

DR. JOSHUA B. MUGYENYI MEMORIAL LECTURE

Makerere University, 15th March 2012

The Chief Guest, Rt. Hon. Professor Apolo Nsibambi

Hon. Peter Anyan'g Nyong'o, Minister for Medical Services, republic of Uganda

Hon. Mary Mugenyi and Members of your family present

Honourable Ministers present

Your Excellencies, The Ambassadors and High Commissioners

The Chancellor, Makerere University

The Vice Chancellor, Makerere University

Professors, Deans and Directors

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. I thank Hon. Professor Peter Anyan'g Nyong'o for his exceptional presentation and the highlights and insights he has provided to us about the life and the times of our colleague and friend, Dr. Joshua Mugenyi.
2. Allow me also to thank Hon. Mary Mugenyi and her family and friends for continuing to strive to keep the memory of Joshua alive. May your love and loyalty to your husband be an example to all families in our country and beyond. Well done, Mary.
3. In the few minutes available to me, I ask you to allow me to restrict my remarks to 4 periods of Joshua's life in which I had an opportunity to work with him. These periods can be summarized as follows:
 - a) His Proclamation of the Third Force in 1979
 - b) The Implementation of the Third Force: 1979-1986
 - The Uganda National Movement.
 - The Uganda Patriotic Movement
 - The 1980 Campaign
 - The Escape to Exile
 - The Communication from Bonn

- c. The Return from Exile to Institutional Building: 1987-2002.
- d. And finally, the Legacy of Joshua Mugenyi.

THE THIRD FORCE

4. My first time to see Joshua Mugenyi was in the Lower Lecture theatre here at Makerere University in September, 1979. I had recently arrived from Florida in the United States where I had lived for 5 years in self exile from Idi Amin's reign of terror. I was then an innocent Senior Lecturer in Economics and I was staying at the Makerere University Guest House while waiting for UPC stalwart, Professor Rubeihayo, then Chairman of the Makerere University Housing Committee, to allocate me a flat or house to live in.
5. I arrived at the lecture theatre late and barely managed to find a place to sit as the place was filled to capacity and many students were standing. Joshua was in the middle of the lecture of which I did not know the topic. But I quickly caught on. Using liberal illustrations on the blackboard, he argued that Uganda's political parties were sectarian. They were based on religion or on ethnic origin. For those of us who did not wish to belong to a party based on religion or ethnic origin, the solution was to start a **third force** that did not base itself on such sectarian beliefs.
6. I became an instant convert. I sought him out afterwards and we agreed to form the Uganda National Movement (UNM). We formed it, registered it and Joshua proclaimed it. At the time of the proclamation I was down with malaria so I did not attend the

- launch. We started holding meetings on campus, developing our ideology and recruiting students and businessmen as members.
7. A few months later I was shocked when Mugenyi came to tell me that Mr. Museveni wanted to meet us. I had heard of Mr. Museveni of course as a guerrilla leader and now a minister in Binaisa's government. So on Saturday, Joshua drove me in his baby fiat to Mr. Museveni's house in Nakasero. We did not find Mr. Museveni there but we found a large number of leading politicians among whom were Hon. Eriya Kategaya, Sam Kutesa, Ruhakana Rugunda, Eli Rwakakoko, Bidandi SSali, the late Bakulu Mpagi and a host of others I did not know. The purpose of the meeting was to form a new political party to compete with the dominant parties of the time namely UPC, DP and KY.
 8. Later in the day Mr. Museveni arrived and when Joshua introduced me to him he said he had already heard about me. He did not tell me who told him about me but I believe that it was most probably Joshua who had told him about me. By the time we left Mr. Museveni's house we had agreed to merge the Uganda National Movement into a new party to be known as the Uganda Patriotic Movement.
 9. In subsequent meetings of the new party, we adopted the formulation: "**Clean Leadership, Unity and Peace**" as our motto. It caught on like wild fire among the young people. Although the older people underestimated us and saw us as hapless childlike adventures who did not know which way the political winds of Uganda were blowing, they clearly underestimated the power of our ideas that reflected the peoples hunger for change and especially for peace, stability and justice.

