is to increase Oromo interaction with numbers of actors engaged in transnational activities; Oromo activists need to go beyond physical, social and cultural distances to persuade civil society and important personalities in every country to influence states and international organizations. This is only possible by creating the Oromo transnational solidarity network by using religion, cultures, politics and other activities. Both national and transnational solidarity networks must work hand in hand as a powerhouse of knowledge, information and policies

to inform the Oromo national movement on national and global levels. There is no easy way to victory. We must work hard day and night and contribute what we can for our national struggle. We must start today to persuade our liberation organizations and institutions in general and the OLF in particular to adopt these approaches to advance the Oromo national movement.

Chapter 19

The Oromo Diaspora: Lessons from the Agency of the "Old" African Diaspora in the United States[137]

Just as European and African slave traders merchandised Africans and created the old African diaspora, successive colonial and authoritarian regimes[138] of Ethiopia forced some Oromos out of their homeland, Oromia, and caused them to settle in the West. The displaced Oromo entered the United States as one of the "new" African diaspora groups four centuries after the old African diaspora began to be created. In the process, the Oromo diaspora emerged on the world stage. Whereas the old African diaspora lived under racial slavery and segregation for almost three centuries, the new African diaspora communities such as the Oromo came to enjoy a measure of freedom in the land of their refuge, primarily owing to the new conditions created by the struggle and sacrifice of the old diaspora. Elements of the Oromo diaspora, who lived under "Ethiopian political slavery,"[139] without freedom of expression and association, came to exercise these rights in the United States. Members of this Oromo group created communities, political organizations, and scholarly associations. In foreign lands, they became able freely to define and defend their individual and collective national interests and to link the Oromo people to the global community.

This chapter documents the experiences of the old African diaspora in building institutions and organizations, in order to impress the lessons of these experiences upon diaspora Oromo nationalists. Isolated from the world for more than a century by Ethiopian colonialism, the Oromo people became scattered around the world. Oromo diaspora communities nowadays are building close linkages among themselves and with the Oromo movement at home, thanks to globalization and modern communication technology. The diaspora Oromo nationalists, if acquainted with the African American story, can be inspired to contribute their part to the Oromo movement's struggle for survival, self-determination, and multicultural democracy. The chapter also aims to open a critical dialogue between the old and new African diaspora groups in the hope that African Americans, if informed about the tenacity and endurance of their African compatriots, can

137. The first draft of this chapter was presented at the 44th Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association, Houston, TX, 15-18 November 2001.

[138.] I refer to the reign of Menelik (r. 1889-1913), the reign of Haile Sellassie (as regent, 1916-30, as emperor, 1930-74), the military-socialist regime (1974-91), and the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) regime (1991 to the present).

[139]. The Ethiopian political system practices political slavery by denying the freedom of self-expression and self-development to the colonized nations. Since this system works without the rule of law, Ethiopian political leaders engage in genocidal massacres with impunity. The system is based on the use of structural and political violence to control the political behavior of the colonized nations. As a result, there is no freedom of association, organization, or expression in the Ethiopian empire. The Ethiopian state does not even respect its own laws.

make common cause with the Oromo in the struggle for multicultural democracy and economic development on a global scale. Overall, the chapter will enable us to explore issues of transnationalism through which diaspora groups can direct and shape nationalist movements in the countries of their origin.

The Intellectual and Autobiographical Case for Comparison

As a member of the Oromo diaspora, I bring a particular perspective to this discussion.[140] My own life and intellectual development are intertwined with the creation of the Oromo diaspora community. As an Oromo born and raised in Oromia, a displaced person who has lived in the United States since 1981, and a parent who has constantly engaged his children in a dialogue about the complexity of diaspora life, I have been intrigued by the similarities in the world system–imposed oppression and exploitation experienced by the African American and Oromo peoples and the similarities between the struggles and experiences of these two peoples.

As a scholar, while researching and teaching in the United States, I came to develop a deep interest in the literature and the history of the African American experience. My life experience and my intellectual interest engendered within me a scholarly interest in comparing the experiences of African Americans and Oromos and the shared interest of the old and new African diaspora groups in the critical understanding of their respective stakes in the struggle against global oppression and racism. In the past, a lack of mutual understanding has caused African diaspora members and Africans to see Ethiopia as a symbol of black freedom, when in fact Ethiopia was a settler colonial state that participated in the European partition of Africa and in merchandising Africans. African Americans deserve to know that Ethiopia is a symbol of racial/ethnonational oppression and exploitation, not an emblem of black freedom. Just as African Americans have an interest in identifying all forms of racism and in getting rid of racialized global structures, Oromos in general and diaspora Oromos in particular need to know about the struggle of American blacks, so that they can acquire more effective ways of fighting against the injustices of the state in Ethiopia and the global racism that supports and justifies the oppression and exploitation of the Oromo.

At a time when some African American elite members, in collaboration with other progressive forces, are attempting to change U.S. foreign policy toward Africa, all the forces of social change need to understand how Ethiopian racism intertwines with Western racism to maintain racial/ethnonational stratification. As a movement whose aim is to

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[140]. Constrained to live in exile in the United States in the early 1980s, I started to develop a keen interest in the experience of the old African diaspora. Reflecting on the experience of this population group and the experience of the Oromo movement, I published a book entitled *Fighting against the Injustice of the State and Globalization: Comparing the African American and Oromo Movements* (New York: Palgrave, 2001). This book reflects my distinctive autobiographical and intellectual experiences, rooted in my enforced exile from Ethiopian colonial domination and political slavery, my participation in the Oromo nationalist movement both at home and abroad, and my work as a critical/Oromo/ African scholar in the United States.

confront the alliance of Ethiopian and Western racism and global tyranny, the Oromo national movement is one of Africa's progressive forces, which needs to be recognized as a force whose purpose is to bring about positive social change.

Even though the old and new African diaspora groups entered the United States through different routes, they have similar challenges and objectives in fighting racism and underdevelopment and in promoting multicultural democracy. The interest of the African diaspora and its members' human dignity cannot be fully protected without liberating the mother continent, Africa, from Western satellite regimes like that of Ethiopia. This can be made possible by initiating a critical dialogue between the old and new African diaspora groups, by taking into consideration the past and current experiences of these groups, and by developing long-term political and cultural strategies in this era of globalization. This dialogue could start with a basic understanding of the Oromo diaspora and the agency of an old African diaspora in order to draw important lessons from almost four centuries of experience.

