



'Ubuntu' and Leadership

On the evening of the 16th October, the Harambee Leadership Program participants plunged straight into the long awaited training program. The Program brings together 18 participants from 7 countries to explore ethical leadership in the 21st Century Africa.

Eric Mafuna, a renowned South African leadership specialist addressed the participants on the first day of their two-week training in Ethiopia. He is a consummate storyteller. From the moment he begins the tales from his home, in the province of Limpopo, his audience is captivated. He understands the fundamental power of most African traditions – a lesson is best learnt through a story.

Over the last thirty years, Mafuna has been working at the forefront of a mission to improve not only the quality, but also the relevance of African leadership while seeking to create leadership models rooted in indigenous thought, customs and value systems. These are largely based on the concept of 'ubuntu' or African Humanism (I am because you are, and you are because we are) to map a course for return to responsible leadership.

He outlined a number of key factors for good leadership, which include self-knowledge, community and hard work.

Mediatix Masava (Kenya) was one of the many captured by his saying, "If you want to go quickly, go alone but if you want to go far, go together." She has seen the value of including her family and community in the activities she pursues and values the support they give her.



"The success of a leader is based on the on those around him." said James Wambogo from Uganda. He felt that Mafuna's emphasis on leadership teams that pull on mutually complementary skills, described as binary leaders, are the best way of creating structures that maximize government's efficiency. He gave Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki as examples of this symbiotic relationship.

His lasting impact on the young group was his resounding call to them to claim their rightful places as the future engineers of change on this continent. He said his generation had walked the path and it was the next to learn from their lessons.

A Vision for Africa

What does the Africa in which you want to live and raise future generations look like? How can Africa serve as hope for the world? What vision for Africa inspires you to make a lifelong commitment to achieve?

As the sole non-African participant among 19 promising, young African leaders from across the continent of the 5th Harambee African Leadership Program, one might think that Shaneeza from Canada would have felt out of place as they discussed such questions. The truth, however, is that she felt even more at home with these curious, powerful minds hungry for change.

They grappled with critical questions such as Africans' large scale migration to North America, UK, Australia and New Zealand. Is it fair to allege that Africans educated abroad have a responsibility to return home and serve common interests or should it be considered a betrayal to migrate for personal growth? One of the Ethiopian participants related to being the only remaining member of their of university colleagues who remained in their country in pursuit of higher education.

Ndoni Khanyile, a South African performing artist and documentary film producer from Johannesburg expressed that it was an

“Incredibly empowering exercise because we were articulating a very huge vision... we were not just speaking about 'pie in the sky' ideas. We are putting the ideas out there with the knowledge that we are choosing to make it live as a reality in our lives. Since we are from such different countries and circumstances, it forced us to think about the root causes of our challenges and how to identify the interconnectedness that will provide umbrella solutions for our needs.”



After putting their heads together for days on end, the group came up with a collective vision for Africa that they intend to live for.

“An Africa that is economically prosperous, politically vibrant, ecologically sustainable and socially inclusive; a continent of people who celebrate their cultural heritage and diversity, bringing hope to the world.”

Harambee will consist of two weeks of training and four weeks of field work ending on the 30th November 2009.



Participants

Nicholas Onosigho (Nigeria), Tongo James (Sudan), Eldoma Dawood Abdalla (Sudan), James Wamboga (Uganda), Mabuza Haanyama (South Africa), Kimanthi Mbindyo (Kenya), Shaneeza Nazeer (Canada), Waratwa Moroka (South Africa), Ndoni Khanyile (South Africa), Mediatrix Masava (Kenya), Tegegnetwork Emishaw (Ethiopia), Fitsum Assefa (Ethiopia), Yonas Dimissie (Ethiopia), Kebebew Absa (Ethiopia), Getesh GImasker (Ethiopia), Zaid Bahta (Ethiopia), Warkalem Glihwet (Ethiopia)