

ERI-VOICE

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Editorial: Misplaced Priorities



Belai Tewelde

Take a peak
inside this
newsletter and
you will find an
article au-
thored by
Yehdego
Beyene who
was kind

enough to let us reprint it. Young Yehdego is forthright in expressing his indignation and has ably articulated the lack of foresight many Eritrean websites as well as intellectuals exhibit when it comes to matters pertinent to our communities in the Diaspora. Many communities are paralyzed as their energy is zapped by inconsequential political strife while scores of social issues have been relegated to the side and needy members left to swim against the current.

When I first read the article and played in my head the realities in our community here, I immediately gave myself a pat on the back. The approval is not for me but for our community. A community that is not as vibrant as it was years ago but is not on life support either. True, our community is infected with the same virus that Yehdego has written about, but thanks to our young university students and other professionals, it did not stop us from engaging in various

activities. The tutoring and mentoring projects are perfect examples.

Many people, including myself, have time and again asserted that the only way we can benefit our country and people is when WE are tolerant of differences and stay focused on the primary mission of our community. A united and purposeful community that is able to pull its resources together can have enough left to contribute to Eritrea's development needs. To accomplish this, however, our community has to mend its ways and the immediate needs of its members have to take precedence.

A few days ago, I read an appeal in one of the Eritrean websites for English textbooks. The earnest plea was from a high school teacher in Eritrea. Now, isn't this a need Eritreans in the Diaspora could easily and readily fill? There are more large Eritrean communities in the United States than there are schools in Eritrea. If our communities are left to perform what they are constituted to do, in one single year we could stock every school in Eritrea with all sorts of textbooks. Corporations in the USA could not find enough space to dump perfectly functional computer systems. With minor upgrading and refurbishing, thousands of young Eritrean students could have benefited from them. Let us correct our misplaced priorities. We have the means, if we have true and sincere caring.

What Has Become Of Us?

Yehdego Beyene
Dallas, TX.

Why is every Eritrean web site convinced to know the needs of Eritreans back home but is totally oblivious to the needs of the Diaspora? Why aren't the web site owners being responsible and addressing the ills of our communities? Asmarino.com, what have you done for your community lately? Dehai.org, are you content with our situation? Awate.com, are we not important enough for you to address our issues once in a while? Aren't you all shocked by what is happening to us? Doesn't it bother you to spend all of your energy spewing political hate and completely ignoring the plight of our people? How are the Eritrean communities in Oakland, Seattle, Boston and DC doing? Why are so many young Eritrean women coming back home pregnant from college instead of bringing back college degrees? Why are so many young Eritrean men dropping out of college and choosing to work at Seven-Eleven's, parking lots and as cab drivers? Why are so many young Eritreans not even graduating from high school? Why are so many Eritrean fathers wasting their time gambling in Eritrean restaurants instead of spending time teaching their children between right and wrong? Why isn't AIDS being addressed in our communities?

I hate to sound too pessimistic, but I don't see anything positive coming from our communities. Parents spend their leisure time drinking coffee and gossiping while their children are being neglected and growing up idolizing rappers and athletes. Why can't we imitate the Asians? Why can't we be more like the Indians? We have enough educated people, why aren't these educated people sharing their knowledge with the rest of us in a constructive and inclusive manner?

I often find myself daydreaming. I long for the day when ALL Eritreans regardless of their political beliefs will come together and have picnics. I yearn for the day when Eritrean professionals will start having workshops to lure young Eritrean kids into getting interested in science, technology, etc. I pray for the day when I will have peaceful discussions with Eritreans I have been conditioned to hate due to their political beliefs. Are these just pipe dreams?

I am constantly filled with pride when I read about Eritrean doctors who go back to Eritrea and perform life saving operations, but would it be too much to ask if these same doctors held seminars or clinics and invite all the young high school or college kids to attend to get them interested in medicine here in America? Why are some educated Eritreans moving far away from the rest of the communities? I am told the DC area has quite a number of Eritrean professionals. Among them there are doctors who mentor aspiring young Eritrean students. What about the people who live in Dallas or other cities that aren't lucky enough to have such doctors in their communities? Shouldn't we get a chance to be advised by these Eritrean doctors as well? Aren't we Eritreans as well? If we can have soccer tournaments and festivals that draw thousands of Eritreans, shouldn't education and community concerns draw similar turnout?

“Parents spend their leisure time drinking coffee and gossiping while their children are being neglected...”

A few weeks ago, we had the honor of having Dr. Tesfa Gebremedhin from West Virginia University come to speak to the Dallas/Fort Worth community on how to better our communities and deal with our problems. Here is a man who is trying to help his people and yet only about thirty parents showed up from a community of over two thousand. I don't care if you live in Oakland, Boston, or DC, this should shock and sadden you. Whether you like it or not, my problems should be your problems. Not even my own friends showed up. If I had the money, I would have paid them to show up just so they would get the knowledge from this great man. How did it get to this point?

