

# Neocolonial Ritual and Servitude to the West: Gratifying the African Elites with Human Rights Awards, Grants and Prizes

By <u>Sophia Tesfamariam</u> Global Research, October 25, 2013 Region: <u>sub-Saharan Africa</u> Theme: <u>History</u>

I am always amazed at how much time and energy is spent by those of European decent discussing "Africa's development". Birgit Brock-Utne, an astute European educator of Norwegian origin, wrote the following in her book[1] about those who insist on preaching to Africa about development:

"... when Europeans came to Africa toward the turn of the fifteenth century, they found a prosperous civilization and enormous wealth. Agriculture and cattle rearing, iron-work, pottery, fishery, salt-mining, gold refining and ornament making, weaving, hunting, and long-distance trading were well advanced at a time and Europe was still relatively backward...From the fifteenth century on, however, the fate of the two continents reversed....Africa stagnated for over three centuries as a direct result of slavery and colonial conquests. This part of global history, for the sake of maintaining a correct historical perspective on Africa and Europe, must always be kept in mind when looking at the contemporary African situation...The bulk of the African people fought heroically against the imposition of slavery and colonialism, though there were some Africans who collaborated with the white slave-hunters and colonialists as well..."

History of post-colonial Africa is replete with shameful stories of African collaborators who worked to undermine the progress and development of their own peoples. The West's "divide and rule" tactics resulted in intractable conflicts, destruction and devastation of Africa, leaving its people at the mercy of the neo-cons and their political and economic systems that have sustained poverty through poverty perpetuating programs. The Structural Adjustment Programs of the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) are an example.

So it comes as no surprise when modern day collaborators such as Mo Ibrahim, the British Sudanese entrepreneur, undermine Africa and its leadership, for no other reason than to force African leaders to submit to Western economic and political ideology. Today, Mo Ibrahim tells us that in 2012 and 2013, there was no African leader that qualified for the Mo Ibrahim Prize for Achievement in African Leadership.

Mo Ibrahim's views regarding Africans and their leadership is evident in this report from the BBC[2], which said:

"...Mr Ibrahim says the good governance prize is needed because many leaders of sub-Saharan African countries come from poor backgrounds and are tempted to hang

on to power for fear that poverty awaits them when they leave office ... "

Afraid of being poor...do European and American presidents also share that fear?



Moh Ibrahim with Ethiopian cadre Redors Adhanom

Dr Salim Ahmed Salim, Chairman of the Mo Ibrahim selection committee tried to explain why no African leaders was chosen for the prize in 2012 and 2013 when African economies were obviously on the rise and much progress was seen in the development arena. This is what he had to say:

"...The economy has been moving forward relentlessly. However, economic progress does not give us a reason to be a little complacent about participation and the human rights of people..."

For example, western agencies have gone to great lengths to tout Ethiopia's "economic growth", but most economists agree that Ethiopia's economic growth, subsidized by billions of donor funds, is not sustainable, and most importantly, does not translate into the betterment in the lives of the Ethiopian people. Yes, opening up its markets has filled the pockets of the corrupt and lawless minority regime's cadres and "investors" (private and state), but has been of little or no benefit to the majority of the Ethiopian people, who continue to suffer from disease, hunger and extreme poverty.

The Mo Ibrahim prize seems to be awarded only to those who tow the western line, stick to IMF and WB prescriptions for the development of their nations and most importantly, open

up their markets to predatory multi-national corporations and leadership considered to be amenable to the west-systematic emasculation of Africa's leadership.

Speaking of emasculation...Here is a man, a Moslem man... given the name Mohamed...presumably after the great Prophet Mohamed, but in trying to fit into his British image...he prefers to call himself Mo... I have never heard anyone referring to Jesus as Jessie or Jess...

For today, let us look at how awards, grants and prizes are used to emasculate Africans...

