

Theme of Event: Improving
National Values, Professional
Practice and Engineering
Ethics

Title of paper presented: “Every Day The
Bucket Goes To The Well, One Day The
Bottom Will Drop Out.”

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“Never forget the well-diggers when drinking from the well.” – Zhou Enlai

“The chief purpose of mobilizing the people’s initiative is to develop the productive forces and raise living standards.” – Deng Xiaoping

Chairperson, Senior Engineers and all other engineers and professionals, citizens-not-spectators, ladies and gentlemen,

1. GREETINGS

I have deliberately left out spectators. It is immoral, unconscionable and unacceptable in the times we live for any of our compatriots to be content to be a spectator. For the times, they are worrying.

It is with great gratitude that I have come here to speak today. But I am not without a significant amount of trepidation as well. I am grateful because when your colleagues select you out of millions of your compatriots to speak on such a subject, it is complimentary.

While it is not hubristic to assume that being invited to give such a speech must mean you are at least not an embarrassment to the profession, that could be an exaggerated conclusion. Perhaps, I could be here simply because they do not know me at all, and they are just about to realise a grievous mistake has been made.

For, the institution made no effort to find out what I would be saying and gave me an absolutely free hand to prepare my remarks. What I say tonight therefore, reflects only my views, not necessarily those of the Ghana Institution of Engineering.

I do notice though, that, like all good engineers, the Ghana Institution of Engineering has installed a back-up device. Should their own primary judgement fail, that of our Chairperson tonight will not fail. She is the Chief Judge of the country.

I mentioned that I was up here with some trepidation because while she is the Chief Justice of all of you, she is my Chief Justice and also my beloved literature teacher, Trudy. When she first met me I was a fifteen going on to sixteen year old Form Four student in Achimota School.

At the time, the only real reason I could find for being in school was that it would make my mother happy if I did well enough in the O-Level examinations to do my sixth-form (i.e. A-Levels) at Achimota School. The sitting Chief Justice was the very first person to teach me English Literature as a subject. And what a devoted doting teacher she was. I

can only say thank you on behalf of the very many you touched so deeply, Trudy, our beloved Trudy.

Silver and gold have we not, but in the name of all that is good about the human race, we thank you most sincerely. Having thanked you, Madam Chair, my former teacher, Chief Justice, I am still in trepidation.

You must disclose to me very quickly in which primary capacity you have come here. Hopefully, it is not as my former teacher, here to assess whether I still remember anything you taught me. For, the worst thing that can happen to me is for the Chief Justice to rule that I have done nothing with all that she taught me. And then insist I must refund my school fees to those who inherited my late parents estate, at inflation adjusted rates. That will be tough for me, for there is no court above the Supreme Court.

Many people, since her Ladyship, our Chair for tonight, was kind enough to write a post on my Facebook page and sign simply and affectionately as “Trudy,” have asked all manner of questions. I am told she has a reputation on the bench as a no-nonsense judge, stern and a disciplinarian.

Therefore, the questions put to me mainly seek to find out what the young, straight-out-of-university Trudy was like. Answering some of them publicly may put me in contempt of the Supreme court of Ghana. So I will not. But to the questioner that amused me the most, I answer: “Yes, this Chief Justice can really dance. She was a dashing young teacher universally adored by her students, especially the male students!”

There is every likelihood that she is the best dancer that ever became Chief Justice in our country. That is as far as I am willing to venture. Trudy, again we thank you for everything. You were a special teacher. We wish you well in this very difficult job.

2. DECLARATIONS

As always, these days when I deliver a lecture like this, I must begin by snuffing out the frenzied flames of rumour. Yaw Nsarkoh is not about to announce that he is contesting for any political office. I have no ambition

whatsoever to participate in elective politics. Not now, not ever. I took this position in 1992 and it has not changed. Now we can move on.

If you want to know why we get involved in the conversation when we are not running for office, I repeat to you the words of that profound thinker and freedom fighter. An icon of the anti-colonial liberation movements of Portuguese speaking Africa, martyr of the struggle for freedom and dignity, and more, Amilcar Lopez da Costa Cabral. He once observed with powerful but deeply sincere simplicity: ¹*"I am a simple African man, doing my duty in my own country in the context of our time."*

It does not take much to establish that we live in worrying times in Ghana, in West Africa and in much of Africa. The times they are troubling. I will give only one figure, as we are going to be tight on time for the enormity of the task involved in discussing this subject. ²*The September Monetary Policy Committee of the Bank of Ghana report* put food inflation at 51.9%. There is no other way to describe this than that it is an explosive disaster. This would be so anywhere, for food prices rising that fast will challenge the harmony and social stability of any country on earth.

We cannot afford to be complacent when things are in this space and we are also heading to elections in 2024. Too many people in Ghana live in mass misery. Too many people have nothing to lose. If those who have most to lose, *the bourgeoisie*, the upper classes, the ruling elites, just sit and watch the cracks, eventually, **THE BOTTOM OF THE BUCKET OF SOCIETY WILL DROP OUT.**

It may not be a beautiful and controlled drop. If we do nothing now, which is already quite late, we could see a detonation. James Baldwin's ³*THE FIRE NEXT TIME* could easily become our fire right here. This must become an urgent responsibility for us all. We cannot sit and simply be spectators as the society falls apart.

We get involved because we are citizens not because we have partisan political ambitions. We, citizens, fought for and secured this Fourth Republic of Ghana. The Fourth Republican constitution, however imperfect it may have turned out in the hands of a predatory political class, was born dripping with blood, tears and sweat.

The blood of the many patriots who died in battle against military dictatorship. The tears of the martyrs, the victims of persecution by *The Ghanaian Gestapo* of that era, and their relatives and loved ones who lived in fear at what could happen. Of course, as well as the sweat of all those who still try to eke out an honest buck in this impossible economic set of circumstances that characterise our existence.

In thirty years of the Fourth Republic, we have created a society in which seven out of ten of our compatriots live in poverty, having to get by on family (average size of five) budgets of GHS140 (€11) a day only. It is a crime against humanity that we have allowed this to happen.

As though this is not enough, we have also created a society in which our entire ecological system is now endangered by illegal mining, what we call *galamsey*. We seem helpless as flora, fauna, water bodies and the earth itself have become transmitters of death, morbidity and poison.

The tale of woe is long. About all I can say for this so-called democracy is that I can state even uncomplimentary facts about power, before the Chief Justice, and not risk liquidation or even arrest by *the Ghanaian Gestapo*. I concede that in this regard, things are less bad. But I do not celebrate at this.