The Development of the Oromo National Movement

Conquered by and absorbed into Ethiopia in the nineteenth century, the Oromos were removed from the global community by the Abyssinian system of political slavery. Oromia was denied a "status as a nation among the community of nations."[141] The Ethiopians established a settler colonial structure in Oromia, erased the cultural identity and the language of the Oromo from public life and the historical record, and isolated Oromos from one another. Ethiopia became "the intermediary representative in the outside world for all the peoples contained within the empire. When the Oromo political system with its overarching integrative republican mechanism of public assemblies was officially dismantled and replaced by centralized Ethiopian administrative policies in Oromia, the isolation of the Oromo peoples was complete."[142]

Because Ethiopia imposed its rule on the Oromo and maintained a colonial relationship with them, Oromos never recognized the legitimacy of Ethiopian suzerainty and never assumed an Ethiopian identity for themselves. The effort to force an Ethiopian identity and culture upon Oromos succeeded only in assimilating a few Oromos who attended the few public schools in Oromia, established and controlled by the Ethiopian regime. The majority of Oromos did not receive formal education and remained largely unaffected by the assimilationist efforts. The Ethiopian colonial government in any case did not encourage structural assimilation or a policy of allowing its colonial subjects access to political opportunity, cultural and economic resources, education, or any resource or activity it deemed incompatible with its colonial interests. Although marginalized, most Oromos kept their *Oromummaa* or Oromoness at the risk of being relegated to second-

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[141] Bonnie Holcomb, "Oromo in the World Community," *Journal of Oromo Studies* 6, nos. 1-2 (1999): 3.

[142] *Ibid*., 5.

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class citizenship within the Ethiopian colonial state. Disaffected, the Oromos continued to resist Ethiopian settler colonialism and to fight to regain their freedom and independence. Resistance sometimes took the form of local uprisings, including instances in which Ethiopian colonial settlers were expelled from Oromo areas.[143] By the 1960s, Oromo resistance to the imposition of Ethiopian settler colonial rule had assumed the form of reform nationalism, a movement whose purpose was to demand for Oromos accommodation and fair treatment as Ethiopian citizens.[144] Nonetheless, it took a while for Oromo nationalism to mature, in contrast to the relatively short time, from the 1920s to 1950s that it took for nationalism to develop in various parts of colonial Africa.

Several factors contributed to the slow development of Oromo nationalism. The Ethiopian colonial state and its institutions impeded the development of an autonomous Oromo leadership by co-opting the submissive elements and liquidating the nationalist ones. State officials actively suppressed Oromo institutions, distorted Oromo history, and stunted the development of the Oromo language and culture. Denied access to formal education, Oromos remained without formally trained and culturally grounded intellectuals. Only a handful of Oromos were fortunate enough to receive formal education, an experience that opened their eyes to the abysmal situation of the lives of their kin. One such fortunate Oromo was Onesimos Nasib, a slave lad from western Oromia who was trained in Sweden as a Christian missionary.

In the first half the twentieth century, Onesimos and his assistants, Aster Ganno, Lydia Dimbo, and Feben (Hirphee) Abba Magaal, as well as the Islamic religious scholar Sheik Bakri Saphalo, pioneered the production of written literature in *Afaan Oromoo* and tried to introduce literacy to Oromo society. The Ethiopian colonial government and the Orthodox Church suppressed the efforts of these scholars and thwarted the emergence of Oromo national consciousness. In addition, after achieving independence in 1960, Somalia worked hard to somalize some Oromos, in its irredentist ambition to annex a part of Oromia to Somalia. Compressed between Ethiopia, which saw it as a major threat to Ethiopian territorial integrity, and Somalia, which regarded it as an obstacle to the realization of the dream of Greater Somalia, Oromo nationalism remained an idea in the minds of a few Oromos.[145]

By the late 1960s, the cumulative experiences of resistance and the politicized collective and individual grievances of Oromos had begun to be transformed into an ideology of nationalism. The process was assisted by the migration of many Oromos from rural areas to cities and the emergence of a small conscious Oromo intelligentsia. Paradoxically, the collective consciousness of Oromos or Oromo nationalism was kindled among the Oromo elite, who had been educated to be co-opted by the Ethiopian ruling class. Barred by the Ethiopian Constitution from establishing a political organization, the

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[143] Asafa Jalata, *Oromia and Ethiopia: State Formation and Ethnonational Conflict, 1868-1992* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1993), 152-53.

[144] Asafa Jalata, "Oromo Nationalism in the New Global Context,"Jour*nal of Oromo Studies* 4, nos. 1-2 (1997): 83-114.

[145] Mohammed Hassen, "The Macha-Tulama Association 1963-1967 and the Development of Oromo Nationalism," in *Oromo Nationalism and the Ethiopian Discourse,* ed. Asafa Jalata (Lawrenceville, NJ: Red Sea Press, 1998), 189.

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nascent Oromo educated class, in 1963, formed the Macha-Tulama Self-Help Association (MTSHA) in Finfinne (Addis Ababa), the capital city of the Ethiopian empire. The association was on record as stating that its objective was to formulate programs to solve economic, social, and educational problems in Oromo society, but the very act of its founding was construed by the Ethiopians as an expression of the collective grievances of the Oromo people.

Even though MTSHA was scrupulous in declaring that its objective was to contribute to the state's effort to improve the social and economic welfare of Oromos and other Ethiopians, the members of the Ethiopian ruling elite were not convinced that the association did not have a subversive political agenda. A campaign of defaming MTSHA subsequently got underway, as its members were harassed, denied treatment equal to that of other Ethiopian bureaucrats and civil servants, and frequently accused of disloyalty to the state. On one occasion, Aklilu Habte Wold, then the Ethiopian prime minister, confided to Brigadier General Taddasa Biru the government's undeclared policy to deny educational and professional opportunities to Oromos. The general was an Ethiopianized Oromo who later joined the association because of this event. In 1966, the stunned general attempted unsuccessfully to assassinate Emperor Haile Sellassie and take over power.

Haile Sellassie's government was alarmed by this daring action and by the level of Oromo discontent and political consciousness. In 1967, MTSHA was banned, some of its leaders executed, and others imprisoned. Oromo cultural groups, such as the Affran Qallo and the Biftu Ganamo musical bands, were accused of being conveyers of devious political messages and disbanded. Between 1968 and 1970, the Bale Oromo armed struggle, which had started in the early 1960s, was brutally suppressed by government forces with technical assistance from Great Britain, the United States, and Israel. The severity and speed with which the government reacted to the attempted assassination of Haile Sellassie made it plain to Oromo nationalists that reforming the Ethiopian state would never attain their demands for social and economic justice. Oromo nationalism was subsequently forced to go underground.

