

Coming of the BIG 'O'

The Coming Of The Big "O": Of Actual And Perceived Significance:

Barrack Obama, the 44th and first African-American president of the United States will be coming to Kenya in July, following confirmed reports. As opposed to the general expectation of euphoric excitement from Kenyans, Kenyans seem to have received the news with much grace, not common to us. Maybe this being the fourth trip to Africa, the "Obama is coming to Africa" elation has died down. At this point, Barrack Obama's ties to Africa, and Kenya in particular is basic, common knowledge. So much so, that political analysts in the United States describe this fact as a political headache to Obama domestically. The president of the "Mighty" United States has had to defend his nationality claims from fringe groups in the US, known as "birthers" to the extent of having to produce his birth certificate in self (nationality) defense. What a strange predicament for the world's hegemonic leader!

Of Kenyans and Their Utopian Idealism;

In January 2009, Barrack Obama assumed office amidst ecstatic jubilation around the globe. Perhaps the world was astounded that one of the most racially prejudiced states had finally overcome the vice, by electing an African-American (Black) into the most powerful office not only in the US, but also in the world. It was a whole different story in Kenya. Not only was Obama the most powerful man then, and maybe now too, but he was also partly Kenyan! We were going to get direct flights to the US. Maybe even free of charge! Kenya and the US were now going to be bosom allies. Unlimited funding. Top of the range training for our soldiers, say, to match the US SEALs, the list WAS endless.

BROKEN DREAM:

Come 2013, Kenyans elect an inductee of the ICC, and voila! Obama gives Kenya a wide berth during his visit to Africa in 2013, including to our immediate neighbor, and nemesis, Tanzania. It was preposterous! Kenyans "caught feelings" like it has never been seen before. The sun begins to shine on Kenyans once more, when after his re-election, president Obama indicates that he would visit the country before his second term in office came to an end. I must share this though with you. The day the US president announced these

sentiments, was the day, I, personally understood that as the strongest indication that Kenya's presidents' case at the ICC was on its death bed. Call it discernment. I digress. To say that we were embarrassed by Obama's nonchalance with Kenya is an understatement. We were dismayed! Our own "son"! We love prestige, fame, we think ourselves better to the rest of Africa. That is who we are. International relations and politics aside, it is always about us, Kenyans, what we want, what we wish. And this is where we terribly miss the point.

MISSING THE POINT

We miss to see the point that since president Barrack came into power, there has been increased foreign policy interaction with Africa. In July 2015, Obama will be in Kenya for the **Global Entrepreneurship Summit**. The GES, is an annual entrepreneurship summit, a brain child of president Obama, through which entrepreneurship was elevated to the forefront of the United States' engagement agenda during the historic speech in Cairo, Egypt in 2009.

Since then, the Obama government has organized 5 GES that have since elevated entrepreneurship on the global agenda, inspiring new generations of innovators to choose entrepreneurship as a profession. The previous GES was held in Marrakech, Morocco, where the Obama administration committed approximately 3.2 billion USD to support micro, small and medium sized enterprises, and mobilized 800 million USD in private capital for start-up acceleration in the developing world.^[1] The 6th GES will be taking place in July in Nairobi, Kenya.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GES FOR KENYA

The 6th Summit in Kenya will focus on generating new investments in entrepreneurship, particularly for women and young entrepreneurs. The choice of venues for this Summit should not come as a surprise for anyone. The Summit underscores the fact that Kenya has become a center for innovation and entrepreneurship, specifically in technological innovations involving mobile money transfer such as M-pesa and Airtel money. Kenya is in fact a world leader in this field. Kenya is evidently also a driver of innovation through creative spaces such as iHub. Besides these, Kenya also boasts a pool of young innovators such as Kelvin Macharia Kuria of Sunrise Tracking solutions and social entrepreneurs such as Heshan de Silva (allegations aside). This, dear Kenyans, is the main reason why the big

“O” is making his way here. It is not about what we want, not about him having roots in Kenya. It is substantial, political, and economic. It is business, not a friendly checkup. And this, is what we should truly be proud about. Substance, our achievements, and not mere wishful and romantic thinking

(I take this chance to pay tribute to the 147 students brutally murdered by the cruel act of terrorism. Terrorism is a philosophy of cowards. #147NotJustaNumber)

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Notes:

[1] Press release, The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, November 20th, 2014