I often go to Asmarino.com, Awate.com. or Dehai.org to read articles written by Eritreans. I may not agree with their political views, but I am proud to know there are Eritreans who are educated and are able to express themselves in an articulate manner. Can you imagine if all of these brilliant people got in one room and discussed on ways to improve our communities?

I think we need a commission set up similar to the 9/11 commission. We need these political activists to declare a ceasefire and come up with a plan to help us improve our communities. Is this too much to ask?

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* ንሰብ እውን ከምኡ። ዋጋ ዘሎዎ ንብረትካ ንጎሓሉ ብሕድሪ ምስ እትህብ ተመሊሰካ ኸም ዘይትረኽቦ ፍሉጥ እዩ።

Creative Corner

BECAUSE ONE CAN
 A cure to closed mind is
 To avoid being defensive
 Sarcastic, devious
 By facing a challenge
 Which is an opportunity to learn
 By developing self-confidence
 In a deep struggle
 For self-discovery
 Revealing that no one
 Is everybody's Jack
 Because one can.

THE ESSENCE OF POWER
 The magic of power
 Is to empower
 The powerless
 Not to rule.
 The unruly man and woman
 Who is only destined
 To rule non-human animal
 Upon the order
 Of the great Provident
 Who created him or her
 After his noble image.

Both poems written by Haile Bokre from Atlanta, Georgia

Announcements

JOB LISTING

PART TIME VOLUNTEER

The Eritrean Community Center Inc., a non-profit, charitable organization is seeking a qualified person to volunteer for a Grants Coordinator position. Over time this position will lead to a full-time paid employment.

The candidate will work closely with the Board of Directors, Resource Center coordinators, Housing Committee and other members of the Eritrean Community Center in developing and executing plans of action to ensure the availability of funding to promote, and implement community related programs.

Qualification Requirements

- Effective written and verbal English communication skills.
- Motivated self-starter with an aptitude for learning new skills quickly.
- Hard working, reliable and able to collaborate in a community enterprise and especially with the Board of Directors, and the business community.
- Ability to use PC applications and related query tools.

Interested applicants,

Please contact the Chairman of the Board, or write to:

Eritrean Community Center (ECC)
 590 Shawmut Ave
 Roxbury, Ma. 02118



International Women's Day

Come dance the night away in celebration of International Women's Day!

When: March 5th, 2005
 8:00PM-2:00AM

Where: ECC
 590 Shawmut
 Street, Boston

Cover charge: \$20



Community Profile



In the spirit of community and mentorship the ECC Newsletter brings you the Community Profile. Today's profile, we are proud to say, is Michael Ghebrehan. Michael was born in Rome, Italy ("the city of seven

hills") and raised in Jacksonville, FL. He has one sister who is now studying in New York City. He is in his second year of a PhD program in Physics at MIT. Michael is a tutor at the ECC but when he is not studying or tutoring you can find him reading stuff outside of physics and lifting weights (in hopes of representing Eritrea in the Mr. Universe competition). We are fortunate to have someone at the ECC with such humor, compassion and smarts. Below is the interview we recently had with Michael.

E-V: Why did you choose to study Physics and what do you like to do during your pastime

MG: I chose physics, specifically condensed matter theory (theory of matter on the atomic level), simply because I was somewhat decent in it and enjoyed it a lot. The most enjoyable part of it is when you have a flash of insight and understand something, like why a liquid continues to rotate in a cup, or in my case the properties of electromagnetic modes in a photonic crystal. During my pastime I usually read stuff outside of physics like history or general interest science.

E-V: How do you like your stay in Boston and what are your short- and long-term plans?

MG: So far, it's been good, even the cold doesn't bother me as much anymore. From what I've seen of

the city it's nice. My immediate plan is to complete my PhD, which hopefully won't take more than 3 more years. Long-term, I'm not so sure. I figure that if I do really well with my research then something will open up.

E-V: How do you find your involvement with the ECC?

MG: I enjoy tutoring. Whoever started this did a really great service to the community.

E-V: Are there people or ideas that had an impact on you? Do you want to say anything to the youth?

MG: Most importantly my dad. I believe most of

**"...it's not the
smartest or
fastest who
wins, it's the
one who hangs
on."**

my habits were formed when I worked with my dad during the summers and weekends. Also the Bible. I spent a lot of time when I was young reading it, so a lot of the teaching and ideals have been etched into me.

If I can say anything to the youth it would be don't give up in whatever you undertake to do, because it's not the smartest

or fastest who wins, it's the one who hangs on. Also learn your history, learn what was before the name Eritrea.

E-V: Any last words?

I just want to stress the importance of learning the history of Eritrea. Those in my generation and younger need to learn what was before the name Eritrea, the laws and culture before the present day, and the events of the 20th century. If the generation of our parents passes and we don't know our history, then I think the future for those us in the U.S. doesn't look too great.

**ERITREAN
COMMUNITY
CENTER, GREATER
BOSTON**

590 Shawmut Street
Boston, MA 02118

**E-mail comments and/or
suggestions to
eccnewsletter@yahoo.com**