With the suppression of Oromo reform nationalism (calling for reforming but not overthrowing the empire's political and economic system), some Oromo nationalists fled to Somalia, the Middle East, and elsewhere to continue the struggle in exile. Others remained in Ethiopia. The continued denial of individual, civil, and collective rights and the suppression of Oromo organizations and movements forced Oromo leaders who remained in Ethiopia to press on with the Oromo struggle clandestinely. In the late 1960s and the early 1970s, they established an underground political movement and expanded their influence by organizing different political circles in different sectors of Oromo society, including students, professionals, workers, farmers, and soldiers. Using political pamphlets that they produced and distributed secretly, they framed the Oromo question as a colonial question and, by doing this, defined the future direction of the Oromo national movement. By the early 1970s, Oromo reform nationalism had been transformed into a revolutionary nationalism that had as its goal the dismantling of Ethiopian settler colonialism and the establishment of an independent state or an autonomous region within a federated, multicultural, democratic society. In 1973, Oromos who had fled to foreign countries and received military training returned to Oromia to initiate an armed struggle. In 1974, this

group and the revolutionary nationalists who had remained in Ethiopia announced the creation of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) to spearhead the Oromo struggle.

Soon, the OLF began to challenge Ethiopian colonial domination ideologically, intellectually, politically, and militarily. In response, the Ethiopian state initiated counterinsurgency operations against Oromo nationalists and the Oromo people. In the late 1970s and the 1980s, the OLF encountered difficulties as it sought to accelerate the pace of the struggle. International support was hard to come by, and acquiring bases from which to launch guerrilla attacks proved difficult. Ethiopia's relentless attacks and Somalia's challenge to Oromo nationalism, coupled with internal disagreement within the OLF leadership, stunted the growth of revolutionary Oromo nationalism, which had begun to develop quickly in the mid 1970s. In one incident in 1979, almost all the members of the OLF executive committee were wiped out on their way to an important organizational meeting in Somalia. Oromo nationalists and veteran leaders like Tadassa Biru and Hailu Ragassa were killed in 1976. In 1980, the military regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam rounded up and murdered high-ranking OLF leaders and several hundred activists. Because of all these factors, the Oromo movement could not play a direct, leading role in the fall of the military regime in May 1991.

With the demise of this regime, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), led by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF), came to power with the support and endorsement of the U.S. government. A Transitional Government, composed of the EPDRF and various liberation fronts, the most prominent of which was the OLF, was formed to pave the way for the eventual establishment of an all-inclusive, democratic government in Ethiopia. During the early phases of the transitional period in 1991 and 1992, Oromo nationalism was transformed from an elite movement to a mass movement. The development of the Oromo national movement representing the largest ethnonational group in Ethiopia was viewed by the TPLF as a major roadblock to the march toward the establishment of Tigrayan hegemony. In an effort to remove the obstacle, the TPLF-led ethnocratic Ethiopian government labeled Oromo nationalists, businessmen, and intellectuals as "narrow nationalists" and "enemies of the Ethiopian Revolution" and began a systematic effort to destroy Oromo nationalism altogether.[146] Thousands of Oromos were killed, imprisoned, and robbed of their property. Several prominent Oromo journalists and intellectuals were imprisoned illegally and many were killed. Even a relief organization that served Oromos, the Oromo Relief Association (ORA), was outlawed and expelled from neighboring countries.[147] Despite the challenges to the Oromo people and their national movement, the OLF and other Oromo organizations continued the Oromos' national struggle for self-determination. The intensification of the national struggle, as _____

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[146] *Hkbawi Adera, an EPRDF /TPLF Political Pamphlet, 1997* (TahisasYekatit, 1989 EC).

[147] Terfa Dibaba, "Humanity Forsaken: The Case of the Oromo Relief Association (ORA) in the Horn of Africa" (lecture, Oromo Studies Association Annual Meeting, University of Minnesota, 1997).

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expected, brought Ethiopian state terrorism down on Oromos. These conditions have forced thousands of Oromos to seek protection in the West and join the African diaspora groups that came before them.

Globalization and the Emergent Oromo Diaspora

The process of globalization that started in the sixteenth century is characterized at the present stage by a revolution in information, communications, and transportation technologies that have reduced the relevance of national boundaries, eliminated barriers to global investment, and allowed the easy movement of capital, information, technology, and labor. In the 1980s and increasingly in the 1990s, these global changes and structures, combined with oppressive conditions in the Ethiopian empire, forced hundreds of thousands of Oromos out of their homeland and made them refuges in foreign lands. The dispersal of Oromos has now produced nascent Oromo diaspora communities worldwide. Noting this phenomenon, Bonnie Holcomb commented: "[A]fter a century of separation from one another, Oromos have come together in the world beyond Oromia where communication was unrestricted."[148]

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In the 1970s and 1980s, the Ethiopian military regime declared an all-out war against "narrow nationalist" and "secessionist" enemies of the revolution. With the support of the former Soviet Union, the regime attacked Oromo nationalists with unprecedented fury. Massive human rights violations were committed as political and religious persecution was unleashed and schemes of forced resettlement and villagization, a political project of creating peasant hamlets on government-selected sites, were carried out. The combined effect of these policies and attacks, summary executions, and political persecution caused the exodus of hundreds of thousands of Oromos, who migrated to neighboring countries.[149] In the 1990s, the TPLF-dominated government of Ethiopia continued the long-standing persecution of the Oromo people and their independent political and civil organizations, this time with assistance from the West, particularly the United States. Oromo nationalist journalists, businessmen and businesswomen, intellectuals, teachers, students, farmers, artists, and civil servants were killed, imprisoned, or "disappeared" without trace. Ethiopian state terrorism "drove millions of people to abandon their homes to escape conscription, starvation, and certain death by seeking refuge beyond the borders of the empire."[150] In this process, about half a million Oromos were scattered around the world.

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Today there are about 50,000 Oromos in North America, the majority of who immigrated to the United States and Canada as refugees. A few others came as tourists and students but decided to remain for political or personal reasons. Among the latter group, some began organizing Oromo diaspora associations in order to expand the support base

[148]. Holcomb, "Oromo in the World Community," 7.

