



Culture and Politics

War, Reconciliation and Citizenship in Mozambique

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Culture and politics often intersect in unexpected ways. Because these lectures are also about personal trajectories please allow me to start by sharing with you how Portuguese colonial policies of cultural assimilation in Mozambique impacted on my own history. I will then move to discuss the interplay of culture and politics in the context of war and post-war, and in the lives of young soldiers and marginalized youths as they struggle to rehabilitate and reconcile themselves with a society and a world that is watching them drifting apart with little hope for the future.

Culture and Politics: A Personal Awakening

In the late 1890s, during colonialism, Sumaila Hamad Mulima, a Makua and Muslim of Arab descent from northern Mozambique, was conscripted into the Portuguese colonial army and posted in the south to fight in the “wars of pacification” against southern insurgencies. There he met Rosa Maria Mapunga, a Mu-Ronga from the South, and decided to settle in the outskirts of Lourenço Marques, the capital of the Portuguese colony of Mozambique.

Their second son Mussagy Mulima was born on 4 March 1903 in Lourenço Marques. At the time, in the predominantly Animist and Christian south, the only available route to education for Africans was through Christian mission schools. Mussagy is said to have been a bright and curious child, and Sumaila approached Portuguese priest Jose Manuel, at the Sao Jose de Hlanguene Catholic Mission. The priest agreed to have Mussagy joining the school, provided that he converted to Catholicism by being baptized and adopting a Christian name. This is how Mussagy Mulima became Jose Manuel, named after the Catholic priest. He did not disappoint, and in 1917, Mussagy, now Jose Manuel, concluded the 4th grade, the high-

est grade native Mozambicans could aspire to. Missionary education included vocational training and Jose Manuel learnt the trade of typesetter.

In 1924 Jose Manuel married Alcinda Macuacua with whom he had six children. Their third son was my late father, Jose Manuel Junior. In this way, the Catholic priest's name continued in my family. All of my father's siblings have Manuel as their surname as did I, and my four brothers.

My grandfather had a number of temporary jobs in newspapers until around 1931 when he acquired his *assimilado* (assimilated) status and became a civil servant. He was among the first few native Mozambicans employed at the Imprensa Nacional (National Printing House) as a typesetter.

Assimilation was a policy established by the Portuguese colonial rulers in 1917 whereby Africans were granted a form of citizenship distinct from the natives, but inferior to the status of citizens enjoyed by the Portuguese. Mozambicans could lose their condition of *indígena* (native) to be *assimilados* upon fulfilling a number of requirements such as: fluency in Portuguese; have regular employment; have acquired the habits and the manners of the Portuguese; be Christian; and not practice or believe in witchcraft and other superstitions.

Paradoxically, the *assimilation* process also paved the way for the emergence of opinion leaders and intellectuals who created and led civic associations and political lobby groups. My grandfather was part of one such group that alongside my father-in-law, Raul Honwana, and others founded in 1932 the Instituto Negrofilo. My grandfather also contributed to *O Brado Africano* (Africans Speak Out), a newspaper known for exposing the excesses of colonial rule.

Many such organic intellectuals criticized assimilation policies for being discriminatory and not extending full citizenship to all Mozambicans, even if granting modest privileges to a selected few. In his book *Citizen and Subject*, Mahmood Mamdani highlights the colonial legacy of a dual citizenship system – the subjects (*indigenas* or natives) governed by customary law, and the citizens governed by civil law¹. Arguably, the *assimilado* would be an interstitial category, somewhere between the full citizenship of the Portuguese, and the total disenfranchisement of the *indigena*.

These moments in the colonial political and social history fashioned several transitions in my grandfather's life, from Muslim to Christian; from "illiterate" to "educated"; from *indigena* to *assimilado*. They also shaped his multiple identities, as Jose Manuel, the Roman Catholic student in a missionary school, the *assimilado* typesetter in the Imprensa Nacional, the organic intellectual, social critic and activist.

