

The Pan-African Institute for the Study of African Society: An Interview with Nahas Angula

conducted

by

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AJPAS: Greetings Nahas Angula, and thank you for agreeing to participate in this (February 2017) interview.

NA: My name is Nahas Angula, former Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia and now a retired politician. On my retirement a group of like-minded Pan-Africanists decided to establish PAISAS to keep alive the flames of Pan-Africanism in Namibia, in Africa and to reach out globally to those who take Pan-Africanism seriously. In that regard we will be involved in research, publication, documentation and networking activities with organizations and individuals who share our vision.

We believe the African condition requires the attention of all those of us who believe in the progress, growth and development of Africa for the benefit of the African People. You may recall that W.E.B. DuBois stated at the First Pan-African Conference of 1900 that the problem of the 20th century was the problem of the color line. Whilst this problem remains in the 21st century in many parts of global Africa, I would state that the problem of the 21st century is the marginalization of Africa and its Diaspora in global affairs. As it is obvious to everybody, Africa is still trapped in the chronic cycle of underdevelopment. This condition is responsible for African poverty, inequality and backwardness.

At the dawn of Africa's emancipation Africa made progress in health care, education, politics and community development. These were the days of Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Modibo Keita of Mali, David Kaunda of Zambia – just to mention a few. These leaders were by and large inspired by the resolutions of the 5th Pan-African Congress (PAC) of 1945 held in Manchester, UK. One of these resolutions read that 'the struggle for political power by colonial people is a first step towards, and a necessary prerequisite to complete socio economic emancipation'. The emancipation of the African People was to be achieved by uniting the African People into a bulwark of anti-imperialist struggle.

Unfortunately due to the shortsightedness of many African nationalists, who became leaders of their countries after independence, the OAU made the colonial borders sacrosanct. This paved the way for the weakening of Africa through balkanization. The nation state in Africa is responsible for the lack of deep continental integration. This is why Africa has no power in global affairs. Hence, the marginalization of Africa. Under these circumstances we in Namibia established PAISAS.

AJPAS: In the material I was sent from Bankie Forster Bankie, the founding director of the Pan-African Institute for the Study of African Society (PAISAS), you are the chairperson of PAISAS the founder of its founding Board of Trustees, in addition to being the former Prime Minister of Namibia. In this regard, I am honored to be discussing PAISAS in relationship to research and knowledge development in Namibia, Africa and throughout the African world community.

NA: Yes, PAISAS took the Pan-African focus for its operations and theoretical objectives in advancing Pan African interests. The vision of PAISAS is to research and document the African experience and the African condition. The purpose is to provide resources for public education and mobilization. In this regard PAISAS will establish a Documentation Centre dedicated to Pan-African literature and writings. PAISAS has already started with its project to write the biographies of Namibian patriots. These are patriots who lead the anti-colonial struggles in Namibia since the advent of colonialism. We hope these life-stories will inspire the youth, students and workers and all progressives, towards a civil commitment to Africa and its Diaspora.

AJPAS: The influence Chancellor Williams, Cheikh Anta Diop and others African thinkers, scholars, and ideas seem to reflect the ideological themes of PAISAS via your brochure, including the classical Egyptian (Kemetic) notion of MAAT consisting of truth, morality, harmony, order, law and justice. How, when and why did this Pan African intellectual articulation come together within PAISAS?

NA: Pan-Africanists of today have a lot to learn from African antiquity and history. That is why the works of Chancellor Williams, Cheik Anta Diop, Kwame Nkrumah, Walter Rodney and others should form the anchor and foundations to build the modern Pan-African movement. We must climb on the shoulders of these giants so that we are able to see further into the future.

AJPAS: In the task to restore Africa from its “backward position in global affairs to a position of leadership and advanced thinking in the global discourse” as mentioned in the PAISAS informational brochure, what is the organization doing or proposing to advance or advocate for a progressive and productive path for Africa in world affairs?

NA: The post-colonial state in Africa has become an obstacle to genuine African unity. This state of affairs has created African nationalists whose leadership credentials leave much to be desired. Many of these African nationalist elites are only interested in primitive accumulation.

Those countries like Namibia who achieved their independence through mass political mobilization, armed struggle and international solidarity, know well that independence was achieved through sacrifice, solidarity and unity. Similarly, the struggle against underdevelopment demands commitment, solidarity and unity of purpose from African leadership. PAISA for its part hopes to contribute to the molding of new African leadership to emerge out of the Youth of Africa and its Diaspora.

AJPAS: When the discussion of leadership enters general conversation in Africa and elsewhere, the quest is always for good and accountable leadership, however many say there are very few good examples, and perhaps African leaders are the worst. In this light, would you agree that many of our scholars, activist and politicians have outlined, and perhaps been examples of good leadership? And if so, who are they, and if not, why do you see it as a challenge?

