Ambassador Girma Asmerom: The embodiment of the State of Eritrea.

A Tribute by Michael Seium.

I will not do the great Ambassador justice by writing a small tribute. His legacy is too far from what any capable mind can imagine. I say this in earnest to let the next generation of Eritreans appreciate the work that he did without too many accolades. Like most of us know in Eritrea no one person is bigger than the struggle of Eritrea, which still continues after our independence today. However, the stories must be told and they must be utilized to inspire future generations. I waited this long to write this tribute simply because I was one of the few people who wrote an article Titled “AN ATHLETE, A STUDENT, A FREEDOM FIGHTER, AN ERITREAN DIPLOMAT” about him in January of 2013 while he was still alive even though he told me not to. I had to tell the story of his work as a dedicated person to Eritrea and his story as a diverse and talented individual. His humble personality did not want any of it so I took it upon myself to make sure people understood that he had a mission to make sure Eritrea is a place of peace, harmony and where people can have a much better life than those who were his colleagues/Bitsot in the war for independence. The cause of Eritrea is the cause of the freedom-seeking world. It is an example of the oppressed masses of our global community. The good ambassador kept that in his mind and fought for peace, justice and the right of the Eritrean nation that has been unfairly mistreated by western powers.

Starting at a young age as a brilliant athlete/Soccer player Ambassador Girma won millions of fans with his dazzling skills as a world-class right-winger by representing a club in Addis Ababa known as Dagnew. Along with many other Eritreans he was selected to the national teams of Ethiopia that played in the 1970 African nations cup and other events. He had a great role and even scored a few times. Following his stint as an athlete, Ambassador Girma decided to go to school in the USA where he excelled as a student athlete. He was able to combine both academics and athletics and even further pursued his masters degree from American University in Washington D.C where he mastered in International Relations.

Like a few other Eritreans the ambassador made a snap decision to leave the comforts of the west for the trenches of Sahel where he gave his services to the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front. After independence he went on to be a part and parcel of the government in Eritrea through the media as well as the diplomatic arena. He did what many dream of doing. Not for paper or resume but genuinely to share his knowledge with his comrades in the cause for a free and independent Eritrea.

What makes Ambassador Girma Asmerom so unique?

Many others may have also felt what I say about my experience with Ambassador Girma as he was a fair, kind, and intelligent human being with an OPEN DOOR policy to anyone who had the best interests of Eritrea. He has on many occasions allowed those whom he disagreed with to come to the table and turned them around with an understanding so that they know the facts and stand up for Eritrea. I know because I saw him do it. We talked about it afterwards on many occasions. His knowledge of world politics, geography, and how it can help make Eritrea a better place is unmatched. He was the ultimate diplomat with a thorough understanding of the geopolitics of our region. His Charisma and his witty knowledge to differentiate the good and the bad in the business of politics and international diplomacy are legendary. How could we Eritreans ever be able to forget this unbelievable, this moving, this beautiful, this wonderful Human being Ambassador Girma? What a challenge to every person that loves ERITREA, to live up to the goals and the ideals of his Excellency Girma Asmerom. To the youth he wanted them to chart the course of their actions and help build a better Eritrea. I was deeply moved by the love the great ambassador had for Eritrea. I spent many hours with him while he was the ambassador to the USA. I worked closely with him on many occasions. So much so he wanted me to work with him on a full time basis. I am honored and humbled and blessed to have known a man of his stature. Every time I think of the crimes being committed against the peace loving nation of Eritrea, I pray to Almighty God, that I shall have the strength and the wisdom to measure up to the confidence and the trust that the great Ambassador Girma Asmerom bestowed upon all of us during our many conversations. He fought for his country day and night without any rest. He did not have to do that. He was one of the first Eritreans to have had a great education that would have allowed him to have a lifestyle different than he lead which was disciplined and focused on Eritrea’s well being. He used his education to help free his country from oppression and continued to serve it until the last minutes of his life without any privilege or greed. He roamed the halls of many corrupt organizations including the AU, EU, UN and he never once sold his soul to the devil. He preferred to stand up for the right thing at a time when many sell themselves to the highest bidder. He was firm in his convictions and put ERITREA above everything else. For somebody who grew up in Ethiopia and went to post-secondary school in the USA, he sure proved that his motherland ERITREA was more valuable than his own life. He is a special breed. He stood by his President and even mentions him on many occasions using the terms “My country” & “My President” to share Eritrea’s stance on many of his diplomatic missions. He was a servant of the people by the people for the people.

I believe that -- I have been lucky enough to know Ambassador Girma in my prime years so let me tell you more about him. For years his courage, his wisdom, his tact, and his persuasion; his judgment and his leadership have shaped many Eritreans, including myself. He would go out of the way to write recommendation letters for school or work, help out young Eritreans who wanted to find an avenue to do work in Eritrea, he would be open to meeting anyone that has a tangible proposal, he attended festivals, sports events and encouraged the youth and more. He was also good at utilizing and appointing people to do tasks that were helpful to Eritrea without taking away your energy but making sure that you were a part of the process to enhance Eritrea’s positive stance.

I was among those lucky ones that he called to his side from time to time. He would ask us ERITREANS young and old alike, for our help when Eritrea needed us. And I say, thank God that Ambassador Girma Asmerom was the patriot that he was; that he had the foresight & the vision to provide for his country. And thank God for Eritrea and for the peace of the world and our region of the horn of Africa that Ambassador Girma had the wisdom to accept the United Nations as his last stop and fight the huge battles that came our way. He had started the work and almost finished the job until he was taken away but his legacy and his work will continue as he has prepared others to take over and fight the fight. Illegal Sanctions must be removed and the very border he was evicted from & to must be demarcated. He was Eritrea’s enemy’s worst nightmare. He withstood all adversity with class and shared his interviews with many media outlets including a moment when he exposed the late Meles Zenawi who appeared on telephone during a Voice of America Television program as a caller known as “Abebe”. Within seconds the genius ambassador Girma figured out the lying Prime minister. This is fact and available on video for everyone to see.

I’m sure you remember these words: "Sheat Meanta." Those simple and direct words of Ambassador Girma Asmerom reached the hearts of our people. Those words rallied them, lifted them, and unified them. In this unfair world, there is no margin for error and so my fellow Eritreans I want to say in the humblest way thank you ambassador Girma. We must continue to tell his story and also fight the fight he started to create a peaceful ERITREA within a rough Horn of Africa neighborhood. He has left at a time when our foes are crumbling down. Their failure is a victory for Eritrea, humanity in general and the likes of Ambassador Girma whose work will not go in vain. I will write a separate article on his athletic prowess but today I want to share this tribute to him. I will forever miss him. He was a true son of Eritrea and one that gave his LIFE by putting his nation above anything else. It has been a few hard days for all of us but we must continue to remain vigilant and always keep him in our prayers.

May you rest in Peace Tegadalay, Athlete, Diplomat, Memhir and Bitsai! Girma Asmerom.

Awet N’hafash. Zelalemawi Zikri Swatna!