She walked up to me and said, "I wish I could have part of your brain." Well, here we go.

Wale Akinyemi
I, Wale
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www.powertalks.biz

wale@powertalks.biz

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Section 1

Change

Talks
Some time ago I read a book with the title, From 3rd World to 1st: The Singapore Story written by the nation’s founding father Lee Kuan Yew. When I finished the book, I asked myself, ‘Can this happen in Africa?’ As I pondered over what I had read, almost immediately some reasons began to bombard my mind – reasons why it could never happen in Africa. Then I began to research into the whole concept of a new Africa. An African state where the African will be in charge. An African State that will evolve its own unique systems. An African State that will be proud of its own. An African State whose own will be proud of her. An African State that will be full of a people that will never be relegated to the background of history again.

The continent was blessed with some of the great minds of the twentieth century. statesmen, sportsmen, entrepreneurs, diplomats…name it, we got it. Why then are we still the way we are? A third world nation is the result of third-world thinking not third-world minds. If that be the case, then if we can change our thinking, we can change our lives. No one will come to help us from outside. It is time for us as a people to determine our future and then walk towards it.
True, Rome was not built in a day but the work started one day. Let this be the day you decide to place your own block in the building of a new Africa – an Africa that will be the pride of those who built the pyramids, the pride of the great warriors, a pride of the great statesmen. An Africa that will be God’s pride.

In the Year 2000 the United Nations adopted what has been considered its most ambitious project yet. They called it the Millennium Development Goals. These goals are set to bring some sort of equality to life. The eight goals are:

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty & hunger
Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education
Goal 3: Promote gender equality & empower women
Goal 4: Reduce child mortality
Goal 5: Improve maternal health
Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria & other diseases
Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability
Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

The Millennium Development Goals were derived from the United Nations Millennium Declaration, adopted by 189 nations in 2000. Most of the goals and targets were set to be achieved by the year 2015. However, it is important that we note that facts do not cease to exist because they are ignored. Present day facts for Africa do not show any sign of change. How are we different today from the way we were yesterday?
What are the value shifts in the continent today? Do we still have the same values that got us into the mess we are in?

A problem can never be solved from the same level of thought that created it. Unfortunately, many Africans – especially the leadership – still have the same mentality that created our problems. The seed for the destruction of an entity is often planted at the inception and the seed for Africa’s destruction was planted years ago and Independence could not be given to African Nations until there was an assurance that the seed would bring forth – that Africa would be forever dependent on the colonial masters. Political Independence is nothing without mental and economic independence.

Unfortunately, many of our founding fathers had a well thought out plan for political independence but did not have an equally well thought out post-independence plan or a properly thought out plan for economic and mental independence; hence we were born as nations destined to be slaves of the colonial masters forever unless a change – a radical change of mentality was birthed and a new mind-set emerged. If we do not change the direction we are going, we are likely to end up where we are headed. From 2005 statistics, where we are headed is not good. From trends on the continent today, where we are headed is not good.

Unfortunately, many our people have the very myopic mentality that says as long as my family is fine I am OK. As such they do not question the direction in which we as a people are going. You will never see something new until you are ready to question something old. If you don’t ask why this or why that? Somebody is bound to ask why you?
The purpose of this meeting is to stimulate some questions and propose some answers with the hope that a new generation of Africans will see the folly of just obediently towing the line of the old. There is a road that leads to destruction and as surely as the sun shines – that road of quiet obedience is destined to lead to destruction.

The United Nations seems to agree with this position as seen in the Executive Summary of the Secretary General’s Report below:

Today’s is the first generation with the resources and technology to make the right to development a reality for everyone and to free the entire human race from want. There is a shared vision of development.

The Millennium Development Goals, which range from halving extreme poverty to putting all children into primary school and stemming the spread of infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, all by 2015, have become globally accepted bench-marks of broader progress, embraced by donors, developing countries, civil society and major development institutions alike.

These goals can be met by 2015— but only if all involved break with business as usual and dramatically accelerate and scale up action now.