We have created this mess and we must solve this mess, or else what will we tell the ancestors when we are reunited with them? That we just watched their toil and struggle dissipate, as greedy and predatory neoliberal politicians squandered the resources of the state and impoverished the masses further? Between 2000 and 2022, according to ⁴Afrobarometer, public approval of democracy has dropped by 1200 bps. Read into that what you want. But it is a very worrying trend.

Ladies and Gentlemen, what will we say when we meet Professor Kwadwo Adu Boahen (Kontopiat), Professor P.A.V. Ansah, Professor Kwame Gyekye, Christian Appiah-Agyei, B.J. da Rocha, Justice E. Amua-Sekyi, Peter Ala Adjetey and many of our ancestors who fought with their all to secure this dispensation? It is a very scary thought. What will we tell them when we also arrive at the land beyond the river?

In his powerfully rendered essay, ⁵*Discourse on Colonialism*, Aime Cesaire begins on a thundering note of condemnation of European

colonialism. I borrow it, with a very slight modification to fit our Fourth Republican context. It should cause deep reflection for all of us who live with the deterioration of everything – especially of values, principles and ethics - that the Fourth Republic has come to represent this state of anomie.

Modified for the context, Aime Cesaire's famous opening paragraph would read to Ghanaians as:

A civilization that proves incapable of solving the problems it creates is a decadent civilization. A civilization that chooses to close its eyes to its most crucial problems is a stricken civilization. A civilization that uses its principles for trickery and deceit is a dying civilization. The fact is that the so-called Fourth Republic of Ghana – as it has been shaped by three decades of bourgeois rule, is incapable of solving the two major problems to which its existence has given rise: the problem of mass misery and the anomie problem; that the ruling elite is unable to justify itself either before the bar of “reason” or before the bar of “conscience”; and that, increasingly, it takes refuge in a hypocrisy which is all the more odious because it is less and less likely to deceive.

Fighting and ominous words. Therefore, we, all of us, must solve our problems, or else we die. The bottom will drop out.

3. A night of orature - Back to Dunia cinema and Hotel Kumbaya in Nima, Accra.

As many know, I do not like to deliver lectures of over forty-five minutes alone. Persuaded by the efficacy of the orature technique in our endogenous systems of communication, I prefer orature to the monologue lecture mode. It is worth saying that the writings of the late stalwart Pan-Africanist scholar, Professor Micere Mugo, convinced me the most on this.

To properly set up a night of orature, I must go back to our heritage and rich traditions of story-telling. So, here goes.

At Dunia cinema in Nima where Chuck Norris was the king of kings and star celebrity, not all were as fortunate as our now highly reputed psychologist, Nortey Duah and his friend Danjuma Wang U. Nortey and

Danjuma had the funds to pay the entrance fee to enter and see the film. Many others did not, for in those days and even now, Nima was home to many who merely survived rather than thrived.

When any Chuck Norris movie ended, there would be a crowd of expectant youth waiting to hear about the latest exploits of their star and celebrity, the revered Chuck Norris. The man they fondly called, *Chuku Norris*. This expectant crowd would shout, as soon as they saw the film goers exit, asking how the great *Chuku Norris* had managed to liquidate and stampede the bad guys this time. For *Chuku Norris* was known indeed to stampede his enemies to death.

In response to this question, the privileged film goers like Nortey Duah, would be ready. They too would scream back to their excited audience:

“Hεεεεεεεεεεεεεεεε Chuku Norris, nna stampedeεεεεεε!” And the now frenzied crowd eager to hear more, would part ask and part say, hoping for more details, *“nna seeεεεεεεerious!!”*

Almost with rhythmic choral orchestration, the spaces between Dunia Cinema and Hotel Kumbaya would then be filled with equally reverberating chants.

Nna stampedeεεεεεε! Nna seeεεεεεεerious!!

Nna stampedeεεεεεε! Nna seeεεεεεεerious!!

Nna stampedeεεεεεε! Nna seeεεεεεεerious!!

I suspect those of you familiar with orature techniques have figured out already that this is going to be our chant tonight. We will give this speech together. When I say *Nna stampedeεεεεεε!*, I want you to bring the roof down by screaming louder than the crowd at Dunia Cinema, *Nna seeεεεεεεerious!!*

There will be no tolerance for bourgeois stiffness. Even Her Ladyship will join us, for she does what her favourite student wants, so long as it keeps him focused on his work. That is the way it always was, and that is the way it is going to be. At least that is my version and I am sticking to it.

So shall we try the chant: *Nna stampedeeee! Nna stampedeeee! Nna stampedeeee!*

Now let us get on with what we are here for, discussing under the theme: *“Improving National Values, Professional Practice and Engineering Ethics,”* a paper titled with inspiration from one of the biggest global superstars to ever have graced the surface of this earth, the revolutionary Reggae singer, Robert Nesta Marley, *“Every Day The Bucket Goes To The Well, One Day The Bottom Will Drop Out.”*

4. A short stop to deal with definitions

As you know, I am no academic, I am an *Area Boy*. Therefore, I will not be detained by detailed explanations and definitions. I am incapable of doing so. Yet, it is important that we establish uniformity of understanding of what we are discussing.

Let us begin with some views of academics who also happen to be professionals. The book ⁶ *Values and Ethics in Coaching*, written by three leading scholars on the subject of professional ethics, Professors Ioanna Iordanu, Rachel Hawley and Christiana Iordanu is very highly regarded by many. The foreword to the book is written by Professor David Clutterbuck, in my view, one of the most respected voices in the worlds of leadership and coaching. A few quotes from this book should do for our purposes today.

“Values are defined as principles or standards of behaviour, one’s judgement of what is important in life.”

“Ethics are moral principles that govern a person’s behaviour or the conducting of an activity.”

“The ethical prism weighs the dimensions of the personal, institutional, social and political factors.”

“Values and ethics sit hand in hand.”

The academic literature on ethics and values is of course heavily influenced, and perhaps even subordinate to work done on moral

philosophy. It is only fitting therefore that I provide a bridge between these definitions, trained mainly on the professional context and philosophy, by quoting Henry Foucault when he writes: ⁷*“Every society has its own regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth.”*

The question for us to ponder is what is the politics of truth that the Fourth Republic has engendered? A pure rhetoric of power or an opportunistic, misleading, highly disingenuous

use of communication techniques for the most transactional and manipulative purposes, only meant to secure electoral victory?