[149]. Mekuria Bulcha, *The Making of the Oromo Diaspora: A Historical Sociology of Forced Migration* (Minneapolis: Kirk House Publishers, 2002), 167-70.

[150]. Holcomb, "Oromo in the World Community," 15-16.

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for Oromo nationalism and the struggle for national liberation.[151] Their ideas came to fruition in 1974 when 11 Oromos came together to form the Union of Oromos in North America (UONA).[152] More Oromos joined UONA during its second congress in the following year.[153] Promoting the Oromo national movement and openly advocating *Oromummaa*, OLF-affiliated organizations such as the UONA, the Union of Oromo Students in Europe (DOSE), and later the Oromo Studies Association (OSA), the Oromo Relief Association (ORA), Oromo community organizations, Oromo support groups, and Oromo Christian and Muslim communities sprang up in the West and in other parts of the world.

The base of the Oromo diaspora community has been expanding recently in both number and diversity. As more refugees arrived in the West, the Oromo diaspora was transformed from a handful of educated Christian males from Western and Central Oromia to a more broadly based representation of the population of Oromia. The new wave of arrivals brought women and children, farmers, traders, Muslims and traditional religionists, and persons of less urbanized, relatively less privileged, and consequently less "Ethiopianized" background and experience.[154] Living outside the control of Ethiopia, the new Oromo diaspora community quickly became engaged in building organizations that reflect Oromummaa and promote the Oromo struggle for self-determination, self-expression, and self-sufficiency both in Oromia and abroad. Although they are concentrated in big cities like Washington, DC, Minneapolis, Atlanta, Seattle, Toronto, and Ottawa, the members of the Oromo diaspora community are scattered over most North American cities. They have raised the voice of the Oromo people in the First World. Lessons from the accumulated experience of African Americans can provide workable strategies and fresh insights for the new Oromo diaspora in building effective organizations to challenge Ethiopian settler colonialism and its sponsor, global tyranny.

The Agency of the Old African Diaspora

In the seventeenth century, enslaved Africans entered the global capitalist system via racial slavery and played a decisive role in founding and building the United States without

[151] One of the organizers was Lubee Biru, who had earlier participated in the Maccaa Tulama Association, was instrumental in the creation of Oromo associations in North America and had close contacts with prominent Oromo nationalists in Oromia. Another was Addisu Tolossa, who worked with Lubee on the idea of organizing Oromos in North America. Telephone interviews with Lubee Biru, 20 December 2002, and with Dr. Addisu Tolossa, 23 December 2002.

[152] According to Lubee Biru, these 11 Oromos were himself; Yeshi Lemma, Umar Abadir, Ismael Haji Kormee, Sisai Ibssa, Mohammed Ahmad, Asras Aboye, Jalata Alemu, Ahimad Bashir, Nuradin Ahmad, and Ibrahim.

[153] According to Lubee Biru, those Oromos who joined UONA during its second congress were Mardassa Raga, Gugsa Makonnen, Ayalew Makonnen, Tarfa Kumsa, Solomon Kana'aa, Itana Gamada, Badhane Tadassa, Mitiku Firisa, and Habte Qitessa.

[154] Holcomb, "Oromo in the World Community," 15-16.

enjoying the fruits of their labor. The system that created racialized and exploitative structures also nurtured the development of the African American movement and occasioned a dynamic interplay between racialized structures and African American human agency. The American capitalist system developed a racial caste system (embodied in slavery and later in segregation) to prevent, for the benefit of white elite members and society, the advancement of African Americans as individuals and as a racialized, ethnonational group.

After two hundred forty six years of struggle to retain an African identity and restore freedom, African American peoplehood developed from the enslaved Africans of various ethnonational origins, from African cultural memory, from the collective dehumanization of slavery, and from the hope for survival as a people in the future. There were various forms of individual and group resistance struggles and protonationalism in African American society. The ancestors of African Americans, both individually and collectively, resisted enslavement in Africa and fought against slavery on slave ships and later on American plantations. Some slaves revolted while others formed maroon communities beyond the reach of planters.[155] These and other forms of ideological and cultural resistance established a strong social foundation from which cultural memory and popular historical consciousness emerged to facilitate the development of African American institutions and nationalism.[156]

Surviving the violence of racial slavery and American segregation for more than three centuries, the descendants of the old African diaspora effectively consolidated their struggle for liberation, self-determination, and multicultural democracy in the first half of the twentieth century. By the mid-twentieth century, African American nationalism had developed as a cultural, intellectual, ideological, and political movement whose purpose was to achieve civil equality, human dignity, and economic development by ending white racial and colonial dictatorship.

Development of Institutions

Until the mid-1860s, African American nationalism developed rather haltingly, owing to the persistence of racial slavery, the active repression of African culture, the prohibition of formal education for slaves, and the denial of political freedom to African Americans.[157] Between the 1770s and the 1860s, however, freed African Americans and their descendants laid the foundation for the emergence of black nationalism by building institutions and organizations that later provided "a favorable structure of political opportunities"[158] for the

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[155] H. Aptheker, "Additional Data on American Maroons," *Journal of Negro History* 32 (1974): 452-460; Aptheker, "Maroons within the Present Limits of the United States," in *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas,* ed. Richard Price, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979).

[156] E. B. Bethel, *The Roots of African American Identity: Memory and History in Antebellum Free Communities* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999).

[157] W. J. Moses, *ClassicalNationalism* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 1.

[158] D. J. McAdam, D. McCarthy, and M. N. Zald, "Social Movements," in *Handbook of Sociology,* ed. Neil J. Smelser (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1998), 695-737.

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African American struggle. In the urbanized North, they established autonomous self-help and fraternal associations, churches, schools, small businesses, media outlets, and cultural centers before the Civil War. Freed African Americans developed an organizational infrastructure, evolving from these indigenous organizations and institutions that helped develop the African American movement during the first half of the twentieth century.