# Africa's Leadership

It was in April 2013 that **Africaisacountry.com** asked "Can African Heads of States Speak?" It was referring to a photo opportunity at the White House in which several African leaders were paraded in front of a gawking media, while Barack Obama sang their praises. According to the article:

"...These days, well-behaved African heads of state are rewarded by Barack Obama with the chance to meet with him in groups of four and have their picture taken with him. It's like meeting Beyonce, but you get to call it a state visit. That's what happened on Friday when Malawi's Joyce Banda, Senegal's Macky Sall, Cape Verde's José Maria Neves and Sierra Leone's Ernest Bai Koroma were paraded before the White House press corps, sitting in star-struck silence as Barack reeled off a kind of wikipedia-level roll-call of their accomplishments. They beamed like competition winners. It was all very feudal... You get the sense that they were given a nice White House tote bag, perhaps a signed copy of Dreams from my Father, and were then patted on the head and sent off to inconsequential NGO-led roundtables..."

According to the East African[3]:

"...The meeting was to reward them for their support for US interests in Africa..."

Photo opportunities with the President of the United States and other western leaders, invitation to G7 and G8 meetings, are just a few examples of the rewards for servitude.

The one reward for servitude most employed by the western nations is "invitation to international forums", and Meles Zenawi was chosen to serve as the "African face" on the Blair Commission for Africa and at the UN climate change conference in Copenhagen, in which he sold out Africa. Here is an excerpt from a 2009 report from IPS[4] that details Meles Zenawi's betrayal of Africa:

"...Twenty-four hours of confusion stalled talks in the Africa Group following Zenawi's joint appeal for a climate deal with French president Sarkozy yesterday. "Ethiopia representing Africa" had agreed on a maximum two degree temperature rise and called on the parties to make a \$10 billion dollar start-up fund available, raved the French....what appeared to be an orchestrated move, US president Obama congratulated the Ethiopians on their "leadership"....But Ethiopia didn't represent Africa's position at all..."

In 2012, Ethiopians are incensed when Meles Zenawi was invited by Barack Obama to attend the G8 Summit in Camp David.

No effort was spared to make a "statesman" out of Meles Zenawi, as the darling of the west and awarding him with various prizes was meant to bolster his reputation, and elevate his diminutive stature-both physical and mental-amongst his countrymen and his peers in Africa. Allow me to present a few examples of awards that have baffled the minds, embarrassed and insulted the intelligence of the peoples of Africa in general, and the people of Ethiopia in particular.

In 2002, the World Peace Council[5] awarded to Meles Zenawi, the lawless leaders of the minority regime in Ethiopia, its "top honor prize". According to the news report at the time:

"...The council unanimously endorsed Meles as winner of the 2002 top honor prize for his contributions to bringing about peace in Africa in general and Ethiopia in particular...The council is awarding Meles for his efforts in the peaceful resolution of the Ethio-Eritrea border dispute, for his commendable work in revitalizing the process of national reconciliation in war-torn Somalia under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity... "

Meles Zenawi was awarded a "peace prize" despite the fact that he launched, with the tacit approval and support of the US Administration, a deadly war of aggression and occupation against Eritrea in which over 120,000 Ethiopians lost their lives as they were used as cannon fodder and minesweepers in his military adventures.

Despite signing the Algiers Agreements, which were witnessed and guaranteed by the USled international community, the African Union, European Union and the United Nations, Zenawi continued to violate international law, reject the 13 April 2002 final and binding ruling of the Eritrea Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC), and dozens of UN Security Council resolutions on the Eritrea Ethiopia border issue. To this day, Ethiopia, with the acquiescence of the US-led international community, refuses to vacate from sovereign Eritrean territories, including Badme, the casus belli for the Eritrea Ethiopia border conflict.

Meles Zenawi's regime, at the behest of the United States, also invaded and occupied Somalia in 2006 causing the greatest humanitarian disaster in Somalia's history. It undermined and orchestrated the dismantling of over 15 Transitional National Governments (TNG) in Somalia and is primarily responsible for the current dire situation in Somalia,which is threatening to Balkanize the Horn of Africa nation. Ethiopia has single handedly disrupted and exacerbated any chance for national reconciliation in Somalia by harboring, financing and supporting various factions to fuel the fratricidal conflicts that continue to rage in Somalia today.

