



## If I had to Evaluate the 9<sup>th</sup> YFPDJ Conference !

Considering all aspects of the mission and the outcome of the 9<sup>th</sup> YFPDJ Conference, held in UC Davis, California, I can confidently say that it was a great achievement to all Eritreans, especially the youth who needed guidance to excel in personal, professional, and public domains, in relation to one's identity and nationalism. Here are the highlights of the mission, as well as the outcome of the conference, to my belief, if I had to evaluate it.

The First issue comes planning, considering the site selection:

- Choosing UC Davis in San Francisco Bay Area, California, in the heart of Silicon Valley, where all the computer technology excels, as host of the 9<sup>th</sup> YFPDJ conference was excellent. It would be significant in the upcoming events of YFPDJ, mobilizing hundreds of youth, for the first time in Western region of North America, in strengthening personal growth while solidifying responsibility and patriotism, considering one's identity and belonging.
  - The site was perfectly situated inside a distinguished college campus, UC Davis, where it will entice & invite the young to think about personal achievements in focusing about college education, while considering identity.
  - It could involve parents in encouraging their loved ones to discover about the school system.
  - To see young Eritreans plan, process and execute such a first time big event in Western USA, to a huge crowd, is beyond expectation.
  - To share the experience of young Eritrean volunteers, who left their Western homes to be part of Eritrea's developmental process, to serve in Eritrea in various capacities, was inspiring to all.
  - To share the experience of successful Eritrean Americans of education and business careers would have a lasting effect to those who need guidance and encouragements.
  - Meeting more people of courage and patriotism, while relaxing & having fun, in the best interest of Eritrea and its people, was unmatched.
  - To share the young Eritreans' talents, in reading poems, playing skits and performing cultural shows indicates how much the young Eritreans are catching up in reflecting Eritrea's development, beyond geographical location.
- Sunday was the 52<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of "Bahti Meskerem", the beginning of the 30 years long armed struggle. Listening to young Eritreans recite a famous poem of Hizbawi Ginbar, "ጅግና ኣይነብርን እዩ፡ ታሪኹ እዩ ዝውረኽ" (Jigna aynebirin Ayu, tariKu iyu zwres) was a reenergizing testimony and pledge to Shaebia's vision of hard work and independence, towards patriotism & Self Reliance.
- The participation of Dr Wolday Fitur, Minister of Investments and Development, Economic adviser to our President Isaias Afwerki, himself a Western educated national and a long time employee of the World Bank, was instrumental.

To hear about the economic development, challenges, and Eritrea's bright future, from the horse's mouth, was beyond expression. In this conference, Eritrea's assets, its people, the underlining costs of achieving development, balancing the central need and regional issues, human rights, core vision elements, medium term targets, development philosophy and investment criteria, considering capital, skilled resources, investment, foreign exchange issues and environmental protection, among others were stressed. The future of Eritrea, from the standpoint of non-administrative "Three development zones" was emphasized. As Dr. Woldai highlighted, "The continuation of vision & strategic outcome for fulfillment of the potential of every citizen is in good progress but with many challenges."

- To involve the PFDJ II in tandem, in bridging the gap between PFDJ and the Young PFDJ members shows vision towards Warsai's proximity, continuity of identity and responsibility in practicality. It was disclosed that the next conference is set to include the PFDJ II group. What a development Eritrea and its people need to strengthen our identity and national harmony in a hostile territory!
- Seeing parents honor the success of their children, especially mothers who mostly have concerns about the welfare of their children join the closing ceremony while backing and reinforcing the best foreign born citizens, with cultural food and entertainment was incredible.
- Enjoying the closing ceremony with some of the most talented and young Eritrean singers and musicians, breaking the ice of hostility and sabotage is beyond measure.

The administration of the event, not only chose the best place to involve youth in personal development, responsibility, and nationalism, it also took a bold but right decision about the daily activities:

- Unlike other venues where people rent in "discounted hotels" where unidentified citizens and drug addicts converge, the location was situated in a drug and alcohol free environment that leaves no room for parental concerns and the concerns of those who wanted to feel safe and sound.
- Each participant was placed/ housed randomly with someone who most likely didn't meet before, just like Sawa, where all ethnic groups and religion backgrounds didn't matter in placing them as roommates. This helped introduce Eritreans of all walks to get the chance to know each other, build brotherhood and at the same time share about life and career experiences.

This event has become a forum for connecting dots of Eritrean nationalism among North American states, within Eritrean Americans, between Canadian Eritreans and Eritrean Americans as well as Europeans and beyond.

- To enjoy daily exercise, from 10 to 20 minutes of walking from the rooms to the hall and from the hall to the cafeteria and vice versa, for three meals a day was therapeutic.

Walking inside school campus, talking to new friends and acquaintances in a mission of patriotism was a solid ground for lasting memory. Physically, walking is the most effective and recommended exercise people get freely to be in shape or remain healthy.

The event didn't mean that everything went smooth. There are still some areas that should be improved in terms of communication, time management, early planning and reaching out to people, in order to involve more professionals and young nationals that could set the stage of development and personal growth within the umbrella of Justice and nationalism. For now, sharing the experience of Shaebia, "ብዙሉካ ዝከኣለካ ግብር" (bzeleka zkeAleka giber) & promoting "ብድህ" (Biddho) is the order of the day, the only choice we can afford. Nkid Tray!

In the end, I'd like to thank all those who made this event very meaningful and successful. Sharing the "Taste of Hizbawi Ginbar", "ab bilHin bibilHin" (አብ ብልሕን፡ ብብልሕን), and considering the potential of the outcome, the event was great!

Eternal Glory to our Martyrs !

Victory to the masses !

Amanuel Tesfamariam

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