

# THE TWO AFRICAS

By Phillip R. Walker

There are really two Africas. One is widely broadcast in the media as the near destitute continent in dire need of our help. This Africa is rapidly succumbing to the pandemic of HIV/Aids, wars, bureaucratic mismanagement, megalomaniac rulers who are hoarding billions of dollars in Switzerland, and the total collapse of colonial era infrastructure. We hear about Bono's crusade to save the continent and Madonna's crusade to save the orphan's. We can watch the horror as the lost boys of Sudan march across our screen or catch DiCaprio in Blood Diamond. To add to this perspective many ministries and NGO's are constantly asking for funds to help feed, rescue, save, educate or inoculate the sick, dying and hurting across the continent. While these efforts may have good intentions and actually help they are often presented in distorted ways by the media. A few minutes of channel surfing will reveal groups on more than one channel showing pictures of poor Africans needing your help to save them from certain death. How ever you look at it, the media is painting Africa as a disaster almost past saving.

There is another Africa. Fortunately it is starting to sneak its way into the information channels of the world. This new Africa is moving economically, socially and spiritually in the right direction. Like the nocturnal hippo coming out of Lake Victoria at night it is not seen by many. Yet it is beginning to make an impact in some unexpected ways. The impact is both in Africa and in many other places around the world.

Spiritually, African leaders are impacting Christianity throughout Europe and the United States. The largest churches in Europe were started by Africans, the number two man in the Church of England is Dr John Tucker Mugabi Sentamu the Archbishop of York from Uganda, arguably the most influential Anglican in the world is Archbishop Peter Akinola of Nigeria. Hardly a week goes by without hearing of another American Episcopal church coming under the leadership of African Bishops. There are

hundreds of African planted churches springing up in the US and Europe. These churches are led by African's committed to the veracity of God's word and a commitment to fulfill the Great Commission. The passion of African Christianity is being felt as tremors around the world. Those tremors will grow as the liberalism of the church in the West clashes with the passionate evangelical conservatism of Africa.

Africans are also impacting many other arenas, such as politics. One of the front runners of the Democratic Party in the United States is Barak Obama (hardly one of the names listed on the Mayflower). His father hails from Kenya. I noticed in my own town in California that the senior health official is from Nigeria. The point is that Africans are making a positive impact around the



world. According to Vejay Mahajan in the June 2007 Harvard Business Review Africa as a continent is wealthier than India. 12 nations in Africa have a gross national income greater than China. While the US and Europe labor under an anemic growth rate of under 2.8% , Africa's growth rate is predicted to be near 6%.

While the West pours millions into Africa in the form of humanitarian aid, China is pouring billions into Africa in the form of economic aid. President Hu Jintao of China told African leaders that China is committing five billion dollars to loans and credits and another five billion dollars to a Chinese-Africa development fund all by 2009. While some of these funds will undoubtedly come in the form of aid, most is coming in the form of economic partnership. China knows there is a new Africa that represents a great investment. If the West does not wake up to this opportunity the Tigers of Asia will soon be the major recipient of a robust African economy.

### The Tigers of Asia Meet the Lions of Africa

The biggest “need” Africa has is to get an honest perspective of its potential. Where the West simply sees need and China sees potential, Africans must come to see themselves in light of a new reality. So, let's take a moment and look at some of the key factors that will make Africa a global player.

Africa is big. I often ask Africans how large, geographically, is Africa? The answers range from, really large to “maybe bigger than China.” Most are shocked to realize that Africa is nearly 12 million square miles. That is bigger than China, Europe, and the United States all combined. Current estimates of population range from 800 million to nearly 900 million people. If you listen to aid agencies you would think that Africa was destined to become a deserted, empty waste land over the next 50 years. But the reality is quite different. While we should not and cannot minimize the tragedy of the pandemic of HIV/Aids, the reality is that the population of Africa is expected to be 1.7 billion people by 2050. Historically Africa was robbed of some of its wealth by colonial powers and/or corrupt rulers. But there is plenty left to propel it onto global markets. While Africa is still rich in natural resources, it is even richer in human capital.

So why isn't Africa already a major economic power? The answers vary and are complex. While it is helpful to understand what has kept Africa down, it is even more important to understand what will lift Africa up. We become our focus. Focusing on the past and all the reasons why I am not what I could be does not make me what I want to be. Africa has a destiny. Destiny is dictated not only by the past but by our creative potential future. Africa needs to look down the road and ask the simple question, “What do we want to become?” Destiny is determined by the choices we make and the choices we make are determined by the paradigms we choose to operate from. As long as Africa accepts the current media's assessment that it is the poor, helpless, needy continent it will live out that destiny. But it does not have to stay that way. There is a new paradigm emerging that sees a new Africa leading the world socially, spiritually and economically.

The term Asian Tigers refers to the emerging economies of Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan during the 1960s. Between 1960 and 1990 they moved from economic poverty to engines of growth for their whole region. Their export driven philosophy allowed them to fuel

not only their own growth but growth throughout Asia. As a result Asia has become an economic giant with China rapidly moving to a position of unparalleled power and potential across the globe.