In 2005, in yet another insult to the Ethiopian people, Yara International ASA, a leading Norwegian supplier of mineral fertilizers[6], awarded Meles Zenawi with yet another award. It said the following in its statements about the award:

"...The Yara Foundation Board recognizes Prime Minister Meles' decisive steps towards increasing food production and reducing poverty in one of the poorest countries of the developing world. He has brought about political change in Ethiopia, and placed the rural poor first in the country's development strategies...In spite of the fact that about 40% of the population is chronically malnourished, Ethiopia's food security program aims at enabling 4-5 million chronically food insecure to attain food security within 3-5 years, a major step towards accomplishing the Hunger Millennium Development Goal..."

The facts show that Ethiopia is nowhere near achieving the Millennium Development Goals on eradicating hunger and may in fact be going backwards-yet its leaders are given accolades and awards by western agencies.

So what are the real facts on Ethiopia? Let us take a look at the 2013 World Food Program Report on Ethiopia. It says:

"...Ethiopia remains one of the world's poorest countries, ranking 174 out of 187 countries on the 2011 UNDP Human Development Index. Twenty-three million people, 29 percent of the population, live below the national poverty line. Eighty-three percent of the population lives in rural areas, mainly the highlands, where 50 percent of the land is degraded... Population pressure, land degradation, poverty, limited non-farm income opportunities, market dysfunction, poor maternal and child care, poor access to social services and HIV remain the main drivers of food insecurity and child malnutrition..."

The WFP report also states the following:

"...44 percent of children under 5 are stunted and 29 percent are underweight, while the prevalence of wasting is 10 percent. Close to 800,000 people are living with HIV, mainly in urban areas, and about 1 million children are orphans having lost their parents due to AIDS. In Ethiopia, under nutrition contributes to 57 percent of deaths of children under 5. Eight million people living in rural areas are chronically food-insecure as they cannot meet their food needs even in years with a good harvest, and several millions are at risk of periodic acute food insecurity ..."

Ethiopia under Meles Zenawi expanded the "villagization" and resettlement programs of the previous regime, in which villagers are displaced from their homes and villages to make way for multi-national corporations, in what is being touted as the largest land grab deals in Africa.

According to a paper by the Oakland Institute, this policy led to the forcible relocation of indigenous communities to villages in the Gambella and Benishangul regions, where they were told they would be taught new techniques to produce food. Their land leased out by the government to multinationals in Saudi Arabia and India. The Institute's research showed that more than three million hectares of land had been leased out to investors.

Simon Allison, who worked for the Mo Ibrahim Foundation from 2009-2011, writing for the Daily Maverick, said the following:

"...Ghana's John Atta Mills and Ethiopia's Meles Zenawi could well have been contenders, but the prize is not awarded posthumously..."

What an insult to the people of Ethiopia...Such actions belie Mo Ibrahim's high and mighty pronouncements about Africa and its leadership...and Ibrahim's latest forays into Ethiopia and bids for lucrative industries there, says a lot about his motives and that of his sponsors.

By the way, Meles Zenawi was not the only African leader rewarded for his servitude to the West...obviously it took more than this one mercenary leader to bring Africa to the grim state that it is in today...

## Intellectuals and Academics for Hire

Intellectuals are not especially well paid and it's not only monetary compensation that they seek- what they really crave is recognition and adoration...and nobody knows that better than western governments who use academic institutions and hired intellectuals in their domestic and foreign policy formulation and delivery. They also use African intellectuals to advance their foreign policy, especially economic policies and agendas for Africa.

Let us take a look at what George Ayittey, a well known US based African academic, wrote about African academics and intellectuals in a 1996 article[7]:

"...The most painful and treacherous aspect of Africa's collapse was the wilful and active collaboration by Africa's own intellectuals, many of whom were highly "educated" with Ph. D.s, and who should have known better. Yet a multitude of them have prostituted themselves, selling off their principles and integrity to partake of the plunder, misrule and repression of the African people...So hordes of politicians, lecturers, professionals, lawyers, and doctors sell themselves off into prostitution and voluntary bondage to serve the dictates of military vagabonds with half their intelligence. And time and time again, after being raped, abused, and defiled, they are tossed out like rubbish — or worse. Yet more intellectual prostitutes stampede to take their places...Vile opportunism, unflappable sycophancy, and trenchant collaboration on the part of Africa's intellectuals allowed tyranny to become entrenched in Africa. Doe, Mengistu, Mobutu, and other military dictators legitimized and perpetuated their rule by buying off and co-opting Africa's academics for a pittance..."

