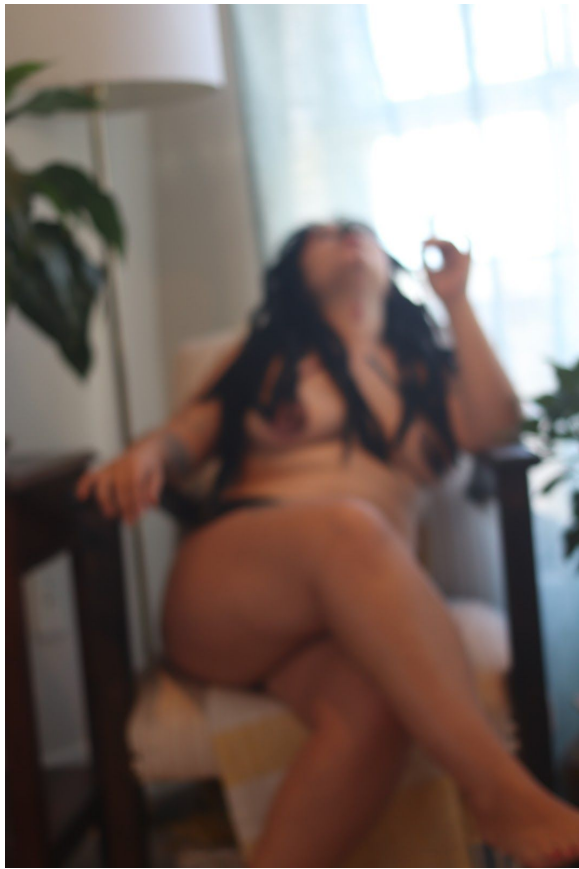


Call me Miss Chief - of the AU



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The date is February 2021, it's been a full term since South Africa has elected its first womxn leader into presidency who is now selected as the African Unions' new chairperson to serve in leading Africa's 2063 agenda. There is a palpable sense of hope and pride in the air, as the newly elected chairperson takes the stage to deliver their acceptance speech.

"I am born from one of the richest, lushest continents on the face of this earth. My continent is pregnant with gold, diamonds and oil. My continent is able to feed the entire world with fresh produce of fruits, vegetables, dairy and wine to name but a few. Sounds like paradise doesn't it? The funny thing however, is that my people are not harvesting for themselves, they are not mining for themselves, the reality is that my people are suffering and dying from hunger. I cannot understand that despite all of these riches, our reality remains impoverished. As African leaders we need to remember! Remember our collective identity, our collective histories and our collective pride. It has become clear that our collective amnesia fuels this perpetual state of disempowerment, disenfranchisement and poverty. The legacy of colonialism has eroded our sense of self and our sense of collective African pride. We have deep seated beliefs of being powerless and voiceless after so many generations of diplomacy in the face of colonial rape and extractivism.

I shall not steep my acceptance speech in thank you's based on tainted old ties to such diplomacies. As a young feminist Pan African womxn I cannot understand how we claim to be working toward "inclusive and sustainable development" when we continue to allow ourselves to be looted with our eyes open, by

foreign entities who historically we know have left us with these colonial scars. These scars continue to cause sepsis of our collective mentality. I do not accept this position as the chairperson of the AU with any other agenda than the following:

During my term of service to this union I have a clear two fold mission.

Firstly, my mandate is to encourage and facilitate memory work within this union among us as leaders. As a union our leadership and agendas are malodorous with attempts to keep up with foreign colonial influences and prescriptions of development for Africa. Lest we forget, these very colonial powers are still syphoning resources and power from our continent all in the name of debt and or aid. It's apparent that our leadership resembles our forefathers' acceptance of ties and suits in an attempt to become "civilised." We as leaders of this rich continent need to root our responses in Pan African Black Conscious Feminist political identities, that are unapologetic. Decisive and swift strategies need to take precedence above our pandering to international standards. Those international standards do not take into account fully, the extent of us having to unlearn, remember and adapt to our context specifically, before being able to keep up with the foreign Joneses. Our Pan African forefathers and mothers have paved a way for us to begin to claim, articulate and understand a future for Africans, about Africans, with Africans. However we as leaders have not paid sufficient attention to the legacies of colonisation. These legacies have left us stuck in nationalist sovereignty and continentalism. Both of these realities are enemies of Pan Africanism and prevent us from realising a lived Pan African reality. In order for us to realise this said vision