Professor Kwame Gyekye, for those of us who were fortunate to know him, a very modest man, but by any criteria one of the most influential philosophers from Africa in the post-colonial era, once made the following telling comment: ⁸*“The African world-view is essentially a moral one, in which the ethical dimension is central.”*

In that statement, the incomparable Kwame Gyekye shows again that positive considerations about values and ethics are indigenous to Africa. They were not imported. Therefore, the derailment and sham consequences of neoliberal democracy cannot stem from any uniquely African characteristics. They arise from primeval tendencies toward greed and predatory acquisitiveness by our elites, *the lumpenbourgeoisie*.

We shall now turn our attention, having briefly established definitional clarity, to whether Ghana has a problem with ethics and values at all. I think we do but let us see.

Nna stampede!

5. The moral dilemma of neoliberal capitalism and some of its fall-outs

There is enough in the headlines everyday to keep us chattering about the latest rapacious deed and plain brigandage of someone in political office. This does not stop whether it is the NPP or NDC in power. It is deeply disturbing to see this happen with such alarming frequency for it conditions the minds of the masses.

It sometimes appears as though having filled every other space with their loot, politicians have taken to hiding it in cupboards, under beds, in wardrobes and maybe soon, even in chamber pots. Not so long ago, it was the current president, Nana Akufo-Addo, mocking the then Attorney General of an NDC government, Dr. Obed Asamoah. The newspaper headlines had alleged that one of Obed's domestic workers had stolen money from a stash under his bed or in a cupboard. Akufo-Addo shot back at his John Kugblenu Memorial Lecture, *"Mr Chairman, what a theft? What a cupboard?"*

If recent news reports are to be believed, then following the adage "one good turn deserves another", the cupboard seems to have reappeared in the era of the NPP too. But this time, it was greeted with relative silence not an Akufo-Addo exclamation about the nature of the cupboard.

The fourth republic has spawned many big and unaccountable men. Before our eyes, we see a search for political favours, for contracts, for public procurement deals and for appointments result in massive corrosion of meritocracy. It precipitates moral degeneracy, the unaccountable big man, to whom no one dares say anything critical is incompatible with true democracy.

In 1980, when the reforms he is generally credited to have been the architect of were just really taking off, Deng Xiaoping – in my view, the most historically and economically significant leader the human race has ever encountered – warned that he would deal with such behaviour with an iron hand. He cautioned the most senior members of his party in chilling but humorous words:

"During the 'Cultural Revolution', when someone got to the top, even his dogs and chickens got there too; likewise, when someone got into trouble, even the distant relatives were dragged down with him. This situation became very serious. Even now, the abominable practice of appointing people through favouritism and factionalism continues unchecked in some regions, departments and units. There are quite a few instances where cadres abuse their power so as to enable their friends and relations to move to the cities or to obtain jobs or promotions. It is thus clear that the residual influences of clannishness must not be underestimated. We need to exert ourselves if these problems are to be solved."

There must be lessons in those words for our own experience in Ghana. But if Deng Xiaoping was speaking about Fourth Republican Ghana, he may have had to say that when someone gets to the top, even his dogs, chickens and *side-chics* get to the top too.

Nna stampede!

Such conspicuous excess and abuse of office leads to a knock in confidence of the democratic process. It can eventually lead to explosive consequences; part of the proverbial bottom dropping out.

Egregious inequality, meaning inequality that leaves the majority in mass misery, is the chief driver of much of social instability. It is also the lead consequence of neoliberalism. The system no doubt triggers capital accumulation but it is deeply oriented to over-concentration and poor distribution. And there it enters a death trap.

The ¹⁰*OXFAM World Inequality Report 2022*, states ominously that:

“ ... the richest 1% of the global population bagged 82% of the wealth generated last year. In contrast, the poorest half of humanity saw no increase in their wealth. The report also highlights that the top 10% of the global population own 76% of all wealth, while the poorest half of the population owns only 2% of the total.

This inequality is driven by factors such as tax evasion, erosion of workers' rights, cost-cutting, and firms' influence on policy . The report calls for governments to ensure that economies work for everyone and not just a fortunate few.”

According to the ¹¹*World Hunger Statistics 2020* by Food Aid Foundation, 821 million people or one in nine still go to bed on an empty stomach each night. Even more, one in three suffer from some form of malnutrition.

The ¹²*Global Report on Food Crises 2022* by the Global Network against Food Crises reveals that more than 900 million tonnes of food is thrown away every year, with 17% of the food available to consumers going directly into the bin. Of this waste, 60% is in the home.

The global economic system, with its dominant carriage, neoliberal

capitalism, is in serious trouble. The system is broken if these are its outcomes. I would say the system is even dangerous, if these are its outcomes. As my friends in East Africa will say in Swahili, neoliberal capitalism is the scourge of modern humanity *kabisa*. The chief ethical issue of the human race.

I do not know about you but I was particularly rattled by the 2020 *OXFAM World Inequality Report*. With the world in the throes of COVID and rattled to an existential extent, millions of workers were laid-off in all kinds of schemes. Business said this was necessary to protect its collective model and therefore these mass layoffs were essential for the very survival of capitalism. Then here came this report saying the net wealth of the world's billionaires increased by 30%, during the first six months of the Corona virus pandemic.

Wealth inequality is nothing new, but even for people like me who have no issue whatsoever with people getting rich from their honest labour, we must concede something is wrong. The insensitivity and callousness that sends hundreds of millions of people away from work and dignity while a few disproportionately increase their colossal wealth is simply put, spiritual wickedness. The Oxfam report found that the world's 2,153 billionaires had more wealth than that of 4.6 billion other people combined — meaning they were wealthier than 60% of the earth's entire population combined.

The OXFAM report also estimated – wait for this - that the world's 22 richest men have more wealth than all the women in Africa combined.

“Women and girls, who spend billions of hours cooking, cleaning, and caring for children and the elderly, are the backbone of our global economy yet benefit the least from it,” Paul O'Brien, vice president of policy and advocacy at Oxfam America, said in a release about the report. *“It's no accident that while most billionaires are men, women handle the care work and dominate the least secure and lowest-paid jobs. Women and girls are subsidizing our sexist economies, enabling rich, white, male billionaires to accumulate vast fortunes at the expense of the poorest.”*

To me, this is the number one moral, ethical, values and philosophical crisis facing humanity in the 21st century. The fact that so many languish in mass misery, in a world that also has so much wealth and yet cannot

distribute it properly because a few must hoard to satisfy their greed. This stark reality of mass poverty and its associated indignities are the biggest threat to humanity. They make the world an unstable place.

The wonder is why policy addiction to the directions that produce such outcomes continue to be favoured, to the point of mindless addiction, by so many in Africa. Ghana is no exception and we are witnessing the evidence.