A deceptive ploy to undermine African intellectuals and prevent them from standing up for their own nations, or does Ayittey really care about the well being of Africans?

I say it is a rotten case of the pot calling the kettle black...allow me to explain.

You see, George Ayittey is one of the members of the African Oil Policy Initiative Group, a Washington, DC lobby group. On January 2, 2002, a symposium was held to discuss African oil and Ayittey and his group came up with a document entitled "African Oil: A Priority for US National Security and African Development".

Let us take a look at what the Christian Science Monitor Reported about that symposium and its recommendations:

"... the IASPS hosted a symposium in Houston, Texas, which was attended by government and oil industry representatives. An influential working group called the African Oil Policy Initiative Group (AOPIG) co-chaired by IASPS researchers Barry Schutz and Paul Michael Wihbey, which has been largely responsible for driving American governmental policy concerning west African oil, emerged from the symposium...Today, the African Oil Policy Initiative Group, a lobby group with members from the oil industry and various arms of government, will present a white paper in Washington. The document urges Congress and the Bush administration to encourage greater extraction of oil across Africa, and to declare the Gulf of Guinea "an area of vital interest" to the US..."

What about the politicians, lecturers (like himself), professional, lawyers, journalists and doctors who are today siding with the west to plunder and fleece Africa...are they any less sinful, dangerous to Africa's development and the welfare of the peoples? Actually, they are not only insidious and ugly; they are far more detrimental to Africa's long term recovery and

reconstruction. Ayittey, has made denigrating African leaders his forte-and the subjects of his books and articles. No doubt he knows who is buttering his bread....

Using nationals of targeted states to do their bidding is the latest modus operandi for neocolonialists seeking to get a foot hold in the various regions of the world, and Africa is no exception.

Iraq's Ahmed Chalabi is an example of such insidious individuals. Barry Lando, in his 17 December 2011 article, "Ahmed Chalabi: the Conning of America", wrote:

"...Ahmed Chalabi, the brilliant, treacherous, endlessly scheming Iraqi refugee who, from 1991 to 2004, played a singular role in contorting U.S. policy towards Iraq...The book Arrows of the Night(Doubleday), written by 60 Minutes producer Richard Bonin... is a chilling chronicle of how this charismatic and totally amoral Iraqi exile, without any power base among his own people, was, at various times, able to con everyone from the New York Times, to the CIA, to the Defense Department, to Dick Cheney — even Iran's intelligence chiefs — in his single-minded determination to overthrow Saddam Hussein and take power himself...It is also an alarming tale of how a feckless American president, George W. Bush, buffeted by conflicting counsels of feuding advisers, stumbled into one of the most disastrous military quagmires in America's history..."

From using Ahmed Chalabi, a hired mercenary to bring down the Saddam Hussein's, to the colored revolutions in the Balkans, hired mercenaries of all kinds, have wrecked havoc in the lives of the Afghan, Iraqi, Syrian, Libyan, Tunisian, Egyptian and Somali people.

In addition to mercenary individuals and co-opted regional organizations, the west uses its own national agencies as well as international "NGOs" such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ), the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and other related organizations, as well as the UN's tentacle organizations such as the World Food Organization (WFO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB), various policy crafting think tanks, foundations etc. to advance foreign policy agendas vis-a-vis Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

The last 15 years has exposed Eritrea's own "Chalabis", those who work to undermine the people and government of Eritrea in order to advance their own selfish political agendas. Two greedy individuals recruited by the US intelligence community are Bereket Habte Selassie, who according to the archives was recruited as early as in the 1970s[8] and Paulos Tesfagiorgis[9], who was recruited later, soon after leaving the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) in the late 80s. Both are multiple recipients of funds from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and Fund for Peace. In addition to funding for their anti-Eritrea activities in Africa, Europe and the United States, both have been "awarded" with UN assignments in Iraq and Afghanistan. For today, let us take a look at the "awards" and prizes that have been given to Paulos Tesfagiorgis and individuals that he has recruited on behalf of western agencies.