according to "our" 2063 agenda of an Africa for Africans, PanAfricanism needs to be a lived reality and not just an ideology that wins us votes through manifestos or secures us selection as chairpersons. The SDGs, economic policies and ideas of "development" are all reminiscent of colonial legacies which prescribe and ascribe what our developmental agenda should be. Coming back to my mission of facilitating memory work among us, let me remind us that It's been 135 years. 135 years since we were chopped up by the Europeans into smaller countries and forced to operate from a dislocated identity. It has been 57 years since our Pan African leaders have been calling for an Africa for Africans. 57 years on we still see a Monrovia group that delays and enacts this diplomacy that keeps us enslaved, disenfranchised and impoverished. Today marks the end of such self sabotage, leadership paralysis and inaction. We will Sit up! We will stand up! We will remember who we are as Africans in Africa leading ourselves according to our own agendas!

Now, it's one thing to say let's begin to imagine alternative futures for ourselves as Africans and it's another to say let's begin to lift ourselves out of the legacies of generational violence and oppression.

This rhetoric reminds me of my personal struggle with mental illness to be honest. How do I begin to reimagine my state of mind without first delving into what drives my toxic thought patterns in the first place.

We cannot overlook the power that our current collective mentality holds over our ability to pull ourselves up and out of a state of perpetual disempowerment. We cannot overlook the power that this collective state of being places on individuals. This brings me to my second and final mission as

chairperson. It is time to advocate, resource and organise for African leadership that is focused on raising the capacity and consciousness of our people for our people.

Imagine a PanAfrican continental approach to education, that is no longer undermined by the legacy of colonisation, nor underpinned by the oppressions prescribed through patriarchy. Imagine a future where through education, we are dismantling the patriarchal system that has kept more than half of our population socio-economically inactive, voiceless and marginalised. Imagine a self determined, aware, proud Africa where our people have begun to heal individually and collectively from the traumas inflicted through generations of colonial rule and oppression. What could this look like in reality?

Think for a moment of the schools and institutions across our continent.

What if in Malawi, Nigeria and Kenya for example, you could walk into a classroom where girl children specifically, are being taught through a Pan African Feminist lens. Where girl children are no longer relegated to second class citizenship confined to the household space, but in fact are active and vocal because of free access to quality PanAfrican Feminist education. The trajectory for such a reality is bright with potential, because it says that we are investing in fostering a capable, independent, free thinking feminist youth, who will drive the realisation of a truly lived PanAfrican future we imagine. Centering youth leadership and deliberately opening up space for youth in decision making positions is equally of utmost importance in this re-imagining work. By doing so we create clear pathways for young people from the classroom straight to running businesses

within an African Feminist economy Resourcing and prioritising such a reality for ourselves is now.

It is my mission to ensure that leaders within this union are prioritising resourcing efforts on encouraging healing through this memory and re-imagining work with our families, communities and broader societies. Healing of these generational traumas, may be approached through a continental re-education and collective psychosocial programme. Let us remember that we come from a continent rich with indigenous religion, rituals, practices and beliefs outside of the christian doctrine that arrived here by boat. These indigenous practices and understanding of religions may give us methods to approach our collective healing agenda. This healing and conscious dismantling is imperative for meaningful and sustainable development for our Africa. This should be our preoccupation.

Everything that we do from here on out should feed into this two fold mission. Our trade agenda for example should shift from exporting our best production or materials to exporting only excess, this becomes a clear articulation of our self as a continent and as a people. What would this mean in terms of “push back” or repercussions from foreign entities who currently hold us by the throats? My response to this is that at some point whether now, whether later, or never there will always be backlash and there will always be repercussions. However our intention for our own development agenda, creates a resilience and reasoning for us to face whatever threats we may face. This does not mean that we should not employ some level of risk mitigation strategies, however let us not be led by fear and threat. Let us be led by our collective reclamation of pride and

healing for Africa. If we do this, there is no doubt that we will have designed and developed our very own approach to social norm change resulting in intersectional intergenerational impacts. By no means does this mean a one size fits all nor does this mean that all of our issues as a continent will miraculously be fixed, but it does provide us a piloting starting point from which to build. I am clear that my mission is rooted in how much I can achieve within the time I am allowed to occupy this space. My mission is also deeply rooted in the acknowledgement that the harvest of my efforts may not be seen during my time. Despite these knowings I am clear on my mission and that my mission is not for me, it is for our continent, her children and her potential for a truly free, self determined, prosperous, dignified future.

2063 is 43 years from now which means we have time and space for piloting and pushing boundaries. Or will we wait another 57 years for another generation to call for a lived PanAfrican reality?