



OVAHERERO GENOCIDE FOUNDATION

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"Remembering an iconic OvaHerero and Namibian Leader, a Pan-Africanist and Father of Modern Global Movement for Restorative Justice:

The spirit of the late Dr. Kuaima Riruako lingers on"

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June 2nd remains a sad but pivotal day in the annals of OvaHerero people's history and the broader restorative justice movement, not least the resolute Nama warriors of southern Namibia in particular who, alongside our people, continues to sit in the trenches of a protracted war for justice denied off a people brutalized over a century back and counting, *for* it is the day one of the greatest luminaries of our struggle and indeed a transitional feature bridging the divide between the struggle for nationalism and statehood AND post-independence pursuits for justice, equity, equality and harmonious co-existence, in departing from the earthly life, chose a different station to serve his beloved people from.

On this day, seven years today, OvaHerero 5th Paramount Chief Kuaima Kakurundiro Riruako transitioned to the afterlife and on his sad exit bequeathed onto us a colossal responsibility and rich heritage to deepen and sustain his lifelong work in pursuit of the ideals of justice and restoration of a dignified life to his people who endured hitherto unseen German racial superiority-peddled horrors accompanied by blatant thievery, dispossession and displacement to foreign lands across Southern Africa where they found refuge and continues to toil and labor as 'temporary residents" BUT it too is the day he, speaking to his parting work elucidated most by recurrent themes pursuant to calls for Reparations for the Nama and OvaHerero Genocide, reminds us all, OvaHerero sons, daughters and friends of the struggle standing on the shoulders of his work and indeed that of eminent personalities of our long campaign for redress, amongst them the celebrated Father of African Nationalism, OvaHerero 3rd Paramount Chief Komombumbi Hosea Kutako, to never relent in our demand for what the world had long established as owed to us as victims of a crime of genocide AND particularly guard against those who in the name of association with our ancestry but not cause for justice, for political expediency attempts to appropriate his name and that of his mentors to their pursuits of political self-preservation and cliental behavior in residence of a patronage system, fueled with falsehoods and anti-people pronouncements, seeks to derail our long and enduring march to real justice and fitting closure to a sad history.

Against this background, in furtherance of the legacy and times of Dr Kuaima Riruako who reminds us to never tire when the road seem infinite, tells us to remain steadfast and resolute when night-whispers of despair and despondency comes to live but chiefly he who tells us that justice almost always resides at the long-end of the stick but that it sure is attainable in a lifetime, the OvaHerero Genocide Foundation (OGF), through this memorializing piece

celebrates the times of the late Paramount Chief and particularly commits anew to his ideals and solemn calls for us to resolutely man this cause for genuine and lasting justice for Ovaherero and Nama people which he rightly schools us is inherently bound to be long and taxing but certainly worth the purposeful life of every Omuhherero and Nama child. On this day of rededication as OGF we reaffirm our commitment to laboring ONLY for a settlement in the open question of genocide injustices that achieves full German culpability to the crime of genocide and consequently installs on her an obligation to effect commensurate repairment or reparations for Ovaherero and Nama people.

We consequently reject all propositions and voices falling short of that noble mission of our late Chief Riruako and his predecessors in the name of PC Kapuuo and Kutako. The invocation of their names in advancement of an anti-Ovaherero and Nama people's interest is distasteful and smacks of naked opportunism mocking their glorious legacy and times spent only in furtherance of their people's cause.

Paramount Chief Dr. Riruako, best known for his forthrightness, remains a towering figure in the Namibian politics of both pre and post statehood epochs AND would particularly be saddened by the open betrayal of his and his people's sacred trust in the solemnity of our representative state organs (the Legislature and Executive) to inter alia faithfully and truthfully pursue the content and spirit of his sponsored 2006 Parliamentary motion on seeking closure to wounds of genocide crimes for affected communities AND consequently build harmonious inter-relations between various strands of the Namibian society still strained by unresolved questions from a racist, brutal and genocidal history of violence, dispossession and displacement. Dr Riruako most loathes the notion that amongst the crafters and lead sponsors of the alleged bad German-Namibia deal frustrating his dying wishes and denying earned justice for his people are his contemporaries and trusted men and women along whom he lit the path to Namibian statehood.