As a chemical engineer, I know that the laws of osmosis and thermodynamics both drive natural corrections when one side has too much and the other has too little. *The second law of thermodynamics indeed argues that the total energy in a closed system remains constant.* Yet, neoliberals have built an economic model in which over-concentration of wealth, extreme income polarisation, takes place and dangerously leaves out many from the fruits of development.

We know from our engineering practice that a system that has no self-correcting mechanism to ensure fair distribution soon explodes. Is our Fourth Republic heading there? As some of the rich politicians on both sides of the duopoly watch mass misery in our midst and yet continue to grab with both hands, their mouths, their feet, everything they can use? To stash away under beds, in cupboards and wardrobes, under mattresses and wherever else. In Nigeria, people even hid money in Polytank water tanks and buried them. Predatory acquisitiveness can make people mad, it seems.

The great Aime Cesaire thundered at European colonialism in 1950 in his book⁵ earlier referred to, the immortal words that almost grew to become one of the most used slogans of the anticolonial movements globally:

"Colonialism = thingification. To make a people an object, to make its culture an object, is a fundamentally dehumanizing process".

I will again modify Cesaire's immortal words for our context:

Neoliberalism = 'thingification'!!

That is the only explanation I can give for one human being sending

another out of a job when his, and it is usually his, own wealth is growing by 30%. How else can I explain that we do nothing about illegal mining, *galamsey*, poisoning our compatriots? Would we be so quiet and indifferent if we had to drink polluted water in Labone, Cantonments, Airport Residential Area, Ridge and so on? It can only be fully explained by accepting that we see some of our compatriots as less human than us. Therefore we simply do not care enough about their conditions of existence. That is 'thingification'.

Fourth Republican politics has led to 'thingification' of the poor electorate. They are viewed as thumbprints on a ballot paper, no more. Else, how in God's almighty name, can we live unconcerned, undisturbed and unperturbed, when the April Partners report published in June 2023 drew attention to such disturbing statistics on poverty?

Nna stampede

6. There is a fire on the mountain

I agonised about how to approach this subject. Was I to focus on spectacular individual failings or, in the relatively short time available should I tackle systemic root causes? When in power, politicians in Ghana generally favour the latter. They say the problem is us, Ghanaians, and our ways. If only we would change our bad behaviour, everything would be heavenly.

I find it frustrating, even irritating, to hear politicians, on both sides, make this argument as their bid to abdicate leadership responsibility. Who on earth do they think they are going to lead when they come campaigning for our votes? Cats and dogs? It is us, Ghanaians! So why do they fight so hard to lead us and then turn round to say they are unsuccessful in office because of us? This is how we were when they the politicians were in opposition and pleading for a chance to lead us. We have not changed and getting office in Ghana means you will lead Ghanaians, not people from Antarctica. This sterile plea must stop or be halted by we the people.

Nna stampede!

As fate would have it, I watched a lecture by the outstanding Ugandan

political scientist, Professor Mahmood Mamdani. In discussing one of his many influential books, he made a critique of the Nuremburg trial model. The Nuremburg model has been adopted by many nations that emerge from crisis, since the end of World War II. Professor Mamdani argued, convincingly in my view, that an overfocus on individual perpetrators can lead to a deemphasis of actual systemic root causes that need to be addressed.

There and then, I knew I was going to focus more on systemic root causes of our national condition in the Fourth Republic than on individual actors. Thirty years on, one of the sad and inescapable conclusions of our neoliberal democratic journey is that when in power, the two parties and their lead politicians are not that different. Corruption has remained a big issue both under NDC and NPP governments, despite what their leaders say on campaign platforms. And for us, the hapless masses, we console ourselves by saying helplessly in pidgin English: *“country broke or country no broke, we dey inside!”*

Nna stampedee!

My boss and big brother Paul Polman, never stopped saying to us that we must work ON the forest and not IN the forest. It is easy to get lost in the weeds and think you are making progress but the real opportunity is to make structural and fundamental changes to improve the entire ecosystem.

This is also the lesson that I learned from the senior engineers who trained me at Unilever. People like our own avuncular inspirer Andrew Quayson, like the indomitable Kwame Addae, and of course Ben Aniagyei, Pamela Aba Turkson, Kofi Folson and the late Emmanuel Agana. Especially in accident reporting, focus was always on how we were going to fix the fundamental root causes not symptoms.

Any number of the quality gurus would tell you this for free. From W. Edwards Deming and Joseph Juran through to Kaoru Ishikawa, Genichi Taguchi and Akio Morita to Philip Crosby, Shigeo Shingo and many more. Of course, to me, the greatest quality master of all time, is my first manager, Joseph Tusah, the formidable Biochemist who took me under his wings when I joined Unilever as a National Service man. God bless all my bosses.

I will keep fidelity with that training therefore and focus on systemic matters. Before doing so though, it is worth establishing that we do have a major crisis of ethics and values in this country with some simple illustrations.

¹⁴*The Ghana Integrity of Public Services Survey (GIPSS)* is a survey conducted by the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) in partnership with the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The survey aims to provide internationally comparable measures of corruption and support the implementation of policies to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 16, which seeks to substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms.

The 2021 maiden *Ghana Integrity of Public Services Survey (GIPSS)* report, which was launched on July 21, 2022, revealed that almost GH¢5 billion was paid in cash as bribes to public officials last year. The report also indicated that nine out of ten bribes were paid in cash.

You heard that right, CASH! Any wonder beds, wardrobes, chamber pots and cupboards are now hiding unholy stashes of loot? They demand money for favours in the public sector and they want it in cash! Because go electronic, and you may be hauled before Her Ladyship the Chief Justice to explain the transaction trail.

To facilitate such evil flows of funds, our political elites have created a dense and opaque climate for the movement of huge amounts of money so their footsteps, dripping with ill-gotten wealth cannot be tracked. The pointers to this are many and I will not dwell on them. But study the auditor general's annual reports, the perception studies of Afrobarometer, the Global Financial secrecy index and many more. Sadly, they point to the same trend. That, we may still apply Professor Kofi Awoonor's expression when he described the Supreme Military Council of General Kutu Acheampong. The Fourth Republic seems to have collapsed into an elite compromise that has supervised ¹⁵*"an era of organised thuggery and brigandage."*

Nna stampede!

7. The rise of anomie conditions and non-beneficial culture

¹Amilcar Cabral was right when he described freedom itself as first and foremost an act of culture. So is political corruption and the attendant collapse of values and ethics.