A few antebellum black scholars played a decisive role in seizing political opportunities, developing popular consciousness, and building institutions and organizations. They produced books, magazines, newspapers, and journals that later helped develop black cultural memory and popular historical consciousness. These scholar-activists, while fighting against racial slavery and segregation, attempted intellectually to capture the African cultural experience. Reconnecting African Americans to the African cultural past and introducing various African civilizations to the world, they challenged the white racism and Eurocentric historical knowledge that posited that blacks were backward, primitive, pagan, and intellectually inferior to whites.[159] By revealing that African civilizations and cultures prior to the sixteenth century were equal to or, in some respects, more advanced than European ones, the black intellectuals refuted the claim of the natural superiority of the white people. Despite the fact that these scholars sometimes held elitist and "modernist" positions, they produced an alternative knowledge that laid the foundation for an Afrocentric scholarship, the paradigm that promotes the idea of multicultural society.[160]

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, freed and freeborn blacks struggled to free their enslaved black brothers and sisters and gain civil equality, and to consolidate the cultural and ideological foundations of African American political consciousness and nationalism. Politically conscious freedmen and their children used various platforms to fight against racial slavery and to promote civil equality. In 1827, for instance, Thomas Paul and Samuel Cornish established the nation's first African American newspaper, *Freedom's Journal.* The editors and pamphleteers of this newspaper provided a critical social, political, and cultural commentary that invoked the common African ancestry on which the earlier nationalists had drawn on to shape a moral community. In 1829, David Walker published the *Appeal,* in which he stated, "The greatest riches in all America have arisen from our blood and tears," and demanded that white Americans "make a national acknowledgment to us [blacks] for the wrongs they have inflicted on us."[161] In this manifesto, David Walker demanded civil equality and cultural integrity, condemning racial slavery, white racism, and the corruption of Christianity and other institutions. Also worthy of note in the black resistance literature of the nineteenth century is a magazine called the *Liberator,* which William Lloyd Garrison founded on 1 January 1831.

The politically conscious blacks also started to build a collective movement. At the suggestion of Hezekiah Grice, Richard Allen convened a clandestine meeting of 40 self-

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[159] See Bethel, *The Roots of African American Identity,* 96.

[160] M. K. Asante, *Afrocentrici0* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1989).

[161] Quoted in Bethel, *The Roots of African American Identity,* 78.

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selected delegates in September 1830 in Philadelphia and founded the National Convention Movement, the first civil rights movement in the United States. This movement met only twice, in 1830 and 1835, but it shaped the future African American political agenda. Describing the movement's significance, E. B. Bethel writes: "The architects of the movement transformed race identity for free African Americans into a political resource upon which two major twentieth-century liberation movements would draw to fuel their agendas. [The first was] . . . the impulse for cultural unification of people of color that would also drive twentieth-century Pan-Africanism. At the same time, and complementing the focus on citizenship and the improvement of the status of free African Americans, the movement aimed to eradicate the structural and legal sources of racial oppression. In this way it foreshadowed the political and economic agendas both of post–Civil War Reconstruction in the Southern states and of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement."[162]

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The numerical growth of the free African American population in the Northern states, and the expansion of a literate public within that population, combined with two great civil rights movements—the (biracial) Antislavery Movement and the (African American) Convention Movement—resulted in a political climate that fostered a black intellectual and literary movement. A few intellectuals helped lay the ideological foundation of African American nationalism by cultivating an African American collective consciousness based on the politicized collective grievances and personal experiences expressed through autobiographical and cultural memory, and on the shared beliefs, myths, and images of the past.[163]

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The struggle for freedom had a few sympathizers and supporters in white American society. The antislavery movement was a biracial movement that brought together black activists and white reformers to fight against American slavery. Quakers dominated the antislavery movement until the mid-nineteenth century by providing large numbers of members and effective leadership. M. L. Dillon argues that these abolitionists had "great moral courage and independence of mind to venture to subvert the dominant practices and values of their age."[164] To their credit, they succeeded in persuading Congress to pass gradual emancipation laws in the North and to end the foreign slave trade in March 1807.

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The American Civil War (1860-65) obviously ended slavery.[165] It should always be remembered that black and white abolitionists made an ideological case against slavery,

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[162] Bethel, *The Roots of African American Identity,* 168,194.

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[163] *Ibid*., 83-84.

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[164] M. L. Dillon, *The Abolitionists: The Growth of a Dissenting Minority* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974), 25.

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[165] The struggle between the class forces of core capitalists and peripheral capitalists for control of federal power eventually resulted in the American Civil War. The Northern core capitalists and their allies entered into the war to maintain the union and to impose the strategy of core capitalist development. C. Chase-Dunn, "The Development of Core Capitalism in the Antebellum United States: Tariff Politics and Class Struggle in an Upwardly Mobile Semi Periphery," in *Studies of the Modern World System,* ed. A. Bergesen (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980), 222-23.

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but nonabolitionist forces whose primary interest was to dismantle the power of the slave-owning class, which was against the interests of core capitalists, effectively abolished the institution of slavery. In addition to creating the social-structural and conjunctural factors that were necessary for the destruction of slavery, the Civil War also contributed to the development of Black Nationalism. The defeat of the planters and the abolition of slavery removed the control that the slave owners had had over the enslaved Africans and transformed the nature of the African American struggle.

For almost a decade after the Civil War, the U.S. federal government intervened in the South to protect freed Africans. After establishing its political hegemony in the South, however, the federal government withdrew, leaving freed women and men to the mercy of the Southern states. With the departure of federal power, these states established Jim Crow laws in order to segregate and continue to dominate, exploit, and oppress blacks. "Push" factors, such as the Jim Crow laws, racial dictatorship, oppressive social control mechanisms, lawlessness, terrorism, denial of political and cultural rights, poverty, lack of education and other opportunities, combined with "pull" factors from the North, such as the availability of jobs, and occasioned the great migration of black folks, mainly to Northern cities.

The mass migration of blacks to Northern cities transformed African Americans from rural agricultural laborers into urban industrial workers. In their urban milieu, black workers set up communities, fraternities, churches, mosques, schools, organizations, and urban associations. The black educated class and other activists who had previously been isolated from their slave brothers and sisters found fertile social ground in which to plant their ideas of social change and struggle. African American activist intellectuals such as W. E. B. Du Bois politicized the collective grievances of blacks and mobilized white activists and reformers who were committed to the legal dismantling of racial segregation. White reformers channeled assistance in several forms from white foundations, clergy members, student volunteers, and other supporters, who were known as "conscience constituencies."[16][6] At the turn of the twentieth century, the efforts of blacks and whites led to the formation of African American organizations, such as the Niagara Movement (1905), which evolved into the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (1910), and the National Urban League (1911).

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During the first half of the 20th century, the majority of African Americans who moved to cities created conditions conducive to the development of Black institutions and organizations. In the urban setting, African Americans overcame the obstacles of dispersion that they had experienced in rural areas by creating social networks and media outlets and by using transportation and communication networks. The very fact of

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[16][6] J. C. Jenkins and M. Eckert, "Channeling Black Insurgency: Elite Patronage and Professional Social Movement Organizations in the Development of the Black Movement," *American Sociological Review* 51:6 (1986): 812-15.

