

**ADDRESS BY
TOBIE OCEAN AUPINDI (PHD),
ON THE MOTION OF BUILDING A MEMORIAL
GENOCIDE MUSEUM,
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
IN WINDHOEK, ON, April 25, 2023**

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members,

I rise to make my voice heard on this proposal presented by the Honourable Kauandenge. The author George Orwell wrote "The most effective way to destroy people is to deny and obliterate their own understanding of their history". Therefore, today, is either the beginning of the end or the end of the beginning, either way we are making history.

The history of partitioning Africa was coined during the Congo Conference held in Berlin and called by Chancellor Otto von Bismarck. This started the long and bitter legacy of colonial oppression, first perpetuated by the German empire, followed by the English and finally by the Dutch. The people were denied the right to self-determination. Today, more than 33 years after a former colony won the right to determine its own destiny, the task of perfecting our own history, is even more relevant, more urgent and more profound than any other time. For it is recorded that 'A generation which ignores history has no past and no future.'

Academically, the term Genocide is defined as the intentional destruction of a people in whole or in part. Raphael Lemkin coined the term in 1944. "In 1948, the United Nations Genocide Convention defined genocide as any of five "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group." These five acts were: killing members of the group, causing them serious bodily or mental harm, imposing living conditions intended to destroy the group, preventing births, and forcibly transferring children out of the group.

On the 11 August 1904, after the von Trotha abandoned negotiations and aggressively attacked the Herero at the Battle of Waterberg and killing between 3,000 – 5,000 Herero combatants. Yet, despite this brutality employed by the Germans, most of the Herero, thanks to God, managed to escape into the Omaheke desert. History will record that "yet under the same von Trotha's command, the Schutztruppe ruthlessly pursued the thousands of Herero, who were attempting to reach the British

Protectorate of Bechuanaland. Thousands more of Herero died from being shot to death, drinking water from poisoned wells, or from thirst and starvation in the desert.”

As if that wasn't enough, on October 2, 1904, the von Trotha issued the infamous extermination order. On 22 April 1905, he issued another message to the Nama, calling upon them to surrender, or face the same consequences. “The Nama who chooses not to surrender and lets himself be seen in German territory will be shot, until all are exterminated”.

It is recorded that during that dark chapter, which in all account is a genocide, recorded that, the German massacred approximately 50,000 – 65,000 Herero and 10,000 Nama between 1904 and 1907 in German South West Africa. These figures are contested throughout history, as some historians believe that because of lack of verifications, the number of the victims could be more.

I learned this history in the SWAPO refugee camps, in Angola and Congo. The foundation of the education system employed by SWAPO in exile was always build on the proud history of our forefathers. While in the bush, I learnt the history of the great warrior Hendrick Witbooi, Jacob Morenga, Samuel Maharero, Mandume ya Ndemufayo, Nehale Iya Mpingana and others.

It was that history passed on from generation to generations, which resulted in the torch being passed on by one of my favourite heroes, Hosea Kutako, passing on the torch to a young Sam Nujoma. Hosea Kutako's vision of National Unity has reaffirmed the spirit that has triumphed over war and depression, the spirit that has lifted this country from the depths of despair to the great heights of hope. In his book 'where others wavered', President Nujoma, narrated how Chief Hosea Kutako facilitated his journey into exile through the Herero community in Botswana, who had survived and escaped the genocide many years earlier. Hosea kutako, had in fact, instructed him never to return until he brings Namibia's independence. The rest is history as they say!

Hon. B.C. Swartbooi said something, which if you do not listen to him carefully, you may dismiss it as pure politics. But it is not. He alluded to the fact that our society seem to be holding people to different standards. For example, at Waterberg, there is a military graveyard for those who have fallen from the side of the Germans, which have been kept nicely, clean with proper tombs and records. Next to it is the graves of the heroes who died in that battle of 1904, which are not well kept for more than 119 years. This is a big shame. But this trends applies to the entire Namibian Colonial history, from the Germans, English, to Dutch apartheid regime of South Africa. While our history is rich, only a small part has been recorded and mostly from the colonisers' point of view. You may even find

that some heroes are recognized and some are not. George Orwell, in his book 'animal farm' called these type of anomalies "all animals are equal, but some are more equal than others".