However, transitions do not establish fixed and linear identities. By their very nature, transitions can be moments full of creative possibilities precisely because of their potential for individual and collective re-ordering and re-configuration. Transitions can give birth to multiple social, cultural and political identities. Achille Mbembe remarks that individuals and groups often assemble and make use of multiple and fluid identities, which are constantly being revised to achieve maximum instrumentality as and when required.²

Therefore, in his time, my grandfather could be simultaneously Mussagy and Jose; a Muslim practicing Catholicism; and a proud African assimilated in the ways of the Portuguese. In all these transitions the underlining aspect was human agency – Jose Manuel's ability to deal with circumstances of his life, and achieve maximum social advancement within the constraints

of colonialism; his ability to refuse to be silenced. My grandfather's generation's drive to self-determination was purposefully passed on to their sons and daughters, some of whom went further and played a key role in the national liberation struggle that led to Mozambique's independence in 1975.

I grew up in this family environment, which gave me the foundations to deal with my own transitions and construct my identities. As a teenager in early years of Mozambique's socialist revolution, I was an activist with the National Youth Organization, and I was concerned with Mozambique's future as an independent nation.

When I finished high school, fascinated with the stories I heard from my elders about our family, the resistance to colonial rule and the struggle for independence, I decided to study history. I started university at a time when recently independent Mozambique was struggling with a crippling lack of trained personnel, especially in the education and health sectors, as most of the Portuguese professionals had left the country. To address this challenge, the government had decided that teachers' training was one of the top priorities in higher education. After obtaining a BA in History and Geography, my first employment was as a curricula development officer in the National Institute for Development of Education. I then moved on to work as a researcher in the National Archives for Cultural Heritage, under the Ministry of Culture. This served well my purpose to learn about my own origins and the cultures of Mozambique, my need to discover and understand my own identity.

I studied Sociology at the University Paris VIII and later Social Anthropology at SOAS in London. In both instances, my research was centred on issues of cultural politics in southern Mozambique. I examined the phenomena of spirit possession

and the practices of traditional healing in their intersection with “modernity”. I approached “culture” as a fundamental dimension of human societies, a dynamic, creative, and continuously shared enterprise. I was interested in the way culture intersected with politics and was used by communities to negotiate their transition from war to peace. Based on these studies, I published my first book entitled *Living Spirits, Modern Traditions: Spirit Possession and Post-War Reintegration in Southern Mozambique* (Slide 5: cover of the book)



Listening to the narratives of war-affected populations, I learned about their concerns and hopes for the future. People were worried about the “generations of tomorrow”. How could young people be brought back into some sense of “normality”? What future could they dream of? These questions disturbed and encouraged me to further explore the effects of war on young people. The stories of the many child soldiers - both boys and girls - the narratives of their families, community leaders and teachers provided valuable insights into the problematic of the child soldiering and their post-war rehabilitation and social reintegration. My research on children and war came together in the book entitled *Child Soldiers in Africa*, mainly drawing from the materials I collected in Mozambique and Angola, but presenting a global perspective on the phenomenon.

I became interested in studying youth more broadly and in contexts other than war-torn communities. My participation in study groups, research projects and a conference I organized on this topic provided me with the material for two other publications: a special issue of the French Journal *Politique Africaine*, on Children, Youth and Politics in Africa; and, the book *Makers & Breakers: Children and Youth in Postcolonial Africa*, both co-edited with Filip de Boeck.

Over the last few years, prompted by the wanderings of my indomitably nomadic husband, *Joao*, and my own curiosity, I left Mozambique and lived in Cape Town, New York, Dakar and the UK, where I worked, respectively, at the University of Cape Town, the Office of the United Nations Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, The New School University and the Social Science Research Council, and The Open University. This has been a journey that tells the story of my own transitions, from the Portuguese to the Mozambican, to the French and to British academic systems, as well as across languages as instruments of learning and expression. Transitions between the worlds of academia and policymaking. Transitions among distinct localities and cultures, and working environments. Transitions, finally, that, as is the case of Mussagy Mulima, also shaped my identities.

In the following section, I would like to share some of my work on the phenomenon of child soldiers and highlight the interplay of culture and politics in processes of post-war healing and reconciliation.

Culture and Politics: War, Healing and Reconciliation

Ivorien novelist Ahmadou Kourouma wrote in 2000 his prize-winning novel, *Allah n'est pas Obligé*, a tale of an orphan who becomes a child soldier during the wars in West Africa. The main character presents himself by saying: "My name is Birahima. I could have been a boy like any other... A dirty boy, neither better nor worse than all the other dirty boys of the world... With my Kalashnikov I killed lots of people. It is easy. You press and it goes tra-la-la. I am not sure that I enjoyed it. I

know that I suffered a lot because many of my fellow child soldiers have died.”³

Let me share with you the story of Marula, a former child soldier I met and interviewed in southern Mozambique. Through Marula’s story I hope to share some of the experiences and challenges faced by young people in contexts of war in Africa, and highlight the complexities of their agency and their prospects for the future.