10. Throughout the campaign of 1980 Joshua and I moved from district to district in his tiny fiat. This is when I learned why a political party is called a party. IT IS PRECISELY THAT. A Party. In our case it was the camaraderie of like minded young people determined to change the world. We marched through towns dressed in white gowns, we sang songs of freedom and we believed that we could win. There can be little doubt that we sowed the seeds of revolution, especially among the young.
11. The elections were held on 10 December, 1980. As the counting was going on and the democratic Party appeared headed for a land slide, Mr. Paulo Muwanga who was the head of Government, the Chairman of the so-called Military Commission that had overthrown President Binaisa months earlier, Mr. Muwanga announced that he alone would announce the results of the elections. He assumed the powers of the electoral Commission and proceeded to announce the losers and winners in each and every constituency. This was of course illegal. His purpose was simply to ensure that his party, the UPC won the elections and that Mr. Milton Obote became president. Mr. Obote had already warned us publicly of the terrible consequences if UPC did not win. He had used the word "shudder" to describe the consequences of a UPC loss. He said he "shuddered" to contemplate what would happen if UPC did not win.
12. With the election results so openly rigged, with undisguised impunity, the war that UPM had promised to wage if the elections were rigged, followed. The ideological campaign which Joshua and his colleagues had waged in the previous years had convinced many young people of the necessity to fight for freedom and so

they came forth as volunteers ready to fight to implement the third force.

13. THE ESCAPE TO EXILE

In January 1981, a lorry full of soldiers was dispatched to Makerere University to arrest Joshua Mugenyi. He had anticipated their coming and had spent the previous night at my flat on the ground floor of Mitchell Hall. His flat was on the top floor of Mitchell Hall. When the soldiers came, they asked for Mugenyi and were directed to a building called Mugenyi Flats. They went there and started breaking down doors looking for Joshua. That gave Joshua the minutes he needed to walk to the main gate and board a taxi to God knows where. I later found him in Nairobi in March 1981 when my turn to run had come.

14. COMMUNICATION FROM BONN

From Nairobi I went to Bonn, West Germany, as a Research Fellow with the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. The German Foundation knew nothing of my political troubles and were simply fulfilling a three month offer of research at their headquarters in Bonn, which was then of course the capital of West Germany. In Bonn I kept in touch with Joshua and the other UPM exiles in Nairobi – Hon. Kiyonga, Hon. Rugunda etc. Of particular importance for me, however, was that I mailed to Joshua a photocopy of Professor Arthur Lewis's book, *Politics in West Africa*. In that book Prof.

Lewis argued that a winner take all model of democracy would not work in Africa. Instead he advocated a coalition of tribes and religions so that every tribe and tongue would be included in the government. For me, it was the best articulation of the concept of the third force that Joshua had already put forward. Sir Arthur Lewis, from the Caribbean, was a renowned economist and had won the Nobel Prize in Economics. But until I went to Bonn I had not known of his experience in African politics especially in West Africa. He believed, and I was convinced by his argument, that a winner take all model would result in endless war as those left out of government would wage war in order to gain access to state privileges for themselves and their members.

I sent that book to Joshua and although we never discussed I believed that it contributed to the consolidation of the NRM ideology as a broad based movement.

THE RETURN FROM EXILE

15. When Hon. Kiyonga became minister of Finance in November 1986, he called me to come and work as Director of Research in the Central Bank and as his main advisor. I abandoned my professorship at the Coppin State University in the USA and joined the Bank of Uganda in April 1987. Although the Bank of Uganda had a reputation as probably the only functioning institution in the country, it was in an incredibly dysfunctional state. For example, it had not published accounts in six years, it did not know how much foreign debt it owed to individual creditors or in total; foreign exchange reserves were virtually zero.

In fact, we could not afford the \$5 million monthly oil import requirement. And so on.

