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Africa: Cuba Deserves AU Observer Status

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When the current chairperson of the African Union Commission, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, visited the revolutionary island of Cuba last month, Mother Africa's bravest children were paying extremely close attention, due to the political and historical ramifications of this gesture.

During the meeting between South African President Jacob Zuma and Cuban President Commandante Raul Castro in December of 2013 at President Zuma's residence, President Castro eloquently stated "Cuba is part of Africa and Africa is part of Cuba and the Caribbean", which prompted President Zuma to say "Without Cuba our old friend modern South Africa would not be complete".

One of the main highlights of President Zuma's speech to the United Nations General Assembly in September, was his calling for the immediate lifting of the blockade on Cuba, it was none other than President Mugabe, a few years ago at the UN, who exposed that the monstrous US blockade has cost Cuba over 100 billion dollars.

While it is hardly necessary or productive to criticise President Zuma for not stressing during the meeting that sadc on a regional level has emerged as the face of Cuban solidarity on the African continent today, the President along with ANC membership and its most loyal supporters must be reminded that the first recipient of the Jose Marti Award in Southern Africa is none other than President Mugabe.

This would also send a message to Africans at home and abroad that when this special honour

was bestowed on President Zuma in Cuba five years ago, he was following not only the footsteps of 'Madiba' Nelson Mandela, who received the award in 1990, but President Mugabe and the late Pan African warrior, Thomas Sankara, former President of Burkina Faso as well.

For Africans to reduce Cuban Solidarity to the relationship between Cuba and the African National Congress is the equivalent of embracing a narrative that suggests that Apartheid existed in South Africa exclusively.

We, as Africans also have the option of reminiscing of when the pro-Apartheid National Assembly Democratic Party and Freedom Front boycotted Commandante Fidel Castro's historic address to the National Assembly in 2000.

The visit of Dr Zuma to Cuba by virtue highlights the 4th and 14th objectives of the African Union which are to promote and defend African common positions on issues of interest to the continent and its peoples and to work with relevant international partners in the eradication of preventable diseases and the promotion of good health on the continent.

The decision by the African Union to establish a Memorandum of Understanding with Cuba with emphasis on strengthening solidarity and cooperation in the areas of education and skills training is without question a lesson in diplomacy and goodwill.

What the African world must learn from this MOU is the Cuban revolution functions from the perspective that when solidarity comes truly from the heart, it will not be measured by ink on a sheet of paper, but by selfless deeds with no hidden motivation and agenda.

Whether we want to discuss Cuban soldiers who shed their blood in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinee Bissau, Cuban teachers who trained Zimbabweans on the Island of Youth in the 80's that has resulted in Zimbabwe's current 97 percent literacy rate or the countless Cuban doctors who have treated Africans at home and abroad for over four decades, it is only the cowards and reactionaries amongst our ranks who doubt Cuba's sincerity.

Whenever high level diplomatic missions take place it is universally accepted that the discussions that take place on the ground are the best indicator of what the follow up will be if any at all, because of Cuba's impeccable track record of service in Mother Africa, we have no choice but to be extremely optimistic.

The highlights of Dr Zuma's visit were her meeting with Commandante Raul Castro, a meeting with the President of the Cuban National Assembly, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, Commerce and Industry, Secretary of Cuban Women's Foundation and the African Ambassador's Group.

It was also pleasing to learn that Dr Zuma's delegation visited the Latin American School of Medicine and the Pedro Touri Institute for Tropical Medicine, with all the pro-capitalist talk of investment on the African continent, Cuba is training thousands of Medical students who will return to their countries of birth and reignite the revolutionary zeal of Agostinho Neto, Frantz Fanon, and Samuel Parienyatwa who were not only exceptional doctors but freedom fighters of the highest order.

The timing of Dr Zuma's visit to Cuba raises eyebrows amongst Africans at home and abroad for two reasons, the first was the comment while supporting Raul Castro and Barack Obama Africa will campaign for the lifting of the sanctions on Cuba, the second was the AU resolution

calling the lifting of the blockade on Cuba.

At this moment in history there are no words in neither the 5,000 languages our ancestors created or the 7 colonial languages we speak that were imposed on us by brutal force, that could capture how tragic it would be if the motivation to fight to lift the Imperialist blockade on Cuba, is due to the opportunism and showboating of the Obama administration.

It is humorous to witness the growing traveling circus of so-called African-Americans now breaking their necks to visit Cuba, many of them not only never participated in the movement to lift the US blockade, but will be amongst the main culprits who propagate the notion that President Obama should go down in history as the liberator of Cuba.

They are the intellectual off springs of those who celebrate former US President Lyndon Johnson as a crusader for Civil Rights and Voting Rights, and Abraham Lincoln as an abolitionist who was dedicated to the eradication of Chattel Slavery.

We only hope that Dr Zuma remembers that when US President Obama addressed AU staff earlier this year he requested that Africa help him pressure the US Congress and Senate to the lift the US blockade on Cuba. He was too hell bent on carrying the torch for the homosexual community to think about the Cuban women, children and men who have suffered due to this genocidal policy.

At the moment seven non- African nations who have AU observer status Haiti, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Palestine, Serbia and Turkey, the question must be raised amongst AU leaders does Cuba deserve this status and if not why not.

Because Cuba is so humble it is very possible they might decline if the offer is extended, however it goes without saying how much Africa will benefit.

In his book "Neo Colonialism The Last Stage of Imperialism" Osagyefo Kwame Nkrumah stated "Investment under neo-colonialism increases rather than decreases the gap between the rich and poor countries of the world"

The Cubans and Zimbabweans are leading the way in showing poor and oppressed people what measures must be taken to address this problem, only time will tell whether we embrace or reject their courageous examples.

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