At the age of ten, Marula was kidnapped by RENAMO insurgents during an attack on his village in southern Mozambique. Marula, his father, and his younger sister were forced to carry military equipment and looted goods and follow the soldiers. They walked for three days, before reaching the RENAMO camp. There, the family was separated. While his father was sent to the men’s sector and his sister to the women’s sector, Marula was ordered to join a group of young boys. A few weeks later Marula started military training. He was not allowed to see his father and sister, but they managed to arrange secret meetings on a few occasions. During one of these meetings they agreed to run away together. But they were caught attempting to escape. As punishment, and for his own life to be spared, Marula was ordered to kill his father. And so he did. Following this first killing, Marula grew into a fierce RENAMO combatant and was active for more than seven years. He does not remember how many people he tortured, how many he killed, how many villages he burnt, and how many food convoys and shops he looted. After the war, he returned to his village. But his paternal uncle, the only close relative who survived the war, refused to welcome him home. The uncle could not forgive Marula for killing his brother, the boy’s own father.⁴

These events established Marula's transitions from child to soldier, civilian to combatant; from victim to perpetrator, innocent to guilty. They also shaped his identity at that point as a child soldier; a RENAMO combatant; a killer rejected by his own family.

The binary *child-soldier* produces an oxymoron, a hybrid that that conflates victim and perpetrator. Child soldiers find themselves in an unsanctioned position between childhood and adulthood. They are still undeniably very young but no longer innocent; they acquire the skills of seasoned soldiers but are not adults yet. The possession of guns and a license to kill removes them from childhood. They are located in a twilight zone; a transition in which the worlds of childhood and adulthood "rub against each other in ... uneasy intimacy."⁵ According to Hommi Bhabha (1994) these 'in between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating new strategies of selfhood and initiate new signs of identity⁶.

It is difficult to regard Marula as simply a victim who was compelled to kill and therefore bears no responsibility for his act of parricide. Yet his responsibility is different from that of a young man who kills his father for some imagined benefit. Civil war and peace engender quite distinct moral environments. Rather than conducting a philosophical inquiry into the degrees of guilt attributable to children and youths coerced into civil wars, the point here is to try and understand the new identities they develop in these interstitial positions.

It is clear from former child soldiers' accounts of their recruitment that coercion predominated. Many boys like Marula were kidnapped or forced into military camps. The context of civil war made detachment from armed conflict impossible, even if enlistment was voluntary. The initiation of young people into

violence was a carefully orchestrated process of identity reconfiguration aimed at cutting their links with society.

Young boys and girls were initiated into violence through a deliberate process of terror. Terrified themselves, they were prepared to inflict terror on others. As Marula's account shows, these were not two separate phases in which boys were first brutalized by soldiers and then forced to brutalize civilians. Rather, the infliction of suffering on others was part of their own initiation into violence. It can be argued that, having started out as victims many of them become perpetrators of the most violent and atrocious deeds. Yet such a linear progression does not fully represent the complex, intertwined, and mutually reinforcing acts of violence of which they are both victims and perpetrators. Some were most victimized in the very act of murdering others. Marula's act of murder detached him from his immediate family; the violation of fundamental kinship ties was performed by his own hand.

In this ambiguous context, these young men and women somehow managed to develop a world of their own. They found space and time to miss their relatives, cry over their pains and sorrows; they found ways of beating the system by deceiving their commanders, planning to escape, and refusing certain tasks. The accounts below highlight the complexity of their lives and identities in the military.

"When I was kidnapped, I gave the soldiers a false name, not my real one. I didn't want them to know my family and make my parents suffer"⁷

"I was very scared of going into combat. I thought I was going to die. Before going on missions, I always thought of my parents and asked in silence for them to pray for me..."⁸

“I felt compassion for the people and, if the commander was not there, I would let them run ...instead of killing them. It was very hard to kill...”⁹

Social theorists agree that agency involves the exercise of power. Anthony Giddens reformulated the concept of human agency.¹⁰ For him, “agency concerns events of which an individual is the perpetrator, in the sense that the individual could, at any phase in a given sequence of conduct, have acted differently. Whatever happened would not have happened if that individual had not intervened.”¹¹

For Giddens, agency is intrinsically connected to power. Power presumes regularized relations of both autonomy and dependence between actors in contexts of social interaction. All forms of dependence offer some resources whereby those who are subordinated can influence the actions of their superiors. But that power can be constrained by a range of circumstances. Indeed, choice is always exercised within a specific situation defined by given constraints. Many former soldiers claim that they “had no choice.” Yet recognition of the constraints under which they acted need not mean the dissolution of agency as such.

