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"A government of the people, by the people, and for the people."

By definition, democracy seems to place a great deal of importance on the people of a nation. It follows that a government elected for the sake of a people must give room for those people to have a say in the affairs that concern them. Sadly, things are not as they should be. The right to freedom of expression as we know it is little more than a shadow in this part of the world, and what we seek now are ways to protect it. Every day, more and more people are in danger for speaking the truth. They say where there is a will, there is a way. What then is the way to protect free speech in Africa?

### **Remove the Veil.**

It is one thing to have something and another to be aware of that possession and how to use it. Myles Munroe said, "When purpose is not known, abuse is inevitable." What is the use of a right or a privilege if the owner is ignorant of what they possess? How does the right to freedom of speech benefit the average African if they're not aware that the law permits them to speak without fear of interference by the Government? There are knowledge deficiencies in several communities that prevent inhabitants from knowing their rights, not to talk of exercising them. If we want to protect these rights from being trampled on, we must first make sure every citizen is aware of what they carry. We must first remove the veil of ignorance. Workshops, seminars, and other institutions focused on human rights awareness will come in handy for this cause.

### **Paint a Clear Picture.**

They say Comparison is a thief of joy, but it can also be its herald. Take a look at countries where freedom of speech is a priority: The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, the Freedom of the Press Act in Sweden, and Norway's commitment to free speech, to mention only a few. This focus on prioritizing free speech has tremendously benefited the nations by promoting transparency, cultural diversity, and accountability.

Imagine a cross-country race where any mode of transportation is allowed, but the participants are accustomed only to walking or running. If one of the participants is given a car but does not know the first thing about it, he will probably keep it somewhere safe and start running the race. The car can help him win the race because it can run faster and for longer periods than the average human, but it is of no use to him if he does not know its importance. It is not enough to know we have a right to speak; we must also realize how our diversity of speech can impact our society. One way to make this happen is to encourage communication with external bodies that can shed light on the importance of these freedom laws. The information garnered can be made public to educate Africans on how vital their words can be.

## **Create Room for Expression.**

We know our rights and are beginning to see how those rights can make a better day for our land. What is next? How do we do the deed - express ourselves? There is one tool I can think of for anyone who wants to make their voice heard – The Internet. Widespread use of the Internet's tools ensures anyone can reach a vast audience swiftly and effectively. Free flow of information is no longer a hassle, which means that multitudes of people can share and receive information in real time. Public discourse is made easy, and citizens of many nations can share innovative ideas via social media and intentional platforms such as African Liberty, thereby fostering growth and unity in the society.

Of course, there will be chaff among the wheat of those who do express themselves, and allowing everyone to speak may give room for uncomfortable or even offensive declarations. Nevertheless, Condoleezza Rice told the truth in his statement, "We do not have a constitutional right to be comfortable." What citizens do have a right to is freedom of expression. Fair measures can be deliberated on and executed to curb hate speech and other forms of abuse in the name of expressing oneself. Still, those measures **must refrain** from trampling on the fundamental rights of an individual to freedom of speech.

Protecting Free Speech in Africa is an ongoing battle, and there is no telling when it will end. However, for change to happen, we must adequately educate Africans about their right to freedom of expression and how they can effectively exercise it.