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concentration in cities increased the opportunity for interaction and facilitated recruiting into various movements and organizations. These institutions and organizations became the foundation of professional social movements and political organizations. In urban centers, African American nationalism blossomed and galvanized the African American people and their supporters for collective action.[167]

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An Analysis: Three Forms of the Black Struggle

In the first half of the twentieth century, the African American struggle settled into three forms. These were cultural nationalism, the civil rights movement, and revolutionary nationalism. The goal of the first was to redefine black cultural identity, which had been distorted by racial dictatorship, the second, to liberate blacks from the racial caste system, and the third, to introduce a fundamental social transformation in the black community. Black cultural nationalism emerged in opposition to white racist discourse and white cultural hegemony. Meier, Rudwick, and Broderick note that the period "from about 1880 to 1930 witnessed the flowering of a clear-cut cultural nationalism. It was evident particularly in a rising self-conscious interest in the race's past and in efforts to stimulate a distinctively black literature."[168] The "New Negro" movement promoted the principles of ethnonational self-help cooperation, ethnic heritage and pride, militancy, and the determination to struggle for constitutional rights. Starting from the era of racial slavery and segregation, African Americans struggled to build their history and fought for recognition of their humanity through developing their peoplehood and cultural identity.[169] Black cultural nationalists gradually challenged the negative images associated with Africanness and blackness and the self-styled virtues of "Europeanness" and "whiteness" in the areas of civilization and culture. African Americans retrieved and reclaimed their African heritage and accepted blackness as a mark of beauty.

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Three ideological movements, Garveyism, the Harlem Renaissance, and Pan-Africanism, did more than others to reconnect African Americans to their African cultural roots. According to Martin Luther King, Garveyism was a movement that "attained mass dimensions, and released a powerful emotional response because it touched a truth which had long been dormant in the mind of the Negro. There was reason to be proud of their heritage as well as of their bitterly won achievement in America."[170] The Harlem Renaissance reconnected African Americans to Africa and cultivated Africanization by encouraging the black artist to turn to his or her African heritage. The Pan-African movement was formed in the first half of the twentieth century by a few radical black intellectuals from the United States, West Indians, and Africa to challenge white domination and supremacy both in Africa and the New World.

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The regeneration of black culture and the ideological revival of the connection to Africa presaged the cultural, national, and international characteristics of the emerging

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[167] *Ibid*., 703.

[168] Bracey A. Meier, E. Rudwick, and F. L. Broderick, eds., *Black Protest Thought in the Twentieth Century,* second edition, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1985), 299.

[169] C. E. Semmes, *Cultural Hegemony and African American Development* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1992), 14.

[170] M. L. King, *Why We Can't Wait* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), 33.

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Black nationalism. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, prominent black activist scholars, artists, and literary figures moved to Harlem and made it a center of African American cultural and intellectual discourse.[171] Inspired by the black cultural nationalism that grew out of the African Americans' cultural, ideological, intellectual, and political experience of urban America, civil rights activists and their supporters formed various organizations to marshal black resources, human, financial, intellectual, and ideological, to fight for black freedom and to dismantle the legal basis of segregation in America.[172]

Born in the urban setting as the main black national organization, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was engaged in a legal struggle to challenge black disfranchisement and racial segregation.[173] This organization extended its branch offices to the South in 1918, linked its activities to the black church there, and fought against lynching, segregated education and transportation, and political disfranchisement. The NAACP provided organizational and managerial skills for the black national struggle by recruiting and training ministers, lawyers, doctors, teachers, union organizers, and other activists, and it taught them how to organize themselves and establish working relationships among themselves. In 1954, the lawyers of the NAACP challenged the legality of school segregation before the Supreme Court in the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* case. The court's ruling dealt a severe blow to the legal basis of segregation in public schools.

Owing to the NAACP's legal successes, white racist and terrorist groups, such as the White Citizens' Council, the American States' Rights Association, the National Association for the Advancement of White People, and the Ku Klux Klan, intensified their organized attacks on the NAACP with the tacit acquiescence of the Southern states in the 1950s. Their relentless onslaught weakened the NAACP and created an organizational void in the black struggle in the South. In the 1940s and 1950s, this situation led to disillusionment and frustration among blacks. African Americans realized that court actions could not destroy racial segregation by themselves, without protest and revolutionary action. As King noted, "freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed."[174] The founding of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) in 1942 by

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[171] These scholars and artists included W. E. B. DuBois, James W. Johnson, Marcus Garvey, A. Philip Randolph, Chandler Owen, Charles S. Johnson, Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, Countee Cullen, and Zora Neale Hurston.

[172] These organizations, associations, and movements included the Niagara Movement, which was formed in 1905; the National Association for the Advancement of the Colored People, which evolved out of the Niagara Movement in 1909; the National Urban League, which was founded in 1911; the Garvey Movement; and the Congress of Racial Equality, which was founded in 1942.

[173] For instance, the NAACP legally attacked "the grandfather clauses" that limited the right to vote and municipal residential segregation ordinances, in 1915 and 1917 respectively. It also vigorously attacked the poll tax and school segregation laws between the 1920s and the 1950s.

[174] King, *Why We Can't Wait,* 80.

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some black students and elite members, white socialists, liberals, and pacifists contributed to the development of the nonviolent direct action strategy to fight against racial segregation in public facilities. The direct action of CORE included sit-ins and freedom rides with the aim of desegregating the public transportation system.

The black church was made the center of a liberation struggle in the Southern states because of its independent leadership, financial resources, organized mass base, and cultural and ideological foundation.[175] The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) was formed in 1957 as "the decentralized political arm of the black church."[176] In the 1950s and 1960s, CORE combined its nonviolent struggle with that of the SCLC and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Using the social and otherworldly gospel as a guide in the struggle, Martin Luther King emerged as the charismatic and sophisticated revolutionary leader of the SCLC and the black struggle of the mid-twentieth century.

King criticized the white church for ignoring its social mission of dealing with moral issues in society[177] and for rationalizing the racial caste system, colonialism, and imperialism.[178] He recognized the vital role of the masses and elites in bringing about progressive social change and insisted that, when the oppressed "bury the psychology of servitude,"[179] no force can stop them from achieving their freedom. King considered the black struggle for freedom as a "new expression of the American dream that need not be realized at the expense of other men around the world, but a dream of opportunity and life that can be shared with the rest of the world."[180] To that end, he developed with his colleagues the political strategy of involving the masses and elites in mass direct action through boycotts, demonstrations, and marches.