I hasten to add that I see culture as a consequence of deliberate choices, of acts of omission and acts of commission. Culture is not genetic, it is learned behaviour, first as individuals and then at scale as society.

Therefore, with courageous and determined leadership, culture can be made wholesome. That is an inescapable lesson from history. Wherever, the rule of law is established and respected and enforced by competent states, culture shapes up.

Unfortunately, neoliberalism preaches retrenchment of states. With the result that we end up with Incompetent States that cannot enforce their own good laws.

Which law in this world that has helped other societies move forward do we not have on our books in Ghana? Yet, we cannot enforce them.

So we are saddled with the dangers of illegal mining, haphazard building practices, chronic noise pollution, indiscriminate littering, feudal land grabbing practices, open defecation at higher levels than we should tolerate, burglary, indiscipline on our roads leading to unacceptably high fatalities, official corruption and much more that is simply contemptible. For which of these do we not have laws? None, yet the anomie beat goes on.

When people begin to realise there is no certain consequence for breaking the law, they take liberties with it. Incompetent states breed Robinson Crusoe Societies therefore, and in Robinson Crusoe Societies, you soon get Santa Claus democracies like we have now. The politicians show up once every four years bearing gifts for the populace. Sometimes I am told, the gifts include the traditional tool for administering enema. What is known in the local parlance as *bentoa*!

When people are willing to give their votes for *bentoa*, they are also saying in their own way that they have lost confidence in the politics of the elite. For, they do not behave in the same way when it comes to

selection of their paramount chiefs.

Unsurprisingly, dangerous deviations begin to show up in the space of the moral culture of the people. I will illustrate with a few anecdotes and sayings that are common in Ghana. No doubt, many of these sayings were originally well intentioned. But the fish rots from the head. When a people see their leaders knee deep in corruption, the debasement spreads like a cancer. Anomie conditions, the collapse of values in society, are unfortunately very contagious

As part of my effort to make my hero, good old Professor Ngugi wa Thiong'o, a bit happy, I will not be translating any of these renditions of street sayings that I make in local languages.

People steal in plain sight and then parade high society showing off ill-gotten wealth, as if to say like the Akan song: *“me ye abrantiε, cigarette si ma no, me bo me walkings, cigarette si ma no.”*

We used to be a people who lived to protect the family name. These days you hear it said in pidgin English as they pillage our commonwealth: *“na good name we go chop?”* You tell people that bad conduct will lead to their reputation being sullied and they respond with cheeky ease – my personal favourite introduced to me by my friend Barbara Davies: *“beyifuo koraa bewu na konkonsani.”*

You encounter poor and unproductive work practices in the public sector and to your protests you are told: *“εye aban adwuma, εnye me papa dea.”*

When you demand that things are done with rigour and diligence, they tell you, *“you are too known na Dentisfo can sing without hymn book.”* A man refuses to honour his debts and his response is shameless and nonchalant: *“εye εka na me bo ye, man ko wia adeε. Kafo didi.”*

When we were students in Katanga Hall, on one of our breaks the return trip to Accra was characterised by drama. At the Nkawkaw stop, Johnny Akoto Jnr., my roommate, an engineer and an incomparable campaigner for justice, noticed the driver of our bus was drinking *akpeteshie*, the strong local brew. Johnny raised an alarm and we quickly organised to demand that the driver be changed.

To my considerable consternation, the driver's only defence was that it was only a small amount he had drunk and that we were only trying to disgrace him. He said we would one day grow up to be like him and realise that we should not disgrace older men like that, for "*yε bo didi.*"

Guess what? The crowd turned against us for complaining that we would not ride in a bus driven by someone who had been seen drinking strong alcoholic beverage while on duty. The driver's colleagues, many of the passengers and the hawkers taunted us, telling us to offload our bags and that they would continue with the journey without us. This was during the era of the second Jerry Rawlings Sensation, so we were under the PNDC military dictatorship. Unsurprisingly therefore, people threatened to call soldiers to deal with us.

If you know anything about Johnny Akoto Jnr., and about Katanga Hall of that era, then you can predict what was about to happen. We broke out chanting war songs and formed a human chain to stop the bus from moving. In Katanga Hall we used to say as articulation of our determination to stand up for justice: "*we don't fear VC, we don't fear police, we don't fear 'beware of dogs.'*" People who had defied police guns before were not likely to be afraid of Nkawkaw hawkers. In no time, the regional manager of the State Transport Corporation appeared on the scene.

He listened to both sides calmly and then said the Katanga Hall students were right. To compensate us for our woes, he released the newest bus in the fleet to replace the much older bus we were travelling in and got us a demonstrably sober driver.

Nna stampedee!

Now guess what? In an illustration of an aspect of the Ghanaian national character I will never fully understand, some of the passengers who had only moments before been condemning us, started to congratulate us for sticking to our guns. They thanked us for securing a better and safer service for them all.

You complain about people ripping off their employer and you get told: "*onipa nyε aboa, man mon yaay, we mon shake body*" and such sterile justifications of daylight robbery.

What happened to the motto my late father, Professor J.K. Nsarkoh, once suggested in dripping sarcasm should be made the national motto of Ghana: “*Asem beba dabi – no condition is permanent*”? Against the backdrop of an Incompetent State and derailed leadership example of a Robinson Crusoe Society, public morality has collapsed in many important ways.

My friend, George Owusu-Ansah and I, still laugh at a story we were told all of three decades ago. A mutual friend had some money stolen by one of his domestic workers, his own relative. When he confronted this relative, the chap completely denied knowledge of the theft. Unconvinced, our friend continued the interrogation with forensic determination and precision.

Finding himself cornered, the relative who had taken his money suddenly exclaimed in Twi: “*Gyama wo dwen se wo ye Yesu. Nti wo sika kakra a me fa ye nti na wo bisa me questions dindin sei. Ah! Atemuda koraa enye den sei.*”

Nna stampede!

There is no doubt in my mind whatsoever that this country is in need of comprehensive Mindset Revolution. These bad attitudes, formed in the crucible of too much poverty and poor leadership example cannot sustain any serious development effort.

I drown my sorrows, in the poetry of the pidgin English of the village drunkard in the *akpeteshie* bar near the Presbyterian Church in my late mother Joana’s hometown, Effiduase. Her only surviving brother, the last of my maternal uncles, Christian Kwabena Appiah-Agyei, the Trade Unionist, has only recently gone on to be with the ancestors. Permit me to wish him a safe ride to the land beyond the river, he did his bit in the best way he knew how. *Wofa Kwabena nante yie, da yie.*

This drunkard from Effiduase would say in despair, in a way I sometimes feel like aping and which always reminds of my great friend, Kolowawa and his main man, Okyenasco:

“Oh God, why koraa you send your son make e come die for this earth?”