This view of agency makes these young soldiers agents in their own right, because they can, at certain moments, mobilize resources to alter the activities of others and, thereby, of themselves. They can pretend to be ill to avoid certain tasks; they can plan to escape; they can deliberately fail to perform their duties properly. This interplay constitutes what Giddens calls the “dialectic of control.”¹²

In order to make sense of the agency of these young soldiers, I draw on the distinction between strategies and tactics proposed by French philosopher Michel De Certeau’s in his book *The Practice of Everyday Life*. De Certeau defines strategy as the

calculation or manipulation of force relationships, which requires a defined physical or social space. In this space the actor has autonomy to generate relations with an exterior distinct from it.¹³

A tactic, on the other hand, is a calculated action taken by someone who lacks autonomy and who is acting in the physical or social space which is not their own. “The place of a tactic is the space of the other ... it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it ... it operates in isolated actions, blow by blow. It takes advantage of ‘opportunities’ and depends on them ... this gives a tactic more mobility, to be sure, but a mobility that must accept the chance offerings of the moment.”¹⁴ As De Certeau recognizes, tactics are the “art of the weak.” Subordinated subjects must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into opportunities.

These young combatants exercised tactical agency to cope with the concrete, immediate conditions of their lives in order to maximize the circumstances created by their violent military environment. They acted from a position of weakness. They had no power base, no locus from which to act independently. As De Certeau suggests, their tactical actions happened “blow by blow” to seize the openings any given moment offered. The testimonies presented above clearly illustrate the point.

By contrast, the exercise of strategic agency would require a basis of power. It would also require mastery of the larger picture, some comprehension—however inaccurate—of the long term consequences of their actions in the form of political gain, benefits, or profits. The majority of child soldiers seem to have entirely lacked such a perspective. Many demobilized soldiers regarded their service in the military as a waste of time.

Young soldiers’ position as tactical agents connects well with the concept of multiple identities, which can be instrumental-

ly used to cope with the constraints of one's situation. My grandfather and his generation can arguably be considered tactical agents who accepted Christianity and *assimilation* while simultaneously confronted colonial discrimination.

In the aftermath of war how does Marula reconcile with his family? His uncle's reluctance to accept him back into the family shows the moral and emotional dilemmas created by a war that turned apart communities and split entire families. Postwar healing, reconciliation and reintegration are thus fundamental for the survival of these war-affected communities. In Mozambique, community based healing and reconciliation mechanisms dominated the rural areas in the absence of state led strategies. Cleansing and purification rituals were performed to deal with the emotional and social problems of war affected populations.

These rituals were based on cultural notions of social pollution that can affect individuals or groups who come in contact with death and bloodshed: those who killed or saw people being killed; or those who simply travel to unknown territory. These individuals and groups are believed to be polluted by the spirits of the dead of the war, or by unknown wandering spirits. In local cosmologies, burial rituals are vital for the stability of the community as they help place the dead in their proper position in the world of the ancestors. The dead of the war are not properly buried; their spirits wander around, and become malevolent spirits that can afflict not only to the individual who committed the offences but also the entire family or community. Individuals exposed to social pollution, like the child soldiers, are believed to be potential contaminators of the social body. Therefore, the cleansing process is seen as a fundamental condition for collective protection against pollution and for the social reintegration of war-affected people into

society. Let me take you through a typical cleansing ritual for a former child soldier, as described by a relative.