Paulos Tesfagiorgis was also awarded the Rafto Prize[10] in 2003. This was after his recruitment and organization of the Berlin Group, self professed "Academics and Professionals"[11] and the production of the document known as the Berlin Manifesto, in which Tesfagiorgis and Bereket Habte Sellasie launched the first of many attacks on the

President of Eritrea and his government. All members of the Berlin Group now work with the minority regime in Ethiopia to recruit and traffic Eritrean youth. According to the Rafto site, Tesfagiorgis was awarded for:

"...his efforts to improve the rights and democratic influence of the people of Eritrea..."

The people of Eritrea who sacrificed life and limb for their own liberation and independence do not need lessons from such a vile individual. As for democracy, he may have fooled his handlers, but not the conscious people of Eritrean who can teach the world a thing or two about real democracy and freedom.

# Let us move on...

Paulo's Tesfagiorgis and Dan Connell recruited Eritrean students to serve as the "Eritrean faces" in the orchestrated defamation and vilification campaigns against the Eritrean government. The following three are the most prominent examples and their activities in the various Eritrean Diaspora communities are a matter of public record. While there are others that have been employed by these three to advance the anti-Eritrea agenda, for brevity's sakes, only the three will be addressed in this sitting.

Daniel Rezene Mekonnen (now living in Europe) was one of several hundred Eritrean students sent to South Africa for higher education. Instead of returning to Eritrea and fulfilling his obligations to the country and people that educated him, he chose instead to work for Dan Connell and the US establishment for pittance. He formed the group called Eritrean Movement for Human Rights and Democracy (EMHDR in South Africa. EMHDR received grants from the US State Department and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the same group that financed Paulos Tesfagiorgis' treasonous activities in Eritrea.

EMHDR was paid to translate Gene Sharp's manual on civil disobedience into Tigrinya, one of the Eritrean languages. In addition, EMHDR was also a recipient of funds from Dan Connell and his NGO, Grassroots International. Connell has been grooming members of the EMHDR who have formed other groups in the Diaspora with the hopes of effectuating regime change in Eritrea. More on Dan Connell, his work during the Eritrean struggle, his tenure in Eritrea and his anti-Eritrea activities will be reserved for another day...

Simon Mebrahtu Weldehaimanot, like Daniel Rezene Mekonnen, and several other members of the EMHDR have been given asylum in the US. Mebrahtu has been active in disseminating anti-Eritrea reports in academic journals and has participated in activities organized by Dan Connell and others at University of Arizona and other academic institutions. He has also worked with Sheila Keetharuth, the newly appointed UN Rapporteur on Eritrea and participated in forums in Ethiopia and other African states in which he has presented papers sponsored by her agency. In 2008, with Sheila Keetharuth at the helm of the IHRDA, with a generous support from the International Centre for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), Simon M. Weldehaimanot developed and filed a self serving case on the right to free movement, and right of citizens to leave their own country.

Meron Estifanos, a person of interest, at the center of the criminal human trafficking ring that is, responsible for the suffering of Eritrean youth in the Sinai and beyond, is also a member of EMHDR. She is also one of the Eritrean students sent to South Africa for higher education. Estifanos is also now a member of the group calling itself EYSC, whose leaders in the US have been charged with crimes committed against Eritrean Communities in Oakland and other cities. EYSC members are suspected in the burning of three Eritrean Community Centers in Sweden and other hate crimes. Today, with Fr. Mussie Zerai, a Catholic priest hiding behind the walls of the Vatican, Estifanos is responsible for the deaths of hundreds of migrants who attempted to enter Italy thru the island of Lampedusa. Eritreans continue to call on the United Nations and the EU Commission to investigate her activities in the refugee camps of Ethiopia, Sinai and Libya, from where Eritrean youth are trafficked to Europe and beyond.

