

TRIBUTE IN HONOUR OF THE LATE JOHN JUSTICE BANTING

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We met thirteen or so years ago through the sheer providence of coincidence. That day, with a mono-narrative world view I engaged you in an argument in defence of the very foundational deposits of my faith in the supreme exercise of control over all things in the universe. That day I conceived before me perhaps a re-incarnated Socrates as you demolished with the finest streaks of convincing argument every point I advanced. That day we locked horns in argument from late in the afternoon until about 1am the following day and you slept in our home that very first day. It was you who helped me crack the first kernel of philosophy and paddled me across the isles of differing shades of thoughts and enlightenment. It was you who introduced me to the living history of black peoples and of Africa. Together we paged through the splendour of black history from the victory of the battle of Adowa 1896 to the triumph of Shaka Zulu; the triumph of the ANC over apartheid; to the vanquishing of the slavers by Sengbeh Pieh on board the Amistad. But then we realised that we must not continue to glorify our history and mystify our feats flipping through chronicles; we realised that our history would not continue to sojourn in beauty of historicity if our peoples continue to languish in poverty, famine, senseless wars and other systemic malaise. With the seeds of philosophy sown in us we conceived and carved out a black renaissance movement. We didn't conceive of returning Africa to the era of huts and caves, we thought about Africa appropriating the benefits of globalisation and competing technologically and being producers more than consumers of very spectre of products. We conceived of a nation and a continent that reflect their past, the history of triumph of every evil enterprise so that when our story is told it would not be in stark betrayal of the historical inspiration therefrom. Our decision to study law stemmed from a belief that the law represents not the end but the means to ending our political shortcomings. We dreamt of forming our own law firm inspired by comrades Mandela and Oliver Tambo's brief practice of law in the gloomy era of apartheid South Africa.

You wrote several poems and many other writings in dedication to the renaissance. These are living works we hope to emboss on the plaques of the accomplishments of our dreams over the sum total of our despair and despondency. In the coming years, we hope to posthumously publish some of these writings and inspire younger generations.

When I first went to the hospital, you took my hand tearfully and asked me to pray for you. If you were not unwell, I know we would have had a whole

argument over the necessity of prayer over the fixed courses of this life and the aggregate of natural principles handed to humanity to shape and guide our very lives. But I felt the desperation and honesty in your tone and even though before that day I could not recall the last time I prayed, I sank into my inner-self and said a prayer that resonated with the sincerity of my heart and summoned the God of the universe to extricate you for the travails of the ailment. You demanded I bring you a bible the following day and shortly afterwards on sick bed, you willingly gave your life to Christ and I realised that human wisdom and the highest towers of mortal sophistication cannot replace that bridge that connects humankind to Him that knoweth and keepeth all things.

I will not forget when you held my hand and told your woman, Fatmata, if there was any human being that could save you, I would be that person alluding to human limitations. She obviously didn't know that I knew you beyond the veil of ordinary perception and that I knew you were on a mission and how connected we were beyond the horizon of her vision. I witnessed every other second how she wiped your sweaty face and helped you with your meals. I salute her courage during the final hours and I applaud her devotion to a man whose humanity was beyond the comprehension of his generation. As she sat across, we spoke about the pertinence of women in our every endeavours and in all layers of the multiple interconnections of the sum total of our aspirations.

We searched the deepest mysteries of human enterprises together. We fell in love with the law and philosophy and travelled beyond the residence of the sun in search of human knowledge and the unspoken and un-said realities underlying human existence. We drank from the chalice of the myth and mysticism of human wisdom and paged through the proud and humble pages of the thoughts and systems that define us. With our young and impressionable minds we surfed through every ideal and ideology, from sophism, to nihilism to atheism, to narcissism, to agnosticism, to pan-Africanism, to communism to democracy and to virtually every facet of life where human wisdom is stashed. You and I were hungry for the truth not told in the volumes of literature handed down to our forebears which inspired us to seek to deconstruct the lines of impossibility drawn around us and hew out a future based on the dignity of all persons.

You were a legend but I'm much happy that you are now with the greatest legend that ever lived. The man that conquered death and stripped it of its boast; the man whom you received has promised life everlasting and he has never failed and never will fail. It is this assurance that we have that you are in the bosom of Abraham on the street of gold with perpetual light shining on you. Let me conclude this lamentation with the poem of John Keats ON DEATH the man

whom you admired more than the famous William Shakespeare; he like yourself died in his twenties:

*Can death be sleep, when life is but a dream,
And scenes of bliss pass as a phantom by?
The transient pleasures as a vision seem,
And yet we think the greatest pain's to die.*

II

*How strange it is that man on earth should roam,
And lead a life of woe, but not forsake
His rugged path; nor dare he view alone
His future doom which is but to awake.*

Until we meet at the beautiful shore, Sleep on comrade and brother.

Rest in perfect peace.