

Home and country burglarized. By Yilma Bekele

Someone broke into our house. They forced the backdoor open and went through every square inch of the house. They turned our mattress over, pilfered through our drawers and left the closet in a mess. It was done in the middle of the day and it looks like they took their time. They stole laptops, I pod, tablet computer, flat screen TV's and my wife's gold jewelry.

We have lived in the same neighborhood for over twenty years now. Nothing like this has happened before. We felt safe and secure. We did not have a burglar alarm. There were no metal guards on our doors and windows. When we moved to the area most of our neighbors were elderly people enjoying their retirement. They were always outside sitting on their porch and remising and watching. It is true there were one or two houses where the young kids were dealing drugs but the presence of the grandfathers made their business low-key.

Burglary is an ugly and very personal crime. Most of the stuff they took is replaceable. What is disturbing and creepy is the fact that a stranger went thru your stuff. I just keep visualizing their ugly dirty hands in my drawer and all over my home. They stole expensive stuff like computers but what bothered me most was the loss of quarters I was saving for my son. They took the flat screen televisions and Google tablet but the loss of little gold crosses from my mom to my wife is what keeps me awake at night. The thought of a burglar never crossed my mind but now I am convinced burglars are the scums of the earth. I better not be called for a jury duty where the crime is burglary. Off with his/her head is what first comes to mind.

I was seething with anger regarding my home invasion when I read Ambassador Susan Rice eulogy at the funeral of you know who in my homeland. My depression was compounded. Et tu Susan? When Bush was the President Mrs. Rice in an article she wrote for the Washington Post said "We Saved Europeans. Why Not Africans?" regarding the administration's refusal to use force in Darfur and her praise of President Clinton's military intervention in Kosovo. Compare that to her statement at the funeral of an African tyrant. Our fearless Ambassador was very generous with her praises of the dictator and was nice enough to include the human side of him inquiring about her family. She went out of her way to heap accolades like a smitten teen ager and elevate the dictator to new heights. I have no problem with her ignorance but what got my goat was her *statement "He [Meles] was tough, unsentimental and sometimes unyielding. And, of course, he had little patience for fools, or "idiots," as he liked to call them"* That to me is too personal. Shame on you Susan Rice! Those of us that fight injustice are not fools or idiots. My dear Ambassador it looks like you got things reversed.

Those that deny freedom to others, those that deny democracy, those that deny the rule of law are considered fools and idiots. On the other hand those that fight back to secure their God given right to live in peace and dignity are normally referred to as freedom fighters. As a black person that find herself in such a high and powerful position representing her country I would have thought she would be the perfect candidate to identify with the cause of our people and be able to articulate our wishes and dreams better than her Wasp predecessors. Mrs. Ambassador it is a little disconcerting to think a poor immigrant like me is constantly fighting rednecks and conservatives

that judge you negatively based on the color of your skin and declare you unfit to represent America and here you are paying my favor by dancing with criminals and unsavory characters. Too bad she is not a student of MLK. Where did she miss the bus? I forgot she did not take the bus, may be that is why Fox news referred to her as a 'limousine liberal'?

Anyway I gave her transgressions and insulting behavior some thought and was able to put things in perspective. I decided there is no reason I should spend an ounce of energy on what she thinks and say. I got bigger problems to solve. Thus I went back to my home burglary issue and viewed the two items and marveled at the linkage of the situation.

I did not leave my home open. Someone forced the door open. What I have done since then is install security doors and windows, install cameras and use cloud storage to back up my documents. It is impossible to stop a determined criminal the least I could do is make the bum work to earn his pay. It is said you know who your friends are in times of difficulty. I was humbled by two of my friends that gave me a lap top computer and a flat screen television to ease my pain. My friends Getachew and Dr. Tesfaye made me realize I am not alone. We are each other's keeper.

When it came to my homeland the situation is a little different. The burglars did not have to break a door or climb thru a window. They just bought their way in to our precious country. They used collaborators to open the door and let them in. We left our door open. No need to blame the burglar for our being indifferent regarding our treasure. Ambassador Rice was praising an individual we allowed to dictate to us for over twenty years. I know some fought back. Plenty paid with their life. The use of ethnic loyalty was his calling card. I am also sure that his harsh and intrusive system have something to do with his longevity. No matter the reason, our door was left open, and our security was compromised.

The solution to safeguard a country is a little different than securing a home. Walls, cameras, border guards on the ground and drones in the sky are not a solution. The best full proof system is a population that is empowered to safeguard its own freedom. The citizen has to feel that they are in charge and they own their country. Those in charge have to understand that they serve by the will of the people. That is what is meant by 'for the people by the people.' As they are hired by the citizen they must know that the possibility of being fired for misconduct is real.

This kind of arrangement assures the leader entrusted with the key will not open the door and let strangers in to take advantage of a poor nation. Strangers will not try using underhanded means to get in and act like king makers knowing it will be rejected. The recent death of the dictator is proof that our door was left wide open. The situation has favored the outsiders at the expense of the citizen. He was loved, respected, held in high esteem, considered a visionary and a person of extraordinary super natural gift. Unfortunately the sky high phrase is uttered by no other than those that enabled him to stay in power.

The issue is not Susan Rice, European Union or any outside party. We are that are the legitimate owners of this Nation called Ethiopia that allows misfits, megalomaniacs and unsavory individuals to hold the key to our door. We refuse to stand for fair play and justice. Recently when talking about an issue that tested the American people President Obama said *'As Americans let us never, ever forget that our freedom is only sustained because there are people who are willing to fight for it, to stand up for it, and in some cases lay down their lives for it. Our country is only as strong as the character of our people and the service of those, both civilian and military, who represent us around the globe.'* It is when we can say those words regarding our motherland that we can stand straight look each other in the eye and utter the words **'I love Ethiopia.'** Anything else is hot air and bluster. Happy New Year, may we have the strength of character to take advantage of the new reality God has given us and build a strong and democratic Ethiopia.