16. On top of all that there were fierce internal politics that I perceived as hostile to the NRM ideological revolution. When I tried to assert myself in the bank I found myself ideologically isolated. I was considered out of touch with the reality of the machinations that governed economic reality in Uganda in general and in the bank in particular. I came to the conclusion that I needed help to turn the bank of Uganda around. When I considered the depth of the matter I resolved that the best person I knew who was smart enough and tough enough to help me in that struggle was Joshua Mugenyi. I communicated my view to Hon. Kiyonga and I thank him for accepting my recommendation and inviting Joshua to come. Joshua came to the Bank of Uganda as Secretary of the Bank, which was a very powerful administrative position.
17. Although I subsequently felt guilty for interrupting his doctoral studies, I consoled myself with the fact that I myself had abandoned not only a professorship with tenure, but also a master's degree in computer science at Columbia University that I had all but completed. Once at the bank we worked practically around the clock. There was no time for academic matters. The burden of restoring sanity to the Bank of Uganda in particular and to Uganda as a whole was a burden that I believe must have contributed to Joshua's early demise. His schedule at the bank was much heavier than mine. He engrossed himself in it with a totality and intensity that frightened me. In those early years, it was not unusual for him to come into office at 7am and leave after midnight including weekends. While I considered myself fully dedicated, Joshua was more than dedicated, he was totally immersed, body and soul into putting right decades of decadence and disintegration. I really have

no way to describe the enormous energy and almost religious intensity that Joshua brought to that institution. Cleaning up the administration, the manpower, the practices would have been impossible but not for Joshua.

18. I can say that for the first time I detected moments of sadness when even his unfailing humor would give way to the wonder of how an institution that was so important to Uganda could have succumbed to the depth of irrationality and debilitation that it had come to.
19. It was also in these early years at the bank that Joshua's mother, Esther, died. My own mother, also called Esther, had died earlier on in 1987 and the news had come to me by telephone from Jinja even though my mother died in Kabale. You see there was no telephone link between Kabale and Kampala. So the message went from the currency centre in Kabale to the currency centre in Jinja and someone I did not know called me from Jinja and simply said, I am sorry buy I have bad news, you mother has passed away. It was a harsh and cruel way to learn of my mother's passing.
20. In the case of Joshua his mother died in Kisoro following unsuccessful surgery I believe on her thyroid. This time the news from Kisoro first came to me and I had the unfortunate duty of passing it on to him. I remember that difficult day. He took it hard, because it is hard. I simply put him in my car and it was my turn to drive him, considering that he always drove me in his fiat in the early years of our friendship. I drove him home and he recovered his balance when he saw his father and all other close relatives.
21. In 1993 I left the Central Bank and moved to a new and for me, an even tougher battleground in Uganda Commercial Bank. As

the chairman/managing director of the largest bank in Uganda I became very busy and my work was dangerous. My interaction with Joshua decreased but he continued to help me whenever I needed help from the Central bank which was often. In 1996 I was dismissed from UCB for opposing its privatization. By then Joshua's ideas on structural adjustment were becoming solid and we often met to compare notes on the process that Uganda had gone through to normalize her economy and the price we had paid. That I believe was the topic of his doctoral dissertation and I was greatly relieved when he finally concluded his doctorate.

22. JOSHUA'S LEGACY

Joshua's number one quality was courage. If in every generation we have one man or woman of Joshua's intellect and courage, Uganda's freedom would be fundamentally advanced. Brothers and sisters, today as we meet here to remember Joshua, let us remember not only his piercing intellect, or his great humor, or his grace and joy and mastery of communication. Let us, above all pray that God will raise men and women of his quantum of intellect and courage.

23. As I have already said, Joshua's late mother was called Esther. A few days ago the people of the Biblical Esther were remembering how Esther put her life on the line to save her people from extermination. For me, the courage of Esther was incarnate in Joshua. To save her people, she said;

*"I will go to the king,
even though it is against the law.
And if I perish, I perish."* (Esther 4:16).

Joshua's life, his works and his example can be similarly summarized as follows:

*"I will declare the truth
And I will fight for what is right,
Even though it is dangerous,
And if I die, I die."*

Joshua, Rest in Peace.

.....
Ezra Suruma.