Executive Summary of the Report of the former Secretary General, In larger freedom1.
What does the above line – **In larger freedom mean**?

We are involved. Let us break with business as usual and dramatically scale up action and upgrade our lives as a people.

As we ponder on these goals, we must remember that everything starts and ends with poverty. If there is no prosperity, there will be no food. If there is no prosperity, there will be no research and if there is no research there will be no development of drugs to combat diseases. If there is no prosperity there will be no homes for the millions of homeless people in the world today. It therefore follows that the first thing that we as a people should be addressing is the issue of poverty and this is why we must all put our forces – our mental resources, our natural resources, our human resources and everything we have towards the successful implementation of the first goal. It is only on this foundation that all the other goals will make sense.

This is why I have taken it upon myself to use every platform available to man in the 21st century to wake Africans up. Arise out of the slumber. This is the generation of the despised. China has woken. India has woken. Argentina and Brazil have woken. Singapore has woken. Malaysia has woken. Where is Africa?

The African situation is at catastrophic levels. Unfortunately, everyone is waiting for government and is blaming government for the crisis. To an extent maybe this is true – true in the sense that no one ever bothered to find out what the role of government should be in the development of Nationhood.
Governments’ role should be that of creating an enabling environment for people to do business. They should have the right treaties and agreements in place that will facilitate the smooth flow of trade between its people and peoples of other lands.

With this in place, private individuals should now be empowered to empower others. That is the foundation of great nations – where one person empowers another. Strong private sector and entrepreneurship programs, easy flow of information and availability of cash through microfinance schemes; all these work together for the development of state. In the absence of these, what we will have is what we have had for the past forty years. Nations going around in circles, always moving but never progressing and always looking for someone to blame.

The African problem is not exclusively the problem of leadership. People tend to get the kind of leadership they deserve. Until every African sees themselves as solutions there will be no progress. Until Africans stop playing the blame game and accept collective responsibility, there can be no progress. When people see government as a means to riches, they will be cursed with thieves as leaders. When people’s identity is shaped from outside instead of from within, then they will attract leaders who will give them what they want to see. The African is primarily what he drives, what he wears and where he lives. When a person’s identity is defined by what he has, that person is suffering from a very low self esteem. If you need to tell people what things you have before they accept you, then you don’t have much. The quality of a person
should never be determined by the things they have but by the quality of their mind and the quality of their character. Are they people of their word? Are they people of love? Are they informed people? Are they sound thinkers?

If we do not change our values, we will not change our value. This is a call to Africans everywhere. A call to the young and the old. A call to male and female. A call to everyone with African roots. This is the dispensation of the despised and if we do not seize the moment, we will have no one to blame anymore as other despised peoples are taking advantage of the age to move forward.

There is enough technology and information in Africa today (not talking of the natural resources and the human resources) to make the continent the leader of the 21st century. The pre 1960 generation had the colonial masters to blame. If the post 1960 generation do not seize this moment, there will be no one to blame. They would have missed the moment. They would have dropped the ball. This is the generation of the despised!
All created beings with the exception of man have to conform to the habitat that nature has provided for them. Man is the only created being that has the power of process. Man can turn raw coffee beans into drinking coffee and turn gold into watches. The processing capability of man is determined by the development of the mind. This is where many people get stuck. Their mind is at the same level it was last year and they wonder why they are not getting different results this year.

Your life is the output of your mind. What you put in your mind will find expression in your thought process and in your choices.

This collection of thoughts, speeches and articles will joggle your mind and provoke you to totally new levels of thought and by extension new levels of living. Do not take it just as a book. It is a course on living – a course on change, creativity, innovation and on transformation. By the time you are done, the transformation will be evident in your life as it has been in the lives of many others around the world who have encountered Dr. Wale either in person or through his writing.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Wale Akinyemi is a business strategist, consultant, author, inspirationl speaker and leading newspaper columnist. His life passion is in the transformation of the African continent, one mind at a time. His work is focused on driving individuals and organizations from where they are to where they can be. He is the Chief Transformation Officer of PowerTalks Corporate and Personal Development Consultants.