He come suffer teeeeeeeey. Them carry am go for Pontius Pilate. Roman solider carry am go put am for cross top bam! They crucify am. Still now the trouble wey dey for this world, e plenty pass before your son come.

O God the Father, next time don't send your son, you yourself come. Amen."

Nna stampede!

I have many more of such stories but the Chief Justice is a busy woman and she must move on to other duties, I will therefore go on to other matters. Before someone says to me: *ye nom nsa a wose shirt!*

8. A look at some of the root causes of structural and systemic dysfunction

The immortal revolutionary, freedom fighter, prolific writer and psychiatrist, Dr. Frantz Fanon, a prominent postcolonial theorist, wrote in his book ¹⁶*"The Wretched of the Earth"* that: *"Each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfil it, or betray it."*

A question for us all is: what is the mission of this generation of professional and academic elites, the intellectual classes? Those of us, who out of good fortune, funded from public funds generated by the backbreaking exertion of our less fortunate compatriots – the workers and peasants on farms and mines and in markets and so on – must stand up for this sinking society.

These words spoken by the incomparable Professor Toni Morrison (in 1988), a Nobel Laureate and in my view, one of the most influential writers of the 20th century and beyond must inspire us.

¹⁷*"If you are free, you need to free somebody else. If you have some power, then your duty is to empower somebody else."*

On this, I am completely with Deng Xiaoping, that outstanding leader. I argue that the mission of democracy, of society, of development and of humanity, is to liberate and emancipate the productive forces. This is done with a full determination to improve livelihoods by sharing dignity and prosperity across society. It must necessarily mean the elimination of mass poverty and mass misery.

This is a theme I will come back to. For now, I will like to look briefly at four things I suggest are factors of systemic causative destruction of ethics and values in this Fourth Republic.

They are:

- Excessive and tremendously dangerous over-monetisation of our politics.
- Poor public sector governance and the attendant absence of security for those who strive for meritocracy.
- The rise of anti-intellectualism and the attendant collapse of intellectual rigour in our development discourse.
- The uncontrollable rise of factionalism.

Nna stampede!

Excessive and tremendously dangerous over-monetisation of our politics: That we are sitting on top of a raging volcano is for me beyond reasonable doubt. I do not therefore want to spend too much time providing the evidence. It is enough to point to the excellent report by the *Centre for Development and Democracy*.¹⁸

When in a poor country like Ghana, with an economy that is significantly below a GDP of US\$75 billion, you are told that to win the presidential race, a candidate needs US\$100 million, know also that you have stumbled on the source of all evil. Where does such money come from?

Unsurprisingly, both the NDC and NPP, in relative terms have been spectacularly quiet about the startling, even frightening contents of that report. But of equal concern is the silence of professional associations like the Ghana Institution of Engineering and others. Disappointingly, the media has also not focused on this matter sufficiently.

Someone tell me, how any human being contesting elections in Ghana can raise US\$100 million and not be compromised? How? Who still believes that our laws that bar foreign funds from entering the coffers of our political parties are being respected?

I lived in Nigeria for six years. It is not a secret why so many of our leading politicians are always seeking out potential financiers from that country. This neoliberal democracy will lead us to mortgage our sovereignty if we do nothing. I have warned before that we are heading towards a narco-state. For there are now much more than subtle hints that massive flows from the international narcotics trade are being laundered in our Santa Claus democracy. That should explain why so much money is kept under beds, and in cupboards, wardrobes and chamber pots.

We cannot sit and watch our politicians raise such funds every four years and still expect them to be honest. We have become the society that expects politicians to turn up at Church harvests, durbars, birthday parties, funerals, weddings, outdoorings, events of their *alma maters* to make substantial donations.

We know the salaries of these public officials. Yet, we ask no questions about their source of funds. Where do they get such monies to make these donations so frequently and regularly, as well as fund their ostentatious lifestyles and side-chics?

By not asking the questions we know we should be asking, we, all of us, have collapsed into collaborators. We are dripping with the guilt that characterises, the *lumpenbourgeoisie* everywhere – elite compromise. Tell me, I ask you the question, which professional association in Ghana does not know that there are several worries about our public procurement system? A system soaked in allegations of deals and kickbacks and bribery. Who pays these for jobs? Not professionals like us? So why are we quiet?

For as long as we do nothing about political campaign funding, we are stuck with egregious corruption. And keep in mind that corruption denies the majority of our compatriots of dignity because it deprives them of social services they deserve simply because they are human!

I do not know how else to say that this is the number one factor of derailment of this Santa Claus neoliberal democracy. It has turned out to be a miracle that has led nowhere. If we do nothing about it, when we cross the river to be with the ancestors, we cannot face Ahunu Hongar and the four others that died during the *Kume Preko* demonstrations.

President Nana Akufo-Addo, you were the spokesperson of the *Alliance For Change*. Since then, you have become a Member of Parliament, Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Foreign Minister, Leader of the opposition, and then finally President of the Republic and Commander-in-Chief of the Ghana Armed Forces. Ahunu and the others whose lives were cut short in their prime deserve better treatment. Their blood haunts us from the grave.

If it is now impossible, for whatever reason, to bring the murderers of these people to justice, we must at least honour their memory properly. We continue to campaign for things to be named after members of a so-called Big Six. What about the ordinary people like Ahunu Hongar who gave their lives in valiant struggle? A 14-year old, killed for nothing!

Alas, my senior brother and Comrade, Akoto Ampaw, only a few days ago crossed the river to be with the ancestors. If it can be said about anyone that he did his bit, then Lawyer Akoto Ampaw, the man we fondly called Sheey Shey, is that man. Comrade Sheey, may you finally find rest.

I call on all the surviving leaders of the *Alliance For Change* to push for justice for Ahunu. Kweku Baako Jnr., Kwesi Pratt Jnr., Charles Wereko-Brobby, Nyaho Tamakloe and Kweku Poku, you are the ones I knew the best. This is a historic duty you must perform.

Before this Robinson Crusoe Society collapses into a heap under all the pillaging, and takes us all down with it. We must not sit and watch as another June 4th 1979 situation develops. I sound the warning again, everyone with breath in their body must take up the issue of political party and political campaign funding. It is the root of all evils.

Nna stampede!

Poor public sector governance and the attendant absence of security for those who strive for meritocracy.

