

AFRICA MEMORIAL DAY 2026 - WELCOME ADDRESS

Theme: Political Leadership and Governance in Africa - What Is the End Product?

Correct Connect Africa Foundation - CCAF

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Distinguished elders, traditional custodians, government officials, scholars, artists, activists, partners, and guests from Africa and the diaspora, and especially the young people of Africa, heirs to a rich and ancient history.

Welcome to Africa Memorial Day 2026.

We are here for more than a ceremony.

We gather because memory is a political act. People who cannot account for their past cannot govern their future. And the silence around our history has cost us dearly - in identity, in self-determination, and in the quality of those we place in power.

Five years ago, the Correct Connect Africa Foundation lit a flame in Nigeria. Not because the timing was perfect. Not because resources were abundant. We lit it because we believed, and still believe, that Africa deserves voices that will not grow silent, platforms that will not be bought, and one day each year when Africans everywhere are compelled to stop, to remember, and to ask the hard questions.

Today, that flame burns with greater purpose.

The theme of this year's Africa Memorial Day poses a question that cannot be answered with applause: *Political Leadership and Governance in Africa - what is the end product?*

Let us be honest. The evidence around us does not yet speak of triumph.

Across our continent, lands of extraordinary wealth still produce extraordinary poverty. Nations whose soil holds the

raw materials of global technology cannot guarantee electricity to their hospitals.

Young men and women of uncommon brilliance still board dangerous boats in the dead of night - not because they lack ambition, but because their nations have failed to build conditions worthy of that ambition.

This is the governance crisis of our time. And it did not arrive by accident.

It arrived through the systematic dismantling of African institutions over centuries of conquest. It was deepened by borders drawn to divide people and unite enemies.

It has been sustained by leaders - in government, in business, in religion - who learned to speak the language of liberation while practising the logic of extraction.

We are not here to mourn this. We are here to name it - because you cannot cure what you will not diagnose.

The philosophers of Kemet taught Ma'at - truth, justice, and balance - not as an abstract ideal, but as a governing standard. The ruler who violated Ma'at did not merely fail politically. They failed cosmically. They betrayed the order of things.

By that ancient measure, much of what passes for governance on this continent today is a betrayal.

But history also shows us what genuine African leadership looks like.

It looks like Nkrumah standing in Accra in 1957, declaring not merely Ghanaian independence, but the liberation of the entire continent as an unfinished obligation.

It looks like Nyerere, building a nation on the principle of Ujamaa - that development without dignity is no development at all. It looks like Amílcar Cabral, warning his people to "claim

no easy victories," reminding them that the hardest battle is not against the enemy outside, but against the colonial mentality within. It looks like Sankara, who reduced his own salary, drove his own car, and told his people plainly: the man who feeds you controls you.

These were not perfect men. But they each asked the right question: *Governance for whom?*

That remains the only question that truly matters.

Africa Memorial Day was created to keep that question alive. To refuse the comfort of amnesia. To insist that remembrance is not nostalgia, but orientation.

We remember not to remain in the past, but to draw from it the strength, the wisdom, and the moral direction we need to build what has not yet been built.

Our vision extends far beyond this hall.

We call for Africa Memorial Day to be recognised as a continental day of remembrance, reflection, celebration, and renewal - observed in every African nation and every African diaspora community around the world.

A day when our children are taught not simply that Africa has a history, but that history is a living inheritance with claims on the present. A day when our leaders are measured not against global opinion, but against the standards our own civilisations established. A day when Africa remembers - and in remembering, reclaims.

To the young people in this room, and to every young African who will hear these words:

You have inherited a complicated estate. There is greatness in it, and there is damage in it. Both are yours.

Do not allow anyone to reduce your reality to either despair or false optimism. The truth is harder - and more useful - than both. Africa's rebirth is possible. It is necessary. And it depends on you - not on some future version of you, but on who you are choosing to become right now.

The Malian scholar Amadou Hampâté Bâ observed that in Africa, when an elder dies, a library burns. I say to you: when a young person abandons their dignity, their curiosity, or their sense of collective responsibility, another library burns - silently, without ceremony.

Protect your intellectual formation. Study the history you were not taught in school. Build competence - real, rigorous, unglamorous competence - in something that genuinely serves your community.

Learn to lead in the spaces you already occupy: the home, the classroom, the organisation, the neighbourhood. The character of a nation is not shaped in parliaments alone. It is shaped in every small decision made by ordinary people who choose not to be corrupted. Leadership is not an office. It is a practice. And it begins now.

The work of Africa Memorial Day - this work of conscientisation and cultural renewal - cannot be carried on goodwill alone.

We call on traditional institutions, universities, governments, civil society, media houses, and Africans of means across the continent and the diaspora: your support for this mission is not

charity. It is an investment in the most fundamental infrastructure of all - the consciousness of a people.

To every individual and institution that made this gathering possible: you have written yourself into the record. History will note your presence.

We stand today at a defining juncture in the African story. The old narratives - of helplessness, perpetual crisis, and a continent incapable of governing itself - are losing their hold. Not because the problems have vanished, but because a generation is rising that refuses to accept inherited failure as a permanent condition.

That generation is in this room. It is in Lagos and Accra, in Nairobi and Kampala, in Dakar and Harare, in London and Washington and in Port-au-Prince. It is reading, organising, creating, questioning, and building.

The ancestors did not endure what they endured so that we could manage decline with sophistication.

They endured so that we could build something worth remembering.

So let us leave this place not merely moved, but committed.

Committed to the honest examination of power. Committed to educating our children in the full truth of who they are. Committed to holding our leaders to this standard: that governance is stewardship - of the earth, of the people, and of the future.

Let us carry the mandate of Africa Memorial Day into every institution we touch - that Africa remembers, Africa reflects,

and Africa, through disciplined, collective, and unrelenting effort, rises.

Go forth. Build well, and remember always what you are building for.

Africa will rise. Thank you.