It's not just Eritrean youth that have been recruited by Dan Connell and Paulos Tesfagiorgis; there is also a long list of Eritreans posing as "journalists". Who are they and what became of them? The Eritrean Diaspora was introduced to these "journalists", not through their works, but when the saga of the "independent press' in Eritrea came to a head, resulting in the closing of the "independent press", a little over a year after their establishment.

Two "journalists", Milkeas Mehreteab and Semere Taezaz, came to the United States, just days after the September 11 attacks. Supposedly, they made their way to Ethiopia and then to Sudan where they received landing visas for the US. While in Sudan, they contacted Neil Skene, a journalism professor who was in Eritrea during the Eritrea Ethiopia border conflict. According to him, he was contracted by the US State Department to teach journalism in Eritrea.

In 2001, shortly after the arrival of the two journalists to the US, the anti-Eritrea media campaigns began with Committee for the Protection of Journalist leading the attack. Frank Smith, head of CPJ and a colleague of Dan Connell, participated in Eritrean Public Forums (EPF) held in cities across the US. These forums which featured the runaway defectors from Eritrea were also attended by Dan Connell, NED representatives and other US officials. CPJ continues to host such events and is organizing another anti-Eritrea program to coincide with Sheila Keetharuth's visit and presentation at the UN this week.

Every single journalist that deserted Eritrea somehow found their way to Canada, Europe and the United States. But that is not all. Let us see what has become of Neil Skene's "journalism students" who managed to leave Eritrea under suspicious conditions:

Milkias Mihreteab was awarded the Percy Qoboza Award from the U.S.-based National Association of Black Journalists and also Amnesty International's 2002 Special Award for Human-Rights Journalism Under Threat. He was issued a US visa in Sudan and brought to the US just weeks after the September 11 attacks.

• Khaled Abdu, co-founder and former editor in chief of Admas, became a recipient of Human Right Watch's Hellman/Hammett grant. Now lives in Sweden and is an active member of the group calling itself the EYSC.

Aaron Berhane, writer and editor at Setit, now living in Canada is also a recipient of Human Right Watch's Hellman/Hammett grant. After leaving Eritrea illegally, he smuggled his wife and children and brought them to Canada. Today, he is engaged with Meron Estifanos, Elsa Chyrum and Dan Connell in the trafficking of Eritrea's youth. He is an active member of EYSC and has conducted seminars and workshops with Dan Connell of Freedom House in Canada and elsewhere. Most notably, he has engaged in the intimidation, harassment and terrorizing of the hard working Eritrean-Canadian Community and defiling their reputation through the local media.

- Semere Taezaz Sium, a reporter at Keste Debena was brought to the US and was awarded Human Right Watch's Hellman/Hammett grant. Lives in the Washington, DC area and still engaged in anti-Eritrea activities, including the intimidation and harassment of the Eritrean Diaspora youth through social networking sites and cyber forums.
- Biniam Simon was recruited by Reporters Sans Frontiers' Vincent Laurent and smuggled into France. He now runs Radio Erena, an RSF sponsored outfit. Meron Estifanos also works for this outfit. Like his partners in crime, Simon has been engaged in the trafficking of Eritrea's youth and uses his radio program to entice and lure gullible young Eritreans into committing crimes against their own people, and endangering their lives through illegal migration.

I have only mentioned the mercenaries from the Horn of Africa that I have followed since 2001...no doubt there are more out there that need to be exposed. For the most part, Eritreans know who they are, but some of those born and raised in the Diaspora do not...it is more so for their benefit that I decided to pen this piece for today...

So...if there are no recipients for the Mo Ibrahim Prize this year, it must be a good sign...it means the people of Africa are becoming more conscious and its leaders are rejecting western prescriptions for their countries. It means they are rejecting the emasculation of the continent and its people...it means hired mercenaries are no longer able to hide behind the cloak of "democracy", "human rights", and "Press freedom" to advance illicit political agendas.

Can't respect others, if one has no self respect...

#### Notes

[1] Birgit Brock-Utne, Whose Education for All?: The Recolonization of the African Mind (New York: Falmer Press, 2000), 35

[2] http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-19946106 accessed 10/20/2013

[3]

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[6]

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[8] <u>http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=181771&dt=2474&dl=1345</u> accessed 10/20/2013

[9]

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