

In Sports,

What do they have in common?

Eritreans, Americans and Ethiopians

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Contemporary common factor for all three EAE countries, they are defeated by a Kenyan athlete. In Marathon race at Rio Brazil, Eliud Kipchoge of Kenya emerged 1st Ethiopia 2nd America 3rd and Eritrea in 4th place. What does this signify? In the following few pages, I will try to relate this phenomena to the respective countries history and geography.

Eritrea

History is a vast subject. As far as political competition though, Eritreans have only a quarter of a century of political identity. Even for that they are still at a loggerhead because of two flags representing two organizations. I cannot believe that they do not have something political to believe in. My background tells me that family life was more important than individual or communal in Eritrea. That means that the struggle of ELF or EPLF was not conducive to neither for democracy nor for socialism. That needs to be studied by sociologists and/or anthropologists. The concepts of ME vs WE are at loggerhead in Eritrea.

But as to the existence of Eritrea as a cultural nation, it dates back to 980 BC, according to some sources.

In Sports competition, I knew from firsthand experience, Eritreans used to excel in soccer and bicycle tournaments but not at Marathon race. Take for instance, the case of Mebatsion, an Eritrean who won a medal for running Marathon. When he won, he was confused as with whom to identify, i.e. with Eritrea, his native country or with America, his adopted country. Unaware of endorsements loss from corporate America, he went to Eritrea and was welcomed as a hero, a communal hero not an individual one. In Eritrea, as I have explained above, there was/is no individual hero. Ato Mebatsion in line with American individualism, shortened his name to MEB and at the age of 41 he run Marathon in Rio and to be expected he was ranked 33. Coincidentally to fit with the number 13, Kenya won thirteen medals and ranked 15 among the whole world. What an accomplishment!!! This is due to political peace in the country. Sports need peace and political stability and Eritrea needs these factors before it indulges itself in sports' competition. Sports and politics are intertwined deep in the skin.

What was disgusting though was Meb's presence at the American Marathoner hero, Galen Rupp who became 3rd. As the man from Portland, Oregon appear for an interview, Meb showed up and humiliated himself as irrelevant and identity less person. Rupp could not talk or

present his family to the show but Meb brought his family to the show and blurred something about the American flag. This is in sharp contrast to Feyisa Lilesa of Ethiopia who had something of value to transmit to the whole world.

At the time when Meb ran and won the Marathon, it was the best time for Americans to be in the spotlight. It was in Athens, Greece, the birth place of Marathon.

America

American life is built on speed also known as Sprint. It is the opposite of Marathon. Nevertheless, when the Centennial of Olympiad was held at Athens, Americans wished to shine if not to win particularly in the Marathon race which is the highlight race of the Olympiads. But Mr. Meb had spoiled the American World Sport competitive dreams. He displayed the wrong flag and now he praised the wrong flag. What a spoiler!!!

Thanks to the man from Portland, Oregon Mr. Rupp finished the Marathon race in Rio, Olympiad XXXI who stood 3rd in the Marathon! From now on, the Marathon competition will be among Americans, Ethiopians, Eritreans and Kenyans for generations to come. Who will win in the end, the Marathonists or the Sprinters? Time will tell. Time and speed are intertwined like Eritreans and Ethiopians in history and geography.

Ethiopia

There is no dispute that the Ethiopians were/are the champions at Marathon race, the final version for competition at the Olympiads. The name of Abebe Bikila in Rome says it all. Abebe not only won but he run barefooted. Unlike the Athenian Marathoner who died right after the race (race for information), Feyisa Lelisa is still kicking for a higher political calling.

The Eathiopians had uninterrupted and continuous long political history (by some count 4 millennia's.) Like the Athenians, they survived for centuries to use communication by means of running Marathon until at the dawn of the end of 20th century where they wanted to jump start to a new mode of governance. They decided that the Monarchy has to go and should be replaced by a political party and that party is known as the Ethiopian/Eritrean People's Revolutionary Party. This political party is structured and operate in a Marathon fashion.

The struggle for radical change was initiated and was galvanized by the students of political department, the law school, and the economic and business departments. Revolutionary students have come together to lead the Eway Ethiopian Revolution. And it is still going on. Unlike the Greek financial crisis, both Ethiopia and Eritrea has neither economic nor financial crisis. Both Eathioia (Eritrea and Ethiopia) do not depend on either finance or economic policies. Their crisis is political and their style is Marathon and not Sprint.

Ethiopia had many global connections, Jamaica, a case in point, is a top leader in sprint race. U Bolt, the fastest man alive is from Jamaica. Politically Jamaica has strong relations with Ethiopia. Another example, Ethiopia and Eritrea are very much involved in the Jews heritage. The case of Cuba is another example in the affairs of Ethiopia and Eritrea.

So the connection is multifaceted. Sports, especially Marathon if it is really a Sport category in the real sense, then Eathiopians will dominate for years to come. This is not only because of historical Greek mythological incident but also because the continuum physical and political geography of Ethiopia and Eritrea is ideal for Marathoners.

EGZI-AB-B'HER has blessed Eathioia in Geographic Marathon and America is blessed by Technological Sprint. Let the history of Bikila and the spirit of Bolt live on for over.

As a side note, I have witnessed the habitat of S'Me T'Ru Hamasien and that of Ras Tefferi in Sidamo's Shashamane. It is a testimony of co-op. Let us keep it alive.

Kenya and concluding Remarks

My friend asked me why Kenya won the Marathon as they were not good at it. My response was maybe of Obama, did he not won the Marathon? I retorted. I was trying to explain to him that politics and Marathon are one and the same. Then he tried to explain to me how the Kenyans are good at handling politics and policy issues. I was impressed about his knowledge about Kenya and Kenyans.

I wish those Eritreans and Ethiopians who came to America via the Sudan and via Saudi Arabia tell us what they have learned in their journey. The narrative is both sprint and marathon alias politics vs sports.

As depicted in the picture, the Kenyan Marathoner seem confident and composed whereas the Ethiopian, the American and the Eritrean seem worried and uncomfortable to say the least.

The connection was there, but not the end result carried out neither by the Marathon nor by the Sprint. The politics of Ethiopians and Eritreans is a Marathon while that of America is a Sprint. Nevertheless, the world has changed mixing up Marathoners with Sprinters. Let us cooperate together for the common good. Kenya led the race not because of Barrack Obama's heritage but because of the man Eliud Kipchoge's courage and stamina plus the Kenyan way of handling politics and sports. Both are inseparable.

In Ethiopia, I came across a meeting discussing about the lack of participation, cooperation and unity. And most of all why Ethiopians won only one gold medal. From the discussion, it looks like that most of the speakers are distance runners such as Haile G. Selassie. Olympics is not only about distance running, it is more than that. The missing element of the discussion hinges on Nationalism. In other words, it is a political agenda not a sports agenda. The Eathioian (Eritrea plus Ethiopia) struggle of Politics for Sports is on, let everyone participate to understand "DEMOCRACIA".

TRUTH WILL PREVAIL

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