In bringing his lifelong work to life, we particularly remember his relentless efforts to mobilize a largely skeptical Namibian Parliamentary membership to rally in unison around his call for a fairer and just settlement for the question of genocidal crimes against Herero-Nama people. A stellar-will and determination best defines the larger than life persona Dr. Riruako was and is remembered for.

Raised by his father who was deeply mired in Herero politics throughout the formative years of young Riruako and particularly serving as pivotal member of the PC Komombumbi Hosea Kutako's Chief's Council, Dr Riruako honed his trade in the company of prominent Ovaherero men who spurred a deep sense of duty and service in pursuit of the long evasive justice for his people.

Searching for a rallying point for diverse voices of our people, the late Paramount Chief inspired the formation of a global genocide and reparations movement as far back as 1995 when the then German Chancellor Helmut Kohl visited Namibia and continued to serve as its principal source for wisdom and tenacious calls for the accountability of powerful states built around criminal enterprises of colonialism and racial exploitation.

To concretize the work he sought to achieve through the broad-based movement for restorative justice he championed, through a National Assembly Resolution on Genocide, in 2006, Dr Kuaima sought Namibia's affirmation of the following:

- That what was done to our people between 1904 and 1908, in then sovereign Ovaheroland and the Great Namaqualand respectively (two-thirds of the land mass of present day Namibia), by German Imperial forces as sanctioned and commanded by a General of the Kaiser, Lothar Von Trotha, on the basis of Extermination Orders

blessed by the German Government of the day, constitutes a brutal and criminal Act of Genocide;

- That the German state must thus repair that damage through a reparations' settlement package to descendants of victims of that genocide and their affected communities;
- That to determine a settlement commensurate and or proportional with the loss incurred by these communities consequent of that criminal German genocidal act, trilateral discussions between the German government on the one hand AND a duality of the Government of Namibia as facilitator in the role of principal custodian of the interest of our people who remained in the territory that later transitioned into the state of Namibia (recognizing that a significant share of survivors of that genocide fled to neighboring countries where they live to present day and thus do not have the modern state of Namibia as custodian of their interest) AND representatives of victims descendants and affected communities (along the model of the Jewish-German Holocaust discussions) occupying the opposing end with each independently engaging the German position of the discussion be instituted urgently. This position was rightly interpreted by then Minister Foreign Affairs Hon. Utoni Nujoma who subsequently issued a state policy affirming the Namibian government's role as "facilitation" and or "mediation".
- That Germany must apologize to descendants of victims and affected communities, not a Parliament of Namibia!.

Nowhere else than in that Resolution exists a better elucidation of our people's aspirations and long yearning for justice delivered through a genuine settlement brokered only by themselves or their independently chosen agent/agents. From the chambers of our representative legislative arm of the state to the halls of executive power, the voice of Dr Riruako echoed with unprecedented unanimity and his calls become Namibia's call with adoption of that Motion!

But as an old thinker would frame it "there are many different forms of betrayal, but one hurts the most, Betraying Your Self" (unknown source); as passionate and central figure of the generation that successively uprooted and drove out a repugnant apartheid regime of South Africa, even Dr Riruako could not and would not in death fathom the betrayal of and or by one self, a betrayal by one's own people ...and that to him and us as heirs to his struggle hurts most, particularly more so as we remember the scattered bones of our people dissolving in the sand dunes on the Kalahari our people trekked across fleeing the harrowing brutalities of the German imperial machine and to this day with no lasting peace for its spirit. That most hurtful 'self-betrayal' is best brought to light by the importation of an alien political construct of absolutist representation by the Namibian Executive and consequently whole appropriation and monopolization of a process that essentially called for inclusivity, plurality and self-representation for all affected parties.

In the footsteps and spirit of Dr Riruako, we remind the Namibian Executive that the format of ongoing, concluding and or concluded bilateral dialogue between the two governments (Namibia and Germany respectively), with the exclusion of legitimate representatives of the affected communities, is significantly adrift from the content of the Riruako's motion and thus flawed not only in its architecture but outcomes as evidenced through leaked extracts and as such the Ovaherero Genocide Foundation (OGF) appeals to our Executive to summon its moral conscience, if only for the memory of Dr Riruako, and set-aside that process for recalibration and starting anew. Dr Riruako demands this little off us and particularly so from his contemporaries who stared him in the face and agreed that that much was owed to the children of Namibia and specifically the Ovaherero and Nama genocide victims' descendants and communities.