Dr Carter G. Wilson, identified as a deficiency that black people are treating themselves with contempt, while their history and wealth is being manipulated and looted. This he called 'black on black' hate. In his book 'The Mis-Education of the Negro, which was originally published in 1933, Dr. Woodson, said in his thesis that Black people of his day were being culturally indoctrinated, rather than taught, in schools. He said that this conditioning, he claims, causes Black people to become dependent and to seek out inferior places in the greater society of which they are a part. He said "When you control a man's thinking you do not have to worry about his actions. You do not have to tell him not to stand here or go wonder. He will find his 'proper place' and will stay in it. You do not need to send him to the back door. He will go without being told. In fact, if there is no back door, he will cut one for his special benefit. His education makes it necessary".

Addressing the nation on the occasion of his 100 day in the office, June 29, 2015, H.E. Dr Hage G. Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia said, "My first and foremost conjecture as newly elected President or what I refer to as the new Head of the Namibian House, was to inspire and rally the entire Nation behind the concepts of "one Namibia, one Nation" and my election mantra that "no Namibian should feel left out". These are deep introspective and timeless words from the President. The President was not blaming anyone, but was making a call to everyone for action. It's true that some communities are left behind and we must apply equity wherever we are implementing national development projects. A just and equal society can only be achieved if we apply ourselves to the constitution, which in the preamble said "**Whereas** recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is indispensable for freedom, justice and peace", Further in the preamble it said "we that people have finally emerged victorious in our struggle against colonialism, racism and apartheid"

Dr Francis Nkwame Nkurumah said at the independence of Ghana in his inaugural speech in 1960, "the independence of Ghana is meaningless, unless it is linked up to the total liberation of Africa", we need to honor our independence by ensuring that all our heroes and heroines, irrespective of the era are properly honoured and remembered.

Lastly, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Articles 11 and 12 specifies that indigenous peoples can demand the return of their artifacts as well as the right to restitution of cultural, intellectual, religious, and spiritual property taken without their free and

informed consent or in violation of their laws, traditions, and customs, including repatriation of human remains.

The responsibilities of bringing and recording our history, lies in the hands of all of us, particularly, the young generation. The time for the blame game is over. Since Independence in 1990, many good initiatives have gone towards the recognition of our heroes and heroines from that period of the German colonial adventurism, including, the honouring of Kaptein Hendrick Witbooi on Namibia's Banknotes (denominations of N\$50, N\$100, N\$200), the Swakopmund Genocide Museum, the first 9 tombs at the heroes acre are dedicated to Kahimemua Nguvauva, Nehale Lya Mpingana, Samuel Maharero, Hendrik Witbooi, Jacob Morenga, Mandume Ya Ndemufayo, Iipumbu Ya Tshilongo, Anna Mungunda, Hosea Kutako, Independence Museum has dedicated the 1st floor specifically for the genocide, the shark island and also the proposal to form a museum which is articulated within the joint declaration, including, the soon to be proclaimed 'genocide day', Hosea Kutako International Airport, Hosea Kutako memorial museum and street re-naming, just to mention but few. Those are good initiatives which are welcome and credit must be given.

The proposed Genocide Museum will add another positivity to the history of our country, we don't need to limit ourselves to only one genocide museum for every soul lost during those awful years is a solemn reminder of who we are as a people. It is easy to forget sometimes. And I say, as the Secretary General of SWAPO said, let's decide now to build the museum. Why refer this matter to a committee? What is the committee going to find out that we don't already know for the last 120 years? Is to find out that there was a genocide, is it to design the museum or is it to kick the can down the road!

By building this genocide museum, we will bring dignity to those who have fallen in the quest for the long and bitter struggle against the German imperialist. These are the heroes who gave their first sacrifice, and therefore insuring that the path was paved for future generations to unite, and fight in order to end colonial oppression and attain genuine independence. May their souls rests in eternal peace.

I thank you.