This visionary and democratic revolutionary leader dreamed and struggled to create a just multicultural society where all peoples can live together as brothers and sisters, where every person "will respect the dignity and worth of human personality."[181] The SCLC, SNCC, CORE, and other organizations led effective desegregation campaigns. King used religion, the media, and the nonviolence strategy, plus mass mobilization and participation, in challenging American segregation. Under his leadership the civil rights movement matured and blossomed as "the Negro thrust himself into the consciousness of the country, and dramatized his grievances on thousand brightly lighted stages."[182] Two important laws,

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[175] The main centers of the movement were the United Defense League, which was organized in 1953 in Baton Rouge; the Montgomery Improvement Association, which was formed in 1955; the Inter Civic Council of Tallahassee, which emerged in 1956; and the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights, which was organized in Birmingham in 1956.

[176] A. D. Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York: Free Press, 1984), 28-30.

[177] M. L. King, *Strength to Love* (New York: Pocket Books, 1964); and M. L. King, *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 96.

[178] G. I. Zepp, *The Social Vision of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: Carlson Publishing, 1989).

[179] King, *Why We Can't Wait,* 111.

[180] M. L. King, "A Testament of Hope," *Playboy,* January 1969, 234.

[181] M. L. King, "The American Dream," *Negro History Bulletin,* Vol. 31, No. 4. April 1968, 15.

[182] King, *Why We Can't Wait,* 112.

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the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, toppled the edifice of legal segregation. King recognized the importance of these legal actions, but realizing that the laws would not fundamentally change the condition of the black majority, he set out to expand the purpose and scope of the civil rights movement.

King raised human rights issues and aimed at creating an alliance of the poor and the working class in the United States. A sophisticated religious and pragmatic leader, he took on the racist capitalist system on its own territory by developing different strategies and tactics for the struggle when he started the Poor People's Campaign. Describing his vision, he said: "I am speaking of all the poor, I am not only concerned about the black poor; I am concerned about poverty among my Puerto Rican brothers; I am concerned about poverty among my Appalachian white brothers, and I wish they would realize that we are struggling against poverty for everybody and would join in a movement to get rid of poverty."[183] He called upon white and black churches to challenge the status quo and to change the oppressive social order; he condemned racism, economic and labor exploitation, and war as the three primary evils in American society.[184]

For advocating solidarity between the black and white poor, King was described as integrationist. His idea of integration nonetheless was not reducible to a simple label. "Integration," he once wrote, "is meaningless without the sharing of power. When I speak of integration, I don't mean a romantic mixing of colors. I mean a real sharing of power and responsibility."[185] That is why King struggled to reduce or eliminate poverty by recognizing the connection among political power, wealth, and poverty. He was a civil rights activist, a nationalist, and an internationalist leader. Laying out his commitment to social justice, he wrote: "Let us be dissatisfied until rat-infested, vermin-filled slums will be a thing of a dark past and every family will have a decent sanitary house in which to live. Let us be dissatisfied until the empty stomachs of Mississippi are filled and idle industries of Appalachia are revitalized. . . . Let us be dissatisfied until our brothers of the Third World—Asia, Africa and Latin America—will no longer be the victims of imperialist exploitation, but will be lifted from the long night of poverty, illiteracy, and disease."[186] King was assassinated in 1968, perhaps because of his "unfinished search for more radical reforms in America."[187] There is no doubt that his ideological and intellectual maturation and commitment to the emancipation and development of all oppressed groups had shortened his life. "Martin Luther King and Malcolm X were both assassinated," Robert Allen writes, "at precisely the point at which they began working actively and consciously against the racism and exploitation generated by the American capitalist system, both at

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[183] *Ibid.*, 4.
[184] Zepp, *The Social Vision,* 54.
[185] M. L. King, "The Last Major Political Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Eldridge Cleaver," in *The Black Politician,* July 1969, 231.
[186] King, "Honoring Dr. Du Bois," *Freedom Ways,* Spring 1968, 110-11.
[187] Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction in the United States* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1991), 105.

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home and abroad?"[188] The assassination of these two prominent leaders left black Americans frustrated and made them more militant. King and Malcolm came by different routes to lead the black struggle, but they both recognized the inability of existing organizations to attain the objective of the black movement. Malcolm X gradually evolved into a militant leader whose understanding of the black question went beyond the views of other black leaders.

Malcolm X was a product of the Nation of Islam, a religious-national movement that emerged in the 1930s and appealed to the black masses in the 1950s and 1960s. After his death, Malcolm "quickly became the fountainhead of the modern renaissance of black nationalism in the late 1960s."[189] Because of his views and militancy, he was expelled from the Nation of Islam and created the Organization of African American Unity (OAAU) in 1964. Malcolm X was committed only to revolutionary Black Nationalism, which focused on the fundamental political, economic, cultural, ideological, and social transformation of black America rather than on the reformist approach embraced by King. Black revolutionary nationalists were antiracist and anti-integrationist; they "opposed Jim Crow laws and simultaneously advocated all-black economic, political and social institutions."[190] Malcolm X argued that black people "want a complete freedom, justice and equality, or recognition and respect as human beings. . . . So, integration is not the objective or separation the objective. The objective is complete respect as human beings."[191]

Like Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, also known as Kwame Toure, forcefully argued that black America should have control over its political economy, life, and culture in order to fundamentally transform itself. Revolutionary Black Nationalist groups such as the OAAU, the SNCC, and the Black Panthers fought to bring about a fundamental social change in American society. The new black militants believed "that black dignity and liberation are not possible in the United States without profound changes in the system."[192] In 1966, the Black Panthers developed a ten-point program that included demands for political power, self-determination, full employment, decent education, housing, food, social justice to end police brutality and unfair trials, and the promotion of economic development.[193] The formation of the Republic of New Africa in 1967 to create an independent African American state in the Deep South was another expression of revolutionary black nationalism.