Commented [N1]: Lets just keep the points of the resolution only.. I am not so sure if the first bullet is part of it..

Raised in the company of great visionaries and Pan-Africanists such as Paramount Chief Komombumbi Hosea Kutako, for late Paramount Chief Riruako, the settlement to the open question of genocide could never be whole until Ovaherero and Nama diasporan communities are adequately accommodated. To spearhead this important work, he extended his mobilization work to Botswana and South Africa in pursuit of their unity and organization for their equal right to justice.

Pursuant to giving these displaced communities a lasting home, PC Riruako campaigned tirelessly to secure land for those seeking repatriation from Botswana to Namibia specifically and stood tall and proud at the respective gates of Dobe and Muhembo to watch them take first steps into the land once known as Hereroland, a land their ancestors fled a century back with German guns chasing on their tail. For Riruako and his most attendant students that moment stands alone as one of truth and justice for our people and as such rejects in totality all propositions for a settlement falling short of restoring full dignity and decent livelihood to that community of returnees now largely congested in Gam-land where they are condemned to conditions of squalor and destitution but equally those who continues to live in foreign lands without serious efforts by Namibia to facilitate their return to the land of their ancestry.

The late Paramount Chief embodies the repatriation of skulls shipped to Germany for racist experimental purposes of the genocidal campaign that later underpinned Nazism under Adolf Hitler and its twisted constructs of racial supremacy and white superiority. Astute as ever, Dr Riruako sought the return of these skulls to their home soil for ends of ensuring that their spirit is reunited with its people and land but tactful as he was, against strong advise in halls of power that they be laid to rest at the National Heroes Acre, he counseled that they rather be archived at the Independence Memorial shrine where they today serve as an indelible reminder of our unsolved historical questions but more so irrefutable material evidence to German genocidal campaign against our people his successor, 7th Paramount Chief Advocate Rukoro, now relies on to litigate the case of our people in various platforms of possible recourse.

Dr. Riruako was an ordinary man in terms of materiality. His generosity set him apart from the rest. He was moving “encyclopedia” of the Ovaherero people, a vast reservoir of indigenous knowledge, folklore, history and family lineages, Dr. Riruako was particularly relatable to his people. He is thus remembered for charisma and deep sense of humor that made his public oral engagements most captivating and worthwhile.

Albeit many stood with him in his generation, his foresight and audacity of hope to see through his daring missions but chiefly inspire others, skeptics and alike, to join him in those pursuits,, particularly as relates his demand that Germany, an established leading global power, be held to account for past colonial crimes, is pioneering and testament of our view that he indeed was first amongst equals.

Convinced of the righteousness of his lifelong work and the lessons we take from it to live a purposeful life in pursuit of the greater good for our people and common cause but also those who lives with and amongst us, We commit anew to striving for the full realization of Dr. Riruako’s legacy as best encapsulated in the 2006 Parliamentary Motion on Genocide and affirms our solemn conviction to never compromise his inspired noble trans-generational struggle of our people, passed across many generations of people less-privileged than we are and often under conditions of extreme deprivation and oppression but still persisted in sustaining the cause until it was bequeathed onto us...The assignment of my generation today is as sacrosanct as ever, it is either to achieve full victory or pass this struggle to future generations with denting it one bit, and that we are fully committed to.

In memorializing his work and times, the OGF, a week from today (June 9th, 2021), hosts a virtual Dr Kuaima Riruako Lecture Series Launch which inter alia sees our organization's interactive website platform going live. The same occasion also launches newly adopted OGF LOGO as symbol of our work and identity.

May the soul of this fallen giant of our people continue to rest in permanent peace!

Nandiasora "Nandi" Mazeingo serves as Chairperson of Ovaherero Genocide Foundation. An ardent student of multidisciplinary studies residing at the nexus of economics, political science, philosophy and history, Nandi is a proud holder of a BA (Economics, Political Science and History); MSc (World Trade Organization law and integration economics); MSc (International Relations, Diplomacy and Management). He further boasts a rich resume of extensive public serve in the Finance and Development cluster.