I have spoken publicly at some length about this, only in July, therefore I do not wish to dwell on it too much today. All I wish to say is that we must change aspects of our constitution to insulate the appointment process from the manipulating hands of politicians.

I have recently made some proposals for changes to the public sector board appointment process. I will just refer to a few of the things I mentioned and then move on. What I do know is that we are faced with a crisis. On some – if not many – boards, there are a number of people there who have no clue what they are there to do. To be honest and meticulous in such a climate, you must have the strength of Samson and more courage than Che Guevara. It is a constant battle for the few that try.

I now make these proposals for strengthening public sector governance which I have repeated before on other platforms:

A structural and determined approach must be taken to strengthen state competence, that is – specifically in this case - the effectiveness of SOE Boards.

A. Amend constitution and all other relevant legislation to insulate strategic appointments in the public sector from politics and to give improved security of tenure to board members, assuming good performance. Above all, board members need courage and independence to be effective, especially in the public sector. More must be done to make it possible for them to pursue the path of integrity wherever it goes, in the discharge of their duties.

B. Concretely, this should mean a radical departure from the current state of affairs where the President and his people appoint nearly every SOE board that matters. To one where vacancies are advertised publicly. Professional search committees are put in place and recruiters such as PWC, KPMG etc are used to interview prospective candidates.

The results of such interviews must be made public on demand. For high profile jobs like Chief Justice, the interviews should even be done publicly - in the media. These measures will help restore the independence of the public sector.

There are now too many instances of boards that lose courage because they are aware they live and die at the pleasure of their political masters. It leads to very poor corporate governance outcomes.

C. Such appointments should then be solidified with performance based contracts – spelling out what boards are expected to achieve (in granular

terms); how long they will exist for; how the boards will be evaluated – to establish a look of failure and also, hopefully, a look of success.

These will then become an objective and transparent criteria by using merit-based tools to recruit, retain and reward board members, for what is an onerous responsibility. If it is done well.

The situation in Ghana, since the beginning of the 4th Republic, Madam Chair, is that as soon as a government changes, all boards of SOEs are also changed. This is deleterious to development progress. Boards grow when they get continuity and deepen sector knowledge and understanding.

D. Once board appointments are made, there should be World Class Continuous Professional Development for all members of boards, especially the chairpersons. The training must be verifiably World Class quality and designed to constantly upgrade the capabilities of board members. The level of sophistication in knowledge of corporate governance that Board Chairpersons require in modern times, demands investment of time and effort to achieve.

E. Public Sector Boards should be evaluated regularly and results given to relevant regulators. These evaluations should be conducted by independent bodies. With clear action plans that are reviewed for compliance by cabinet members responsible for the respective sectors.

I know there must be people saying “Kwaku Frimpong” Yaw Nsarkoh *de asem beba*. To them I respond, we can all pretend that we do not know we are in serious trouble as a country and then go down when the fire next time becomes the fire right here and the bottom of the bucket drops out. Or we can heed the admonishment of Deng Xiaoping. People who want to reform societies must take structural approaches and tackle the big issues of the day. ⁹*They must dare to touch the back side of the tiger.*

The rise of anti-intellectualism and the attendant collapse of intellectual rigour in our development discourse

I do not know any society on earth, throughout human history, that has made it to development without serious thinking, critical reflection, systematic awareness creation and collective mindset revolution. Not one example exists.

We cannot be the only one. It has become fashionable in some places to trash demands for intellectual rigour. Sometimes, I watch with horror as statements from different government agents, regardless of which party is in office, contradict each other.

Serious societies that have made it from poverty and misery to prosperity and development were led by people like Lee Kwan Yew and Deng Xiaoping. They had one thing in common. They recognised the place of thinking in their society and declared knowledge, mindsets, science (in the broadest sense of rigorous study of all fields) as the primary productive force.

It is of course for our leaders to welcome fact-based challenge more and encourage it. It has become perilous to many from a point of view in surviving as a supplier of government in anything, to disagree with power. This is not a recipe for constructive development.

But the intellectuals and thinkers themselves too have a role. And here I speak to the kinds of people gathered in this room. Throughout human history, people without courage have affected nothing. We too have the responsibility to speak out and participate in the conversation to rescue our beleaguered society.

For example, it is now fashionable for these politicians to “distract” the judiciary after every presidential election because losers no longer accept results. What is it that politicians do when they are in office that makes them so suspicious of the electoral process as soon as they are in opposition? Someone must explain to us.

All professionals in this country must rise up now to demand that John Dramani Mahama and whoever emerges as the Presidential candidate of the NPP tell us now what they find wrong with the electoral process. If they are that bothered, we the people must know what they know, so we all fix it. We cannot afford this degree of destabilisation and upheaval and fear in our society every four years simply because we want to elect a President. Many of whom anyway simply promise miracles that have led us nowhere in three decades.

Had I my own way, all major Presidential candidates that participate in the 2024 elections would be made to sign a death oath in blood that they

will accept the outcome of the elections. Every four years since 1992, the bucket of elections has tested the peace of this country severely. If we leave it that way, one day the bottom will drop out. Be sure.

Democracy and Development must mean Democracy and Development for the masses. We cannot achieve that without peace and harmony and stability. When I see how even intra-party elections and contests are now characterised by violence, what has happened to our values and ethics as a people that we tolerate such scoundrel conduct from politicians who want to lead us?

Nna stampede!

The uncontrollable rise of factionalism: Only because this subject saddens me deeply, I will be very brief here. All I will say is that no people who remain this divided in all things ever develop. In Ghana we now put party before being Ghanaian or African.

Whichever party is in power excludes the other. All boards, ambassadors even handlers of public toilets, are fired. No continuity, no space for mastery of the craft. Just power grab.

There is no route to development with this attitude. The 21st Century winners will be those who learn to cooperate and collaborate in networks, alliances and partnerships, even with those perceived to be their enemies by others. It takes an ecosystem to liberate and properly emancipate the productive forces.

This perilous Russian Roulette of a Santa Claus democracy makes people in office extremely insecure. People who must always look over their shoulders become susceptible to corruption, for they always worry what will happen to them if they are sacked. The absence of meritocracy has a corrosive effect on values and ethics.

But will the Falcon hear the falconer, or will we wait, until as ¹⁹William Butler Yeats pointed out, things fall apart and mere anarchy is loosed upon the earth?

Nna stampede!

9. Now a message to engineers and all professionals

The Russian sage and writer, Leo Tolstoy, once said with characteristically profound simplicity: ²⁰*“Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself.”*

I have spoken on the platform of professionals, specifically of engineers. If you have assumed that I have let off professionals quite lightly, then fasten your seat-belts for now we proceed to the gates of hell.

