



## **If I had to evaluate Festival DC, 2013**

If I had to evaluate Festival DC, 2013, it would be the Mother of all Festivals, not in terms of essence or mission but the outcome towards Eritrean solid foundation of unity and consented defiance against betrayal of the Eritrean cause, Western bigotry and indifference. Although one of our founding fathers of Eritrea, the Honorable Woldenkiel Gebremariam, Minister of Local Government, who passed away in this time of festival, his historical leadership in the long armed struggle, his continued service to the motherland, and also his integrity and personal characters had energized our resolve in continuing the strengthening of our unity and strength. Here are some of the highlights that made this festival exceptional:

- The turnout of Eritreans from all walks of life and locations throughout the United States, especially the Eastern, Northern and Southern states was exceptional. This even didn't include thousands of Muslims who couldn't participate but were fasting Ramadan.
- The mood of Eritreans towards national unity and vision in the best interest of Eritrea and its people, against continued hostility was unbelievable.
- The cohesiveness and openness and the communication skills and participation of the best Ambassadors, representatives of our government and the PFDJ front, as well as guest speakers, whether in seminars, meetings, or even cultural entertainments.

I would like to emphasize the professional communication skill, representation and availability, as well as the humbleness and down-to-earth personality of H.E. Tesfamichael Gerahtu, Eritrea's Ambassador to the UK and Ireland. Here, the exceptional credibility of seminars, as far as I'm concerned, goes to the great Ambassador. His deep and sharp political analysis of the sworn enemies, as well as the Eritrean Peoples' Liberation Front (EPLF) a.k.a. Hizbawi Ginbar, Shaebia, not just as an organization who had become successful through thick and thin, who has defended the motherland and our rights for existence, by effectively thwarting enemies from inside and out, but also, as a solid foundation to our very existence and continuity as Eritreans of Horn of Africa and the World, be it economically, politically, culturally, militarily, or even psychologically, against all the odds, was so rich and satisfying. Mr. Gerahtu elaborated that elimination of poverty, social justice to the needy, guaranteeing food production, guaranteeing education and health, and other basic necessities and organizational structures were the priorities of Shaebia, as a popular front, in protecting the cause, to instill stability and economic and political independence.

Misconceptions of Shaebia and its members, in the leadership of every Eritrean affairs and also the emerging of divide-and-rule risks in developing local religious and region based organizations was clearly underlined and clarified so we would be prepared.

Eritrea's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Araia Desta was also eloquent, in exposing the recent illegal, hypocritical, speculative, and continued dirty game played in the Security Council that, upon enough evidence and preparation, failed to matter in the unfortunate SEMG's (Somalia Eritrean Monitoring Group) leaked information in framing Eritrea for "violation" of arms embargo in "Dual Service" of Asha Golgol, mining boom resources, the 2% rehabilitation tax, Human Trafficking charge and wanna-be "Coup d'état" of "Human Rights abuse". It was clearly identified and clarified that we had solid foundation, within the UN, in defending our rights for existence, against forgery, fabrications, and willful intent of blackmailing. The Somalia's recent development, in recognizing the reality on the ground, and the related issues were also elaborated in greater length.

- ENHOC, ESMART, OEA, and NUEW sponsored Panel Discussions, by professionals DR. Mihreteab Gebrehiwet, Dr Berhe Habtegiorgis, Dr Ghidewon Abay Asmerom, and Ms. Sophia Tesfamariam, as well as the brilliant energetic youths, Miss. Zebib Berhane in health and education, and Simon Tesfamariam in media related topics had presented principal and burning issue of the topic of **"Human Rights, as a Political Ploy to Stabilize Nations: The Case of Eritrea"**, to explain how those bigots and human right abusers who denied our existence for more than 60 years- as one of the panelists have attributed to 100 years- used "Human Rights" to deny our existence, in using & abusing media and NGOs towards Religion & Human Rights. The panel's surgical isolation and presentation of the source of destabilization was clear cut.
- The emergence of new leaders from the young generation was something new that indicated how our "Warsai" generation abroad has effectively began taking over. One of the panelists, Dr. Berhe Habtegiorgis, stated that there were three generations [leaders] that participated in this year's annual festival. In here, as the old Shaebian saying, "nxelaEi bibiretu bitiyitu", has proved its meaning, the importance of social media, especially the Face Book and Twitter gedli has been emphasized and showed their importance in continuing our justified defiance against fabrication and psychological warfare. Following Twitter accounts from your keyboard has been upgraded to communicating live. It was clearly stated and witnessed as well, to social media participants, especially those of Twitter, how much enemy has been badly bitten and its agents have suffered and hence ducked their heads behind the keyboard, under the fabrication weather. Many Face Book friends of diversified groups and locations had also the chance to know each other in solidifying their struggle to neutralize sellout agents of servitude, defending the national cause.
- The participation of citizens who at some point or time had christened their names "Opposition" and especially the participation of Eritrean Kunama Cultural Troupe, whose members are amongst those who recently migrated to South Dakota, USA proved Eritreanism in a real sense, no matter where and no matter what.

Participation of some of the victims of the ongoing smuggling and Human Trafficking of Eritrean youth crimes, sponsored by Eritrea's sworn enemies, added flavor to the colorful and energetic performances.

- Participation of the youth in organizing Sports activities and the awarding ceremony was great.
- The Festival Exhibition included presentations on "Alternative energy", Solar energy displays for home consumption and the magnificent displays of "Taste of Eritrea", the historical picture displays and community activities of different diasporan communities, during the daily activities was informative.
- The chance to witness our Embassy's improvement in giving better service while the festival was running in full force and beyond was noticed.
- The reorganizing effort & vision towards improving our upcoming festivals, hence the opportunists' effort to hijack the essence of our historical & nation building festivals, for personal greed and sabotage, was placed into perspective.
- And at last, but not least, of all activities was the dedication and exceptional performance of "Hade Libna" musical group, along Salina Band, from Eritrea, EriAm Sisters from Seattle, Kunama Cultural Group from South Dakota. The Washington's Convention 2nd Floor dance floor was literally shaking but was structurally designed to the status quo specification, as witnessed in the past weekend where hundreds of Eritreans were rocking without any risk, like never before. These dedicated musicians and singers had worked "Overtime", voluntarily, to satisfy Eritrean patrons in the Eritrean Community Cultural Center until our energy has discharged completely.
- Of course, as expected, it didn't mean everything was perfect. There were and will always be rooms for improvements, including, but not limited to time management, communication improvements towards schedule changes, handling problems ahead of time and participating in seminars and other events on time, both within the coordinating committees & participants.

Over all, I could summarize this year's Washington festival in few words. It was a festival of hope and optimism, strong nationalism and capacity building forum towards the right direction that would be a landmark precedent to future festivals. And I wish the Festival in the West Coast, currently in progress in Seattle, Washington will also be very productive and entertaining as well. In the end, I'd like to thank all those who made this event very meaningful and successful. It was indeed great!

Eternal Glory to our Martyrs!  
Victory to the masses!

Amanuel Tesfamariam, a patron of Washington's Festival, from California  
August 2013