While there are many differences that cannot be neglected, Africa has its own economic “lions.” The four lions of Africa represent nearly 50% of the total economy of the continent. Over the next decade these lions will become more and more linked with the economic powers of Asia to develop growth economies that will pull Africa out of despair and into the beginning of a golden era. These countries are South Africa, Nigeria, Egypt and Algeria. While Egypt and Algeria will play a major role in North Africa, it is South Africa and Nigeria that will lead sub-Saharan Africa into a new era of prosperity. And out of the two it will eventually be Nigeria that takes the lead.

### But Choices Remain

The destiny of Africa is not a forgone conclusion, it will be based on choices. As leaders throughout the continent move to take responsibility for their own destiny they have the potential to exceed Asia and the West economically. But it will not be economic acumen that determines the quality of life or potential, but it will be inner strength and character. Quality of life cannot be simply exchanging poverty for riches. It is more than that. As leaders learn the skills necessary to take their companies global, they need also to learn the message of the heart that will provide significance and not simply success. China is a huge engine that is fueling the global economy. Unless China finds its soul, economic power will eventually implode as the heart is shriveled up by external wealth. Africa needs to learn skills, but those cannot be at the expense of its soul. The West has things, but Africa has character. Character is formed in the hardships of life. The soul does not have to be the price for economic security and growth. In fact, long term prosperity, including significance, can only come as a result of balancing the opportunities of wealth with the humanity of the heart. While the brain and skills can bring economic success only the heart can give significance. Success without significance is winning a race that has no lasting reward.

### The Foundations of the New Africa

The bedrock of a global economy is built on accountable trust. As the world moves towards ever greater integration, outsourcing, and cooperation there have to be some ground rules that will guide the process. Once these ground rules are put into effect and limited measures of accountability are established then companies have some assurance that they are getting what they are ordering at agreed upon levels of quality. China has serious problems with the accountability of some of its exports. Tainted tooth paste, pirated CDs and DVDs, pollution, and other globally unacceptable practices and products threaten to derail the growing giant. Zheng Xiaoyu, former head of the State Food and Drug Administration (SFDA), did not simply lose his job but was executed for taking some \$850,000 in bribes in return for approving the use of certain medicines. China understands that trade with other countries is based on some assurance that they are upholding agreed upon standards. At the heart of the global economy is trust.

Over the next five years Africa will finally be connected to the world via fiber optic cable. The potential impact is limited only by the creativity of African entrepreneurs. Already European

companies are outsourcing some call centers to places like Ghana where the connection is adequate. Africa offers the global market educated, hard working young people eager to do what they need to do in order to become successful. But if this is to happen then the world must be able to trust the governments, businesses, and leaders in Africa to deliver products and services with quality.

So how does a continent not known for trusting one another instill the value of trust in its population? One decision at a time. The Law of the Broken Window states that crime comes out of a lack of order. If people see a broken window and it is never repaired the assumption is that no one really cares. It does not take long before more windows are broken and soon the whole area is decaying. But there is also the Law of the Fixed Window. This states that if those things that are obviously broke are fixed then people assume that someone cares enough and they in turn begin to care. This can lead to random acts of caring and trusting. The attitude of the man on the street is generally the corporate attitude of the people. If enough people care and practice trusting then others will follow suit. Trust can only happen as individuals begin caring and putting the value of trust into action on a daily basis. At the center of this caring lies a church committed to both the Great Commission and the Great Commandment. Real transformation takes place as church leaders become catalyst to changed lives.

Africa has experience phenomenal growth in the number of those who call themselves Christians. In 1900 barely five million people in Africa identified themselves as such. In 2000 that number has grown to over four hundred million. This rapid growth in adherents has not been matched by an equal growth in real disciples. While hundreds of missionaries and dozens of mission agencies have rushed in to shore up the discipleship call, the answer lies in the leadership of Africa. The transition has begun. More and more African leaders are calling on their churches to focus on equipping the saints to live out their faith in the practical application of everyday life. Like the Law of the Broken Window, the answer is in those who live in the neighborhood. Outsiders can assist, but the answers must come out of Africa. Over the past 21 years of living and working in that great continent I am seeing the new Africa developing churches who are holistically committed to evangelism and committed to addressing the physical needs of the people.

## Conclusion

The new Africa is rising fast. The destiny of Africa is to become a major player in the global market and a leader in fulfilling the Great Commission. But the new Africa should be built on the solid foundation of dignity, trust and the commitment to spiritual significance. It is time to exchange the begging bowl for African creativity. Mission agencies and Western churches need to move from telling to listening, from handout to hand ups, from leading to partnering. Poverty, disease and war are symptoms, not causes. While symptoms need to be addressed it is vital that the underlying issues be attacked. Donors need to invest forward towards a new Africa led by Africans solving African problems.