Whatever this country has become professionals deserve their equal share of the credit and blame. We have been part of every government since Independence, we cannot now extricate ourselves.

But I do not intend to sermonise at an individual level. For, I believe that we must apply sanctions and the law must work where engineers, and indeed all professions are involved.

If it has become the case that everywhere professionals have become complicit in subverting the public procurement practices by paying bribes for deals and sustaining a system of political patronage, people must suffer for it. It should not be a matter of discretion to be an ethical or values-led professional that works for the long term health of society.

Without a healthy and functional society, professions and professionals do not thrive. Almighty Lord, I can say it no other way, professional engineers who do sloppy and shoddy jobs and deliberately thereby, cause mass injury and fatalities should be jailed. And struck off the professional roll. The professional associations must have the courage to do this, regardless of who is involved. Then we will see sanity return to this country. In our lifetimes.

You cannot take public funds or even private funds to do a job and then you construct things that kill people or damage the ecological system. I say it again, such professionals should be in a jail somewhere.

Of course, you as the Institution of Engineering should be involved in putting together all the professional development schemes, continuous education, competent incentive schemes, mentoring and coaching, proper regulation and standards and so on. If in spite of these pure

greed, for that is what motivates all this, leads people to be wilfully negligent, they must be adequately punished to serve as a deterrent.

And when the day of judgement comes, we should not start making calls to the Chief Justice and asking our priests and chiefs to plead. That is the extent of my appeal.

Nna stampede!

I now have a set of things I suggest the Ghana Institution of Engineering can focus on. I touch on this and I am done.

The first thing I did when I was given this subject was to reflect on what our national values are as a people and to ask a few of my friends. Every one agreed on FREEDOM AND JUSTICE. But then everyone had their own candidates for some other values.

Freedom and Justice are indeed comprehensive values and any society that really achieves them will become a developed society in the true sense of development and humanity.

Going through the national anthem, Ephraim Amu's "*Yɛn ara ya asaase ni*", and *The Directive Principles of State Policy of our constitution*, I submit three more. We value SOLIDARITY, COURAGE and INTEGRITY.

If you put together FREEDOM, JUSTICE, SOLIDARITY, COURAGE and INTEGRITY, you get a humane and disciplined society in which the rule of law is functional and people live in dignity. These values underline the fact that the central task of the 21st Century is to emancipate and liberate the productive forces in order to improve livelihoods and achieve shared prosperity and shared dignity for all. This is the surest way to secure the long term health of our society.

Professor Donald Schon, an expert in the area, insightfully poses the right question when he asks in his 1991 book, ²¹*The Reflective Practitioner*:

"Is professional knowledge adequate to fulfil the espoused purposes of the professionals? Is it sufficient to meet the societal demands which the professions have helped to create?"

As professionals we must always ask ourselves these questions and answer them honestly. That will help us face what should be faced.

I suggest for the consideration of the Ghana Institution of Engineering that it picks up these points that I have previously mentioned in an open letter:

Five areas that Ghana Institution of Engineering is well placed to do this in, if we have the courage in leadership are:

- A. Dealing with poor construction standards and practices that lead to preventable accidents.
- B. Structural solutions to perennial flooding challenges and improving general sanitation (which must mean the elimination of the blight of open defecation from this country).
- C. Management of vehicular traffic on our roads to significantly reduce the carnage and improve economic efficiencies of transport by eliminating many deadweight costs in the current system.
- D. Tackling *galamsey* systematically, organically, holistically and structurally.
- E. Value chain solutions to systematically debottleneck the end-to-end agricultural production systems in order to improve food production.

I always favour focus and prioritisation. In these five areas, I believe we could have more than enough to keep the Ghana Institution of Engineering very busy for the next five to ten years, minimum. Obviously, there will also be in place talent development in the profession.

All of these areas will require that engineers stand up and organise. It requires courageous and determined leadership as well. The question for us all, is: are we able to provide that leadership for our association?

The revolutionary thinker, Karl Marx, writing in 1845, in his ²²*The Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach*, observed provocatively as he was quite capable of, "*Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it.*" Those immortal words were inscribed on his tombstone upon his death.

Can we change the situation? It is what we do next that will decide. So, if

it is to be, it is up to you and I. Will we?

Nna stampede!

10. Epilogue

Now we must close. What happens next is up to us. In his extraordinarily influential book, ²²*Man's search for meaning*, among many other things, the Psychiatrist and Nazi Holocaust survivor, Professor Viktor Frankl, made these striking comments:

"For the world is in a bad state, but everything will become still worse unless each of us does his best."

Viktor Frankl then added these immortal words I will never tire of repeating. They are indeed very powerful for reminding people that we all can make a difference with the right attitudes and mindsets.

"We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that every thing can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."

We have agency. That is the point of Frankl. Even in the middle of this mess, to choose our own way. Which road will we choose, the road that liberates the productive forces to improve the livelihoods of all our compatriots? Or the neoliberal road that enriches a small elite, corrupts the system to the point of destruction and leaves our society dripping with mass misery? We each and collectively have a choice to make.

It will definitely be worth the time and energy required for each of us to reflect on these words of the incomparable Amilcar Cabral.

¹*"Therefore, national liberation takes place when, and only when the national productive forces are completely free of all kinds of foreign domination. The liberation of productive forces, and consequently of the ability to determine the mode of production most appropriate to the evolution (or growth) of the liberated people, necessarily opens up new*

prospects for the cultural development of the society in question, by returning to that society all its capacity to create progress.

"The more one realizes that the chief goal of the liberation movement goes beyond the achievement of political independence to the superior level of complete liberation of the productive forces and the construction of economic, social, and cultural progress of the people, the more evident is the necessity of undertaking a selective analysis of the values of the culture within the framework of the struggle for liberation."

This is true not just about independence. It holds validity in the cases of our search for true democracy, good governance, development, indeed everything! *Uhuru* must mean *Uhuru* for the masses.

The day is coming, I hope, if we are willing to dare everything and work hard, when we like James Baldwin – faced with the hopelessness of the present, shall also be able to say: ²³ *"The very moment I thought I was lost, my dungeon shook and my chains fell off."*

Before that day arrives though, I leave you with inspiration of the slogan of the Portuguese speaking anti-colonial freedom fighters and that of their Cuban comrades.

A LUTA CONTINUA. HASTA LA VICTORIA SEMPRE. VICTORIA ASCERTA.

AFRIKA MAYIBUYE. Thank you for listening. I am done.

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