NA: As I said before the nation states in Africa have led to the balkanization of Africa. The reform of the OAU into the AUC has not lead to meaningful integration of Africa. Africa still continues to be balkanized in nation states. Efforts have been made at the regional level to create regional economic communities. Yes, one can hope that with a leadership committed to the unity of the Africans the regional economic communities may form the foundation for the unity of the African people. Some regions have made some progress, such as the SADC and ECOWAS.

AJPAS: Is there a relationship between PAISAS and the African Union, and if so, what are they, and if not, why?

NA: The observed reality currently is that the regional economic structures in general are further fragmenting the AUC. In these circumstances PAISAS works with civil society and networks with Pan-African organizations in order to enhance the idea of Pan-African unity.

AJPAS: The Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society (CASAS) in Cape Town, South Africa was mentioned in your brochure as an example of a research unit working to provide an application of a practical model of transformation relevant to autonomous development; are there other units in Africa or elsewhere that can also serve as a model?

NA: You mention the work done by CASAS in Cape Town, especially in the area of languages harmonization. PAISAS will focus more on research and documentation of the African experiences. We are developing networks with other organizations, who are involved in Pan-African affairs. One such is The Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana, Legon, Accra, and we have been in touch with its Director Prof Dzodzi Tsikata. This Institute is organizing the Second Kwame Nkrumah Intellectual and Cultural Festival which will take place at the University of Ghana from 25 June to the 1st July 2017. The Festival will take place under the leadership of Prof Horace G.Campbell, who currently occupies the Kwame Nkrumah Chair at the Institute. We believe this type of activity will lead to public mobilization and the exchange of views on contemporary African issues.

AJPAS: Has PAISAS engaged/applied the theoretical focus of Afrocentricity (a paradigm based on the idea that African people should re-assert a sense of agency in order to achieve a soundness, rationality and healthiness of the mind) presented by Dr. Molefi Kete Asante (and others) or the disciplinary contours of Africology (the systematic, critical and often Afrocentric study of the thought, behavior and practices of African people everywhere)?

NA: The theoretical focus of Afrocentricity, as propounded by Dr Molefi Kete Asante and others in the US and Africa is indeed inspiring. This idea states that the African People should re-assert a sense of urgency in order to address the current African condition. This urgency should be the basis for collective African action in order to promote the unity of the African People at home and abroad. PAISAS soon after its formation in November 2015 was in communication with the Professor exploring modes of common work. Such co-operative interaction can only enhance a sense of common purpose. As Dr. Asante correctly asserts Africa must embrace a notion of civic commitment to African unity. This requires a dedicated Africa leadership.

African leadership, as Dr. Asante states must create a new ethical politics. This is the only way Africa can liberate itself from the trap of neo-colonialism. Currently the agents of neo-colonialism in the form of transnational corporations (TNCs) are exploiting Africa's resources and robbing the African People of their means of survival and wellbeing. The struggle to control African resources for the benefit of Africans requires a focused African leadership. We believe that the paradigm of Afrocentricity goes a long way to create a new dynamism in our quest for African integration.

AJPAS: What role does youth and women play in the goals, objectives and projects of PAISAS?

NA: PAISAS is currently in the process of developing its mentorship program focused on Youth and students. Through this program PAISAS aims at educating the young people on the history and evolution of Pan-Africanism. We believe this relevant under the current circumstances where the slogan now is 'local is the new global', which in the African context means Africa must strengthen its voice so that Africa can promote itself globally.

AJPAS: I have reviewed *To Hell and Back: My Experience Under Difficult Colonial Rule* by Dr. Ngarikutuke Tjiriange published by PAISAS and found it to be a good introduction to the history of Namibia, and the development of SWAPO (South West Africa People's Organization). Are there other relevant books in the making at PAISAS, and if so, what are the topics?

NA: PAISAS had the honor to publish the biography of Dr. Ngarikutuke. Tjiriange, who is one of the Namibian patriots and a liberation struggle icons. We are in the process of assisting the living Namibian patriots to tell their stories for the benefit of the young people and future generations. We believe this is one of the ways to keep the flames of Pan-Africanism alive.

AJPAS: How can members and organization in the African world community participate in the programs of PAISAS, and if they can, why is it important that they participate?

NA: As the name implies PAISAS is meant to be a Pan-African organization in which all the people concerned with Pan-African affairs are welcome to participate as 'Associates'. PAISAS draw its inspiration from the historical Pan-African Congress (PAC) series, which brought the people of Africa and its Diaspora together to fight against colonialism. We believe the fight against neo-colonialism requires the participation of all those committed to the African cause. As you see from the Board's membership it reflects our global vision as an organization.

AJPAS: Thank you for this interview, I am sure our readers will gain valuable insight and information from your discussion which should move toward implementing policy and programs that can advance human consciousness and social-cultural development.

NA: Indeed PAISAS is committed to the advancement of African conscientization and the development of African cultural, scientific and social programs. We invite therefore global Africa to support the programs of PAISAS in whatever way possible.