

DREAMING YUNHOUSE

My Father was the working title for Yunhouse, by The Author



I began dreaming of Yunhouse from the moment of my arrival in Europe in the middle of the last century. It was a dream that would afflict my career development. For a couple of decades, after graduating with two degrees, I wandered through space and time with a nagging existential itch that was attributable to my psyche being wired into Europe-Africa mode. I got relief from this itch by keeping diaries, millions of words, thousands of pages, and dozens of volumes.

I approached middle age without a job that satisfied My Father's idea of earning a living. On one historic day, he asked what I planned to do with my life. 'If I don't write I will die', I said. He paused for a long time, then he said: 'If only we had known that Whiteman's schooling would turn our children into Whitemen...As it is now, I don't's see any of myself in you. You have turned out a bastard...The only thing traditional left in you is to ensure I have a decent funeral".

I felt hurt. Really, deeply hurt.

My Father did not go to school. But he was – and still remains – the person I most respect on this planet. He is the only role model I can think of. So, how on earth could he regret his decision that led to my growing up to be who I am?

The exchange with My Father helped focus my Yunhouse dream. I took a critical look at European education. I stripped being European-educated of its popular blessings: earning power, material possessions, high status in society, and all that. Then I saw the curses: the unresolved contradictions and conflicts inherent in The Pacification Of The Natives as a process in the colonisation of Africa. And this revelation: the much vaunted Golden Fleece being pursued by European-educated Africans was a Trojan Horse! The irrepressible urge to narrate this revelation in full became the essence of the dream about a place of interminable hot debates about Africa, Africans African-ness, and associated emotions, notions, locutions or prognostications.

But, how could this dream narration be attained without resorting to anti-colonial furore so loudly expressed in extant literature about Africa but seemingly made redundant by the full continent-wide attainment of political independence? For instance, what else can an African say about colonialism after the world famous Nelson Mandela Option is deemed to have concluded the

liberation struggle, and Africans are asked to sheath their swords of anger, forgive the brutalisation, forget the dehumanisation, and move on? Move on to what life?

I considered a narrative angle that used My Father to characterise the generation that sent my generation to school. Imagine My Father having gone to school and travelling to England to study, how he would have been in a position to experience and observe at first hand the undeniable conspiracy behind the colonisation process. Armed with their language and knowledge of their social attitudes, he would be able to directly engage those responsible for re-engineering the destiny of his people. How would he defend Africa?

Predictably, My Father would vehemently challenge the basic assumption that Africa was there to be taken by any non-Africans who so desired. He would adduce arguments from first principles of humanity: what of the humans (the Africans) who have lived on this target continent for millennia, their history, their culture, their traditions, not to mention their god-given rights to life aimed at a destiny of their aspiration? The responses, explicit and implicit, would come at him, loud and clear, wherever he goes, whatever he sees, anything he touches, every sound he hears: What African people? Non-Africans have been taking Black Africans for

centuries, the Arabs moved millions across the Sahara Desert, and lately Europeans shipped millions across the Atlantic Ocean. These responses would no doubt sicken My Father. Even more so when he points their implications at himself: does that mean he too has been taken? He cannot answer because he cannot believe the probability. He cannot believe the probability because he cannot he cannot accept the possibility. He cannot accept the possibility because it would mean shredding everything he holds as the essence of the life as he has known and lived.

Feeling dejected, rejected and even ejected, My Father reaches for his soul's panic button: fight or flight! But...who are the enemies?...where are they?...where is the battlefield?...flight from where?...retreating to what destination? Too many things are simply not adding up in this existential equation.

Typical of his generation, My Father hankers for his roots, for any bits of traditional wisdom, to ease his anguish. He recollects the event of his native community's initial encounter with Europe. The community's Spiritual Leader walked out of the first ever formal discussion with the first ever European person to step on their native soil, because: "Dialogue with a total stranger is a total illusion!". And he spat. The pronouncement (together with the spitting) has become an adage in My Father's language. But the

speakers of this language are undecided about the pertinence of the symbolism in the fact that this iconic Spiritual Leader, straight after dropping his pearl of wisdom, hanged himself. Had the cause of death been suicide, African Spiritual Leader – of all people – would have been denied the dignity of traditional funeral rites. So the elders noted the cause of death as natural tragedy, and it was so recorded in the community's collective memory.

All pre-colonial African communities had Spiritual Leaders who, without exception, expressed opposition and resistance to the phenomenon of the appearance of the Whiteman. All the Spiritual Leaders had the premonition that the European was harbinger of an ill-wind that would blow away all things African. But now, as My Father and his peers could clearly observe, all the social relevance of the spiritual leaders are being deleted by Christianity, and their institutions are being categorised by anthropologists as medicine-men, mumbo-jumbo, juju, etc, etc, in the scientific nomenclature for African purveyors of perceived superstition.

However, in the mind-set of My Father's generation, there persists a legacy of the Spiritual Leaders foresaw Africa being invaded by strangers who were vectors of an alien cultural pathogen against which Africa's cultural immune system had no defence. The manifestation of this virulent pathogen is that it chews up Africa's

past, compels Africans to a life that begins today, and infects them with perpetual angst about tomorrow.

Being at the cusp of this transformation exacerbates My Father's anguish. In spite of himself, he witnesses how and why there is not much he can do about the unfolding reality whereby he cannot be the role model for his children the way his father had been for him. He can only wish his children would live out their scenes of this existential drama with less pain than himself. Hopefully, they will have more to

Visit Yunhouse website: www.yunhouse.co.uk

BUY YUNHOUSE FROM AMAZON

