

# GUIDE OF THE FATHERS OF THE NATIONS

## BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

Paul B.Vitta was born in Tanzania. He received his PHD in Physics from Emory University and was a professor of Physics at the Dar es salaam, later he worked for African regional Center for Technology in Senegal then later move to international Research center in Canada.

## **TITLE**

### **FATHERS OF NATIONS**

The title is relevant and apt for it satirizes the situation in contemporary Africa. Fathers the Nations is a honorific title given to a person considered the driving force behind the establishment of a country, state or nation. These are figures in the African context who once helped drive away the colonial regime and helped their countries gain self-rule under their leadership. In the contemporary sense, fathers of nations are basically

the heads of states and governments: presidents.

Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the Nation of India is a figure celebrated in numerous nations and by international organizations, a departure from these current title holders. On Joseph Stalin's seventieth birthday in 1949, he was bestowed with the title "Father of Nations" for his establishment of "people's democracies" in countries occupied by the USSR after World War 11.

In post-colonial Africa, "Father of Nation" was a title used by leaders to refer to their role in the independence movement as a source of legitimacy and to use paternalist symbolism as a source of continued popularity.

The title is satirical. In the text, fifty fathers of nations, herein titled heads of state have met at Banjul –Gambia. The agenda of the summit is not clear. This discussion thereafter has neither head nor tail. Two rival groups emerge; each advancing its ideology. There are those for Path Alpha and another group advancing Way Omega. The debate seems directionless. Thus, what comes to the fore is that the agenda for Africa is set and dictated by the international financial institutions that continue to impoverish the continent. Though "fathers" are expected

to give direction, provide agenda, give proper leadership and guidance to their "children," who in this context are their respective nations and states.

On the contrary, heads of state in Africa seem to be clueless, visionless and without agenda and this is what ails Africa. Hence, it can be arguably said that the problems bedeviling Africa stem from poor leadership that has presumably enveloped Africa as a continent. Needless to say, this poor leadership is not ready to pass over the baton to a vibrant and visionary leadership. For the longest time ever, after most countries gained self-rule the continent is still stuck in the realms of poverty, ignorance, illiteracy and diseases fifty years after independence.

### **PLOT SUMMARY**

Fathers of Nations is a spellbinding and thought-provoking, satirical novel tackling contemporary issues set in contemporary Africa. Paul B. Vitta uses sarcasm through humour to enlighten the reader on the social, economic and political wrongs in the African states. The continent is still struggling with the post independent problems namely: poverty, ignorance and disease. Instead of solving the same problems, the states have new entrants which are equally retrogressive to the inhabitants of the African nations (corruption and impunity). The continent is hence depicted as having lost sense of direction and moral correctness.

The plot revolves around the lives of four men from different parts of Africa. These men – Professor Kimani, Comrade Melusi, Engineer Tahir, Pastor Chiamaka, want the African heads of states in a Summit to ratify and adopt the document that could transform the continent's economic structures. The above stated four men, have initially suffered in different ways under the current political systems in their respective countries. This makes each and every one of them to hold a grudge against the same systems that affected them and hence starts to press for a possible change.

Doctor Abiola Afolabi is abandoned by his American wife (Pamela); Professor Kimani from Kenya has lost his wife (Asiyo Omondi) to a former university

colleague now a politician by the name Newborn Walomu, his daughter – Tuni, dies in a fatal accident; pastor Chiamaka is a fierce man who is jailed irregularly also deterred from preaching, finally, Ngobile Melusi a big time politician suffers in the hands of the new head of state, loses his wife (Ziliza) in a massacre, his Ndebele people are ruthlessly suppressed and murdered by the head of state's direct order. In addition to the four men, Engineer Seif Tahir (a nuclear bomb expert), Mr. Thaddeus Longway, are also dissatisfied by the African leadership, they are assisted by VOA journalist Fiona McKenzie and Nicholas Sentinel who in one accord plan to front their agenda before the heads Summit held in Gambia's capital of Banjul.

A summit of the heads of the African States is planned to take place in Banjul the capital of Gambia. Fifty heads of states are invited including the Gambian head of state who is supposed to be the chair of the summit but passes it on to another president. The heads of states are assembled and accommodated in the Pinnacle Hotel with their entourage, they look forward to re-adopt the Way Omega ideology which advocates for a common growth strategy of the citizens which will enable the donors to continue supporting the African nations through aids and grants. The ideology is fronted by Minister Zinto who claims that the strategy was well- thought out by experts. The majority of the African head of states seems to be aged and have over stayed in power, a good example is president Didier Bangoura who is depicted as senile, Bibo Dibonso who had ruled for forty years (Pg 157), king Jemba - Jemba IV, who was a king for life, president Wasi Wasi who had committed all sorts of atrocities including authoring many coups and so many others.

