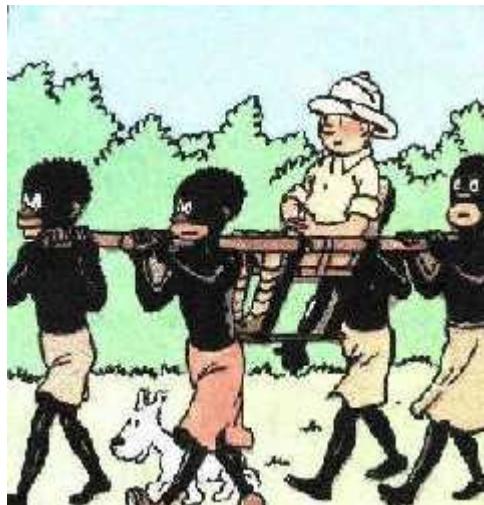


Where Are the African Men?

By: [Mawuna Remarque KOUTONIN](#)

Sunday, June 17th, 2014 at 9:13 pm.



It's already few months I've returned to Africa. It's arguably the best place on earth to live and die, regardless of all the problems and challenges.

I'll not go anywhere else to live before I'd die. I'll fight to make this place a better one for next generations!

Now, I'm a man, and since I'm back here, one question that continuously pops into my mind is "**Where are the men?**"

I spend most of my time immersed in the life of [ordinary people](#), trading with them, eating with them, walking the same paths as they do and taking the same taxi as they do, passionately engaged in understanding things.

What is obvious is that in all productive activities you see only or mainly women. From the farms to the markets, it seems like only women are working, doing something or producing something.

In the contrary, most men are in [non-productive activities](#) mainly acting as paper pushers in offices, middleman traders of chinese goods, or henchmen for some dubious NGOs or International organizations!

Tough most of the productive activities that sustain our people here are in the hand of women, the biggest houses, the brandy and biggest cars are owned by men.

How is that possible?

Shamefully, most of our men work in positions which support the colonial system that crush the life out of our people, and they are well rewarded for doing so.

During the struggle for decolonization of Togo, women were in the front of the liberation movements, supported by few men. Most educated men in the other hand were the henchmen of the colonizers. They earn their living from helping the colonizers. They were afraid if colonization will end, it'll be also the end of their status and revenue.

From that misguided perception, the majority of educated men in Togo who were in the colonial system were against the fight for independence, causing the death of hundreds of people because of fights between pro-independence and con-independence movements.

That tradition of African men earning their living detached from the reality of their fellow citizens, and serving foreigners continues up until nowadays.

They are happy to sign paper that give our land to foreigners because their revenue don't depend on working on those lands. They are happy to give license to traders who will dump products from Europe and China that crush local producers, because they have no idea how local production is strategic to our country stability. For them , If they could just sign a paper and receive money, they will do regardless of the harm it would cause to their country. They have no pride, no loyalty.

The political power and economical power still is in the hand of men, tough they contribute very little to the production of local wealth.

When you go the office, You see men in suit either as paper pushers or keyboard punchers! Outside of the office you see millions of women with their kids crushed by life because their men decided to sell out to the biggest bidders, incapable of leading their countries out of poverty.

They are happy helping Europeans fulfill their [dream to transform the whole continent into the likes of South Africa](#), Namibia or Kenya, where a white minority owns and controls the local economy, while Africans are just good like consumers or their servants.

Currently, there are two kinds of people in Africa, those who can't make a living regardless of how much they put in, and those with lavish lifestyle and privileges regardless of how little they contribute.

The first group is made of those who has not contact with "white" people, and the second is made of people who has contact with "white" people.

If you live in Africa or know some African people, make a list of 10 people you know or have heard about who have a "good life" and social privileges. You'll quickly find out that 90% those who have a good life are people who work for the "white" or with the "white". They serve foreign-owned or controlled companies, organizations or foreign NGOs in Africa. They have big houses, nice cars, home servants, and enjoy high social status and privileges.

I call those the "Rich subalterns" or the "Selected subalterns".

The "working poor" is the rest of Africa, those who wake up at 5am, go to farm or to the market, plant the seeds to grow food and feed their kids, or go out early to have a place to sell some stuff on the street. They are the ones who produce and create value, but whatever they do, however hard they work, they still have very hard life. This group is made of the rural poor and the urban hustlers.

Unfortunately, this harsh split in the African society makes African drama.

In this post, my intention is not go deep to explain why there is such a dichotomy in the African society, but to point out how this dichotomy is creating and spreading a deep impression that the only way to have a life in Africa is to serve foreign interests or be associated with foreign vested interests, organizations or foreign NGOs.

The most severe consequence of this phenomenon is the pervasive inability of modern African societies to create strong local leaders with the ability to think properly through the prism of local realities where they are living in, but only leaders who are mainly controlled by foreign agendas.

What is the problem?

The problem is that you can't develop a country or continent where the majority of people who have the potential to become leaders are groomed to be “good subalterns” to be successful.

Young people aspire to emulate the most successful models in their society, and now the only visible and tangible model available is the rich subaltern model.

There will be no problem with the [rich subaltern model](#) if this group of population was not made mainly with “non-productive” people working in middle management position. Middle managers in office don’t create companies, they don’t create value, they don’t create jobs, they don’t invent, innovate or act in leadership position with the power to change things.

A friend of mine recently wrote the following about the African “middle class”, “middle managers”: “they are professionals working at Microsoft, Boeing, T-mobile, etc. They are comfortably making six figures and while they have ‘entrepreneur envy’ they are too scared to leave their cushy jobs!”.

How could this model of people change Africa?

It can’t because it distracts our young people from jobs that have the potential to make change: local farmers, architects, plumbers, engineers, researchers, entrepreneurs. They don’t see enough evidence of making a good life doing those jobs.

The only dream they have is to be “in contact with the white man” to end “their suffering”. And for that they have enough evidence that it does work: from the local rich subalterns to the returning immigrants with shining shoes.

It's not a surprise then if Africa has the highest rate of young people who want to emigrate in the world, according to a recent [Gallup survey](#).

We have to change from the “[5 stars colonization](#)” mentality to building local leaders that leaves no doubt that their success is not related to another project funded by the European union, or behind their success are “white people”.

Without a clear and unambiguous signals sent to the majority of our youth that our leaders, our “olders” accomplished what they have accomplished by their own sheer of will, determination, and organization, the belief that you can not succeed if you don't have a white in your back will continue to sink into the mind of our youngest, and will infiltrate their veins and minds in ways that will also continue to delay our self reliance and capacity to dust ourselves off and tackle our problems by ourselves and for ourselves.

If foreign aid, investment, and colonization would develop any place, Africa will be the most developed continent in the world.

There is no hope with the rich subalterns, and the mentality that goes with it, as they have used their political clout only in predatory way to the rest of the population: “*The political elite uses its control of the state to extract savings from the rural poor who, if they could, would have invested those savings either in improving their skills or in other productive economic activities.*

The elite diverts these savings towards its own consumption, and to strengthen the state's repressive instruments. Much of what Africa's elite consumes is imported. So state consumption does not create a significant market for African producers. Instead, it is a major drain on national savings that might have gone into productive investment.

This explains Africa's growing impoverishment. The more the political elite consolidates its power, the stronger its hold over the state, and therefore the more rural societies sink into poverty” wrote [Moeletsi Mbeki](#)

We need strong local leaders grounded in the same realities as their fellow citizen, who seek their legacy and place in history, not from token awards from some foreign organizations, but from the profound positive impact they have had on the life of their fellow countrymen.