When the young man came back from the war his relatives took him to the ndumba (the house of the spirits) to present him to the ancestral spirits of the family. The grandfather thanked the spirits for their protection as his grandson was able to return alive. A few days later, a female healer came to perform the cleansing ritual. Followed by the family, she took the young man to the bush, and there a small hut covered with dry grass was built. Dressed with the dirty clothes he brought from the REN-AMO camp, the young man entered the hut and undressed himself. Then fire was set to the hut, and an adult relative helped him out.. The hut, the clothes and everything else that he brought from the camp was burned to ashes and buried. Everybody, especially the young man, left the ritual place without looking back. At the family home the young man's body was cleansed – he inhaled the smoke of herbal remedies, he drunk tea from herbal medicines and he took a bath with water also treated with herbal remedies. These procedures were aimed at cleansing him inside and out. The ritual ended with the sacrifice of chicken to make the ritual meal which was shared by those present and with the ancestral spirits.

This healing ritual brings together a series of symbolic meanings aimed at cutting the young man's link with the war. While modern psychotherapeutic practices emphasize verbal exteriorization of the affliction, here through symbolic meanings the past is locked away. This is seen in the burning of the hut and the clothes, the cleansing of the body, and not looking

back at the past. To talk and recall the past is not necessarily seen as a prelude to healing or diminishing pain. Indeed, it is often believed to open the space for the malevolent forces to intervene.

These cleansing rituals resemble what anthropologists call rites of transition. The young man undergoes a symbolic change of status from someone who has existed in a realm of sanctioned norm violation or norm suspension, to someone who must now live in a realm of peaceful behavioural and social norms, and conform to these. Until the transition is complete (through ritual performance), the subject is considered to be in a dangerous state, a marginal, "betwixt and between," ambiguous state. For this reason, the young man cannot engage into full social interaction, until the rituals have been completed¹⁵. The performance of these rituals and the politics that precede them transcend the particular individual and involve the collective body. The family and community members are involved, as are the ancestral spirits, in mediating for a good outcome. This case illustrates the interdependence between the living and the dead in this cultural context. The living must acknowledge the dead, both the ancestors and the dead of the war, to bring order and stability to their lives.

In this way, former child soldiers' transition from war to peace, from soldier to civilian, from perpetrator of violence into active citizenship becomes embedded in local culture with its particular meaning systems. Of course, these rituals have their limitations and may fail to address all the dimensions of young soldiers' afflictions. Also, some youths are sceptical of such practices and might refuse them as a way to break away from "tradition". However, in the chaos of the post-war when governments and international organizations are unable to provide effective mechanisms, these community rituals are often the only means available to help communities move for-

ward. They are also critical in bringing people together in forgiveness and reconciliation.

In a study carried out in Mozambique with a group of former child soldiers Neil Boothby points out that the vast majority of the group of former child soldiers in his study “became productive, capable and caring adults. At the same time, none of them are truly free from their pasts, and rely solely on themselves, families and friends for comfort and support”¹⁶ Boothby argues that apprenticeships, community sensitization campaigns and the outward support of traditional community rituals were critical to the successful recovery of many of the former child soldiers. He concludes that over and above all, the crucial element was the need to be accepted by their families and communities after the war. And this is precisely what these community healing rituals offered to the former child soldiers – forgiveness and re-acceptance into the community. In this way, the community also reconciled itself with its troubled past. But these rituals might have also had the function of bonding them to rural society in ways that the war and city life may have been unable to do.

However, while community healing and cleansing rituals offered forgiveness and reacceptance into community and, thus, helped facilitate their psychological and emotional recovery, the fact that former young soldiers had no education and marketable skills, and had no employment or other forms of livelihood makes them vulnerable to a myriad of problems. In these circumstances, programs for healing war affected youth must be complemented by job creation and skills training programs. A general alleviation of poverty is urgently necessary in order to offer these young people some prospect of a better future.

This last point brings into sharp focus the issue of youth more broadly. Former child soldiers are but a fraction of the many young Africans struggling to ve from the margins of society, make a decent living, and exercise full citizenship.

Culture and Politics: From Marginalisation to Citizenship

In the last few minutes of this lecture, I would like to sketch a new direction for my research on youth and development in Africa.

The “problem” of youth is being constructed as one of the great challenges of the 21st century. Nowhere is this question more acute than in Africa, where the micro-politics of households intersect with the macro-demography of large youth populations, many unemployable in the formal sectors of national economies.