Some of the revolutionary organizations attempted to engage in armed struggle. The urban black rebellion, which lasted from 1964 to 1972, was an integral part of black militancy that the white establishment could not ignore. While the government co-opted

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[188] Robert Allen, *Reluctant Reformers: Racism and Social Reform Movements in the United States* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1983), 322.
[189] Marable, *Race, Reform,* 92.
[190] *Ibid.*, 51.
[191] W. W. Sales, *From Civil Rights to Black Liberation: Malcolm X and the Organization of Afro-American Unity* (Boston: South End Press, 1994), 80.
[192] G. Marine, *The Black Panthers* (New York: Carlson Publishing, 1986), 23.
[193] *Ibid.*, 35

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Black reformist elite members by using civil rights laws, it suppressed the black masses Some of the revolutionary organizations attempted to engage in armed struggle. The urban black rebellion, which lasted from 1964 to 1972, was an integral part of black militancy that the white establishment could not ignore. While the government co-opted black reformist elite members by using civil rights laws, it suppressed the black masses and revolutionaries. Several hundred African American revolutionary leaders, who participated in a series of rebellions, were killed, imprisoned, or exiled. The nonviolent approach limited the capacity of the struggle by preventing a fundamental social change, while the militant revolutionary approach provoked repression from the white establishment. Still, the African American movement "succeeded in institutionalizing significant gains during the early 1970s. Blacks became an important voter bloc, participating at higher rates than whites of the same socioeconomic status and the number of black office holders rose rapidly. . . . significant progress against the most overt forms of racial discrimination in education and employment gradually became evident."[194]

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The suppression of revolutionary nationalism and the imposition of the politics of law and order on the black masses and revolutionaries perpetuated the underdevelopment of black America. Given the absence of a national organization that could effectively mobilize and organize blacks and articulate the demands of the majority of blacks, the civil rights organizations and black elite members were not able to obtain adequate goods and services for the black community. Consequently, the majority of African Americans have been left in ghettos and exposed to such social ills as police brutality, poverty, illiteracy, disease, unemployment, crime, drugs, and urban crises.

In its long struggle, the black movement succeeded in destroying the legal basis of the racial caste system. But individual and institutional racism remained intact. The majority of blacks is still poor and remains at the bottom of American society. They still do not have meaningful access to the political, economic, and cultural resources of the country. Furthermore, the struggle for cultural identity and multicultural democracy has not achieved its desired goals. The objective of fundamentally transforming black America is yet to be realized.

Discussion and Conclusion

African American nationalism developed to resist racial oppression, colonialism, and racist democracy. Oromo nationalism emerged to overthrow Ethiopian settler colonialism and its oppressive institutions in Oromia. Compared to its African American counterpart, Oromo nationalism is in a fledgling stage of development. The Oromo people are isolated and impoverished people, and they live under Ethiopian political slavery without freedom of expression and association.

The Oromo diaspora is uniquely positioned to learn and then transfer to the Oromo movement four centuries of African American experience of resistance and triumph. The

[194] J. C. Jenkins and M. Eckert, "Channeling Black Insurgency: Elite Patronage and Professional Social Movement Organizations in the Development of the Black Movement," *American Sociological Review* 51:6 (1986): 816-17.

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new Oromo diaspora can learn mechanisms of survival and strategies of struggle from the rich experience of the old African diaspora. Although individuals can be successful in life, it is important to remember that individual rights are not guaranteed without a strong collective identity, buttressed by enduring institutions and organizations. Maintaining Oromummaa or Oromo identity and nationalism, borrowing cultural and political experiences from others, and building enduring institutions and organizations that reflect Oromo personality are necessary to liberate the Oromo from a century-old dehumanization and degradation. The world is moving faster than ever, educationally and technologically, for those who have power and wealth. Members of the Oromo diaspora understand that their entry into the United States has exposed them to opportunities and challenges and that they should not be dazzled by the glow of their new lifestyles and shirk their responsibility of shaping the destiny of their people.

The African American people survived the scourge of racial slavery and segregation through cultural and ideological resistance. Learning from this experience and following in the footsteps of their ancestors, in the antebellum period, freed blacks and their children fought to free their folk from racial slavery by building autonomous institutions and forming different cultural and political platforms. Educated blacks rediscovered ancient African cultures and civilizations and laid the foundation for an Afrocentric paradigm with which to challenge the ideology of white racial supremacy. By creating institutions and producing newspapers, magazines, and books, free blacks developed a popular cultural consciousness that facilitated the emergence of African American nationalism. When the institution of racial slavery was dismantled, black nationalists and activists and their supporters continued the struggle against racial domination and segregation. With the emergence of favorable social structural factors and conjunctures, African American nationalism flourished and became a mass movement in the first half of the twentieth century. The blossoming of this nationalism assisted the dismantling of the legal edifice of racial segregation in the 1960s and 1970s. This rich experience could be a programmatic guide for the Oromo national movement. The Oromo diaspora can use this rich experience to develop an Oromo-centered cultural, ideological, and organizational vehicle that could assist in advancing the struggle and bringing liberation to the Oromo people.

To overcome the challenge they face as a human group in the racialized capitalist world system, members of the Oromo diaspora must build and consolidate a broad-based Oromo nationalist movement. Although the new African diaspora groups, including the Oromo, have different experiences from those of African Americans, the fate and future of people of African descent are interconnected. Indirect institutional racism and old views about Africa and African peoples have continued negatively to affect old and new diaspora groups alike. Further, the West and its international institutions, such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), unwittingly lend support to authoritarian African regimes like that of Ethiopia, regimes that deny human liberty, democracy, and development to their citizens. Therefore, the danger that emerged with racial slavery and colonialism still exists and negatively influences the fate of blacks everywhere, despite some positive changes. In this age of intensified globalization, Africans in Africa and in the diaspora are marginalized and unable to occupy an appropriate position on the world stage from which to influence events to their

advantage. One of the indicators of this reality is the destruction of African young people by war and diseases such as HIV/AIDS, and the suffering of more than a million and half young African Americans in American prisons.

While attempting to maintain their *Oromummaa* and achieve self-determination, members of the Oromo diaspora and other Oromos must be ready to develop Pan-Africanism from "below," based on the principles of popular democracy and multiculturalism, by forming an alliance with antiracist, anticolonial, and all the progressive forces to expose and remove obstacles to social justice, popular development, and self-determination through education and sustained, organized struggle. Oromos should enter into this alliance as proud and confident human beings, using their unique cultural identity. As members of the Oromo diaspora build networks within their communities to maintain both unity and diversity, they need to extend their networks to other communities in order to exchange information, ideas, knowledge, and goods and services. Just as the Oromos in the diaspora have much to learn from the African American struggle, African Americans can learn from the experience of Oromo culture, particularly from the Oromo democratic tradition and social networks to challenge racism, elitist democracy, and underdevelopment.