The Path Alpha a counter ideology emanating from AGDA (Agency for Governance and Development in Africa), which is championed by Mr. Thaddeus Longway, finds its way to the heads of states summit. Mr. Longway mobilises the likes of Professor Kimani, Comrade Melusi, Pastor Chiamaka, Doctor Afolabi and Engineer Tahir to use 'the trick' to table the ideology before the summit to counter the Way Omega.

Path Alpha is a strategy that advocates for mobilizing civic or public discontent into will to change. This strategy is to solve the problems some present heads of state find it difficult to solve. The advocates of Path Alpha champion the strategy because they want to solve the problems and owing to the fact that they have also suffered the ugly state abuse and do not want to suffer any more.

The Summit comes to a close in an unprecedented way by 'the fathers of nations' setting up a committee to bring the matter into a conclusion. The committee set is given the name The Method Committee which is chaired by President Bangoura who seems to be terribly confused because of senility. He uses two ways to make a decision on which strategy to be ratified – the Simple Matrix by a toss of a coin and Choice Matrix. Ultimately, either way, the path alpha carries the day, meaning the common citizen wins.

## **CHAPTER SUMMARIES**

### **Chapter one (Pg. 1-15)**

#### **The Four Strangers with the Same Mission**

- ✠ It is evening, four strangers check in at The Seamount hotel in Gambia's capital" Banjul
- ✠ None of them knows the other three
- ✠ First to check in is about 609 Karanja Kimani, a professor in the Institute of Development at the University of Nairobi, Kenya. He's assigned a room on the fourth floor, east wing.
- ✠ Ngobile Melusi, about 70, a comrade and a citizen of Zimbabwe is second to check in and is allocated a room on the fifth floor of the south wing.
- ✠ Third to check in is about 50, Chineke Chiamaka, a pastor at the Church Inside Africa (CIA) in Lagos, Nigeria. Chiamaka is booked on the sixth floor of the west wing.

- ✠ Last to report is another stranger, about 40, his name is SeifTahir, an Engineer formerly employed by the Ministry of Defense in the Tripoli- Libya. He is assigned a room on the third-floor north wing.
- ✠ In less than an hour after the booking all the four "strangers," receives a call from the same caller who declines to divulge details about himself, He only identifies himself as the guide and gives the same set of instructions about opening their briefcases using a similar code: one, one, two, four. The code number fails to open the briefcases in all the four cases.
- ✠ Meanwhile, Dr. Abiola Afolabi, another guest at the hotel hears someone call him from behind. From the introduction, Dr. Afolabi meets Fiona McKenzie, a reporter with Gambia News, a Gambian who was adopted by Ian and Elspeth McKenzie- Scottish missionaries. She was brought up in Edingburg, Scotland and is now back to Banjul.
- ✠ An interview ensues.
- ✠ Dr. Abiola Afolabi, is disclosed, he schooled at Harvard University in the US and currently teaches at the University of Ibadan. He's forty-five and is an advisor to the heads of state.
- ✠ Africa's heads of state are soon to start a debate at Pinnacle Hotel, a hotel that is two streets from The Seamount Hotel.
- ✠ The Heads of State are soon to discuss a document titled Way Omega. If adopted, Way Omega is expected to change African politics drastically; there are to be no more military coups, no more rigged elections, no more foul play.
- ✠ Dr. Abiola Afolabi is the author of Failure of States in which he is so pessimistic about Africa's state of affairs and yet in Way Omega he's very optimistic, He was invited by the presidents.
- ✠ The interview ends prematurely after her boss calls her to the office.
- ✠ On the other hand, 49 foreign heads of state are in Banjul for the summit. They still look happy.
- ✠ For Gambians, the presence of so many visiting dignitaries isn't fun. Here, before dignitaries came, bull dozers were dispatched at night in slum clearance

'exercises,' demolished road side kiosks on which whole families depended upon. Roads got rare layers of tarmac at times of maximum traffic. Checkpoints sprouted everywhere. Water taps dried up because all water had to go to the new water foundations built to mesmerize visitors.

✠ Catastrophes can happen even at summits. All heads of state are to be put in one hotel; Pinnacle Hotel so that security is concentrated at the hotel instead of having fifty places to be manned.

✠ A few challenges are noted on how well to take care of the dignitaries in terms of sitting arrangement at the summit and the hotel arrangement.

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