To date, the failures of structural adjustment programmes in Africa and the disruptions caused by globalisation have promoted an environment of instability and global conflict. These political developments have exacerbated cultural and generational disconnections and tensions.¹⁷ Large numbers of youth in Africa today are disenfranchised and operate in the margins of society. Sierra Leonean scholars, Ibrahim Abdullah and Yussuf Bangura, introduced the concept of lumpen youth, to describe the unemployed and unemployable youths, both male and female, who live by their wits with a foot in the informal or underground economy. They are prone to criminal behaviour, petty theft, drugs, prostitution and other anti-social tendencies. They often appear to reject the values of rural society and aspire to live and be governed by the modern city values. These lumpen youths are often associated to violence. The

recent violent riots in Mozambique to protest against government price increases were mainly led by youth. In recent post-electoral violence in Kenya youths were at the forefront. It is estimated that 80% of the dead in these riots were men aged between 15-30 years of age.

Like the child soldiers, lumpen youths are forced to operate in the margins of society, are unable to have a strategy and rely on tactics. No wonder their responses may seem inconsistent and their future threatened. No wonder they are often called 'the lost generation'. But how is society to create spaces to integrate youth and allow them to exercise their citizenship?

Some analysts argue that in the past Mozambican young men migrated to find work in the city, on big farms, or in the mines in South Africa until they earned enough to pay for a wife, start a family and maybe set up a small farm of their in the village. This journey out of the village into the unknown world also entailed exposure to social pollution. They could encounter malevolent wandering spirits or even become victims of witchcraft or "evil eye". Thus, this back and forth journey also embedded migrant youths in a series of rituals that protected and integrated the youth into rural society, in the same way the cleansing rituals integrated child soldiers in the post-war period. However, such an integration process is not necessarily a static one because young men returning home from war, or to marry, bring back to the village new ideas, new forms and new perspectives that may enrich, complement or even alter rural life and culture. Some may opt for marrying and leaving the village for the city.

Today, however, youth increasingly migrate to the city, stay there with no integration and seemingly with no structure; and become what Abdullah and Bangura call lumpen. With the breakdown of rural societies due to extreme poverty, AIDS,

and violent conflict, and with the pressures of globalisation in urban areas, African societies are struggling to deal with lumpen youth.

What solutions can be found for this problem? How can Africa harness the potential of its younger generation? Does society need to create new rituals that anchor the young to contemporary values that bridge the urban and the rural in ways that are comfortable for them? Or should these value systems be shaped by the youth themselves? These are the questions informing my current research. The problems are huge and the solutions not easy. However, it is not all doom and gloom.

Despite all the difficulties they face, young people in Africa are engaged in social, economic, and political developments. Indeed, over the years youth have been at the forefront of major social transformations, whether in politics, economics, religion, popular culture, or community building. The Soweto uprisings against apartheid in South Africa are an example of this. Also, global youth cultures self-expression and representation have emerged in recent years. Creative and innovative forms of popular culture—theatre, arts, music and dance—are often the exclusive domains of the young as they create, reinvent, and domesticate global trends into local cultural and political forms. For example, in Kenya young musicians established what they call the “Hip Hop Parliament” to denounce, through rap music, the violence engulfing their communities following recent post-electoral ethnic violence in the country¹⁸. And in Mozambique a group of young artists are transforming the weapons of war into works of art.

In the cyberspace age, young people have enhanced their capacity to communicate and act effectively in the global arena. Youths have taken to the internet and to the streets, in growing numbers, profoundly altering global frontiers of com-

munication and socialization. The youth are indeed at the centre of the many changes that characterize the contemporary African context, often perceived as being afloat between crisis and renewal. African youth today not only constitute the vast majority of the continent's population but also "embody the sharpening contradictions of the contemporary world in especially acute form."¹⁹ Therefore, studying and understanding the multiple dimensions of young people's lives is crucial to understanding African societies today.

Contemporary African youth are not a lost generation. Just as my grandfather's generation in the 1920s managed their transitions and reinvented themselves creating a system with its rituals (the Instituto Negrofilo, O Brado Africano etc) to find their space and role in society. Just as in the 1960s young Africans, such as Nkrumah, Nyerere, Mandela, Mondlane, Machel, Lumumba and Cabral, who stood against oppression and realized the dream of independence. Just as my generation at the time of independence went through our rituals of transition, had hope and believed in building a better world. So too, today's generation has to exercise its agency, reinvent itself, create its rituals and find its own path. As anti-colonial intellectual Frantz Fanon rightfully stated: "each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its own mission (and either) fulfil it, or betray it".²⁰

The future of Africa depends on its youth.

I thank you very much.

Endnotes

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