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The African Renaissance is maturing and going on a journey: lead her on a safe pathway

Background

The African Renaissance concept first appeared in a series of [essays](#) from 1946 by the African philosopher Cheikh Anta Diop, calling to action Africans and people of African descent to complete the liberation of Africa. Putting this concept into practice, former [President Mbeki](#) and the current Chancellor of Unisa states that one of the central objectives of a “genuine” African Renaissance is the creation of the necessary space for the people of Africa to determine their destiny; where the people shall govern across racial, ethnic, class, gender, and other social divides. According to Professor Emeritus Shadrack Gutto, it is about the recovery, repair, rebuilding and repositioning of Africa, Africans and their descendants in the re-distribution and re-balancing of global power. Thought leadership (individuals who can make sense of phenomena and have the capability to reflect on progressive solutions), is an essential ingredient for African progress. Therefore, [thought leaders](#) must be liberated mentally, psychologically, and socially to lead the development of Africa in all sectors of African societies and the world. According to business leader and Emeritus Professor Reuel Khosa, leadership must find lasting solutions for the misfortunes of Africa that can only come from determined action to rectify what is wrong.

Leading the African Renaissance on a safe pathway

After successfully [rising](#), Africa departed on a journey towards taking its rightful place in a changing globalised world. An essential part of this journey is to mobilise the intellectual capital of the people of Africa, including those in the African Diaspora. Issues such as the geopolitical positioning of Africa in a changing world order, democratic governance, social cohesion, and rebuilding of the economy to improve the material conditions of the people in Africa, are only to be resolved by the wealth of knowledgeable people in Africa. On this journey, it is the obligation of all people in Africa to lead people to transform their own thinking as well as the mind-sets of others towards social cohesion in African societies, crossing social divides in both thinking and practice.

For transformational thought leaders in Africa, it is important to activate the people around them to discover, reflect on, and make sense of phenomena that bring obstacles on the journey towards progressive solutions. From this sense-making, people with progressive mind sets should emerge,

launch and lead projects with the aim to improve the well-being of the people in Africa, together with research and educational activities that underpin social innovation projects. Through the triangulation of quality research outputs; teaching theory from knowledge grounded in the African networks and learning from engagement with African and global networks; as well as social action to close the gap between the privileged and the neglected, leaders from any sphere of society should commit themselves to the African Renaissance.

This is a call for leadership, beyond just being rulers stating noble intentions. It is about leading people on the pathway charted in the form of [Agenda 2063](#). The main test for leadership will be putting into practice what they preach, crossing many barriers, and moving away from the many insecurities that still exist, building on the many positives of an Africa rising towards peaceful security for all. Putting this philosophy into practice, the people of Africa should enjoy Great Heart Leadership. To apply this kind of leadership, any person in society should take up her/his right to lead people, developing and applying analytical, intellectual, emotional, spiritual and normative leadership to ensure a secure pathway for a better Africa. Securing the pathway Great Heart Leaders prevent and manage conflict among people, build relationships; facilitate personal healing and growth; and activate unity. Along this pathway, leaders in social communities and in communities-of-practice (such as conflict resolution/peace practitioners) take hands to serve the African society in practice.

In summary, the Great Heart Leader always attempts to inspire people around her/him by means of visible action to build and guide relationships across divides. Moreover, the Great Heart Leader creates and maintains an intellectual ambiance where a diversity of people, without exclusion and division, is encouraged to engage in research, teaching, learning, and social interventions to restore societal divides and promote social cohesion in Africa.

To lead the Africa Renaissance on her safe pathway, leadership in Africa, therefore, requires from the leader to be an active mentor and teacher, continually challenging negative thinking, behaviour and vocabulary that instigate conflict. The Great Heart Leader in Africa is a person who can inspire people by leveraging the tacit and explicit mix of democratic practices, spirituality, and morality to prevent behaviour that is harmful to people and society as a whole. The virtue of inspiring and connecting a diversity of human beings in an atmosphere of peaceful mind-sets and behaviour makes a person a Great Heart Leader capable of chartering progressive and transformative change in Africa.

Recommended further reading.

Gutto, S.B.O. (Ed.). 2010. *Shared Values, Constitutionalism and Democracy in Africa*. Research papers and conference proceedings on constitutionalism, democracy, peace, justice, reconciliation and shared values in Africa. Johannesburg: Fortune-Africa Publishing.

Khoza, R. 2011. *Attuned leadership: Lessons on humanism in leadership*. London: Routledge.

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