

# ***The “Aupindi Tobie Aupindi Attitude”***

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***“UNPLUGGED, UNEDITED AND UNCENSORED:  
RECLAIMING AFRICA”***

**AT THE OFFICIAL GRADUATION CEREMONIES OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA  
ON THE 16 APRIL 2010 WINDHOEK**

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The journey of life is long and fulfilling one's purpose is a lifelong quest. Martin Luther King Jr once said that in life, one must discover what their calling is. And when they do...they must do their job so well, that the living, the dead or the unborn could do them no better. He constantly challenged us to become our best by stating that if you cannot be a pine on the top of the hill just be a shrub in the valley but be the best little shrub on the side of the road be a bush if you cannot be a tree, if you cannot be the highway..Just be a trail, if you cannot be the sun ...then be a star for it isn't by size that you win or you fail - you got to be the best of what you are. ***To the graduate Class of 2010, today, the day belongs to you! CONGRATULATIONS.*** While today is special for you. Even more special are the parents, who sacrificed their youth, and their little resource so that their children can have a better life. So our parent's unwavering support and sacrifice must never be forgotten.

I stand here today mindful of the immense responsibilities you are about to take. I am thankful and humbled by this rare and singular honor bestowed on me by Prof Hangula to share with the graduates a few of my experiences and to entrench in you the attitude you need to survive and thrive in today's world. I will share with you a message of my suffering, rising above fear but a journey of perseverance. It has been said that the "knowledge available to man is compounding at an astronomical rate and professionals just a few years out of university are often out of date with new technology, new social responsibilities, new ideas. Continuing education is virtually mandatory for success".

It wasn't long that I graduated just like you are today. I can just imagine what you are thinking. What the excitement of today will bring tomorrow, insecurity and desperation as you search for economic opportunity. You will be wondering as to when the next job will come by and the anxiety of repayment of your bursary becomes higher, so as your eagerness to survive. So yes I know how you feel and I completely understand because I went through the same thing. You and I share the same bond. We share the same challenges and experiences of suffering. Furthermore, we share the potential, the hopes and dreams of a better future for our country and our people. I believe that our challenge today lies in offering

global solutions to local problems and in the process we reap the rewards both as individuals and as a Nation.

My journey started many years ago when my parents put a baby on their back and left for exile in Angola to join SWAPO. I grew up in the Mountains of Kwanza-sul in Angola during the liberation struggle of this country. My first class was under a tree in Kwanza. In the early days we didn't even have books for reading or writing. We used to write on the ground. I remember President Nujoma risking his life being driven through mountains infested with enemy soldiers just to visit us in the camps in kwanza. I am here as a survivor. Not a victim. ***What you are about to receive here today, other people sacrificed their youth and their lives so that you can be able to study, enjoy liberty, freedom, justice, opportunity and prosperity.***

The journey of life that I walked was very difficult but not impossible. My story therefore looks very unique, but, its' NOT. In amongst all of you today there could be similar stories of growing up suffering in poverty in Katima, Nkurekuru, Maltahohe or Otjinene. So we are bound by the same past where ever we grew up. Most importantly we share a common destiny and purpose. Today, I believe I am standing before a special group; the 'coffee bean' brand of people. This brand of people is the new generation, Namibian youth. The generation that, brings about what they think about. You need to reflect upon your present blessing, of which everyone has many: not on your past misfortunes, of which everyone have some. ***So like the Namibian youth that we are, we are not defeated by our circumstances, but we change the shape of the future. For us, the past misfortunes are testimonies of who we were! But it is not, I repeat NOT, a definition of who we are? Or of where we are going?***

Africa has been described as a dark continent because of its' inability to stop the many wars and deliver the much needed economic emancipation to its people. In terms of Economic benefits and prosperity though, the indigenous Namibians are to a large extent only spectators. We do not own much of the economic benefit derived from our country. This is because of the past colonial legacies that have divided a nation for more than a century. These past injustices said that when you were white you were right. While it is true to say we are free today, some of these

past injustices are still evident today as relics of the past. When you go into the working world, you will find some of these injustices there. You will find out soon enough that economic independence is yet to come. ***But always remember you are the 'Coffee bean brand' and the hope of a Nation. "You may not be able to change your history or the circumstances into which you were born. But, if you really decide – you can change your life and re-write the story of your life from this moment on".***

Some Namibians are programmed to endure a journey of self destruction. These like the 'carrot' are softened by life's challenges and end up giving in to undue pressure and indeed to character assassination. In some African countries millions of people have been misplaced by political unrest. The last true colonies in Africa were Namibia and South Africa yet we have ongoing tribal conflict orchestrated by those who sow seeds of hatred in order to exploit Africa's mineral and natural wealth. Don't you think it is funny that when African Government wants to develop a country there are no financial resources and they go to Europe to seek for the so-called "development aid", but when some people need to launch the rebel wars against their own people there is money easily available. In the end though, we are left with nothing but fear.

And we turn on each other and are at each other's throats, it becomes brother against brother, Africans versus Africans, while our Natural wealth is being exploited and only benefitting the few. It is these fears that surround us today, which have removed us from the path of self discovery, self appreciation, self confidence and self respect. It is indeed that type of fear which has made many black children to have a negative self perception of being VICTIMS rather than see themselves as VICTORS. This particular perception has lead to black/coloured children graduating from universities as we are seeing today but they go out to a large extend and start looking for a job, while many of our whites and Asians counterparts go out and look for a business. As educated people you must go out and create wealth through a sustainable career. I therefore advise you to go out and look for a business not a job. Even if you get a job, to you it must only be a temporary measure. The system is so imperfect that some of these financial institutions that take all our money in billions of dollar deposits are quick to give a

previously disadvantaged person N\$600,000 loan to buy a car, but if you need to borrow N\$600,000 to create your own business, they find all sorts of reasons to refuse you that money. They ask you 'do you have security or collateral. Simple economics will tell you that if you are loaning out money to two people, where one is going to buy a car, while the other one is going into the property market or mining, your money is more at risk to the one buying a car. ***Why can't the same arrangement work in either transaction? This is anarchy, racism and a system designed to keep us down.*** This has created a global economic imbalance leaving Africa and its people behind. ***Well I say this is simply unacceptable and a betrayal of the many sacrifices made by those who died fighting for our country.***

H.E. Nujoma led us through the toughest years of our lives in human history through years of apartheid, dehumanization and classification. He and others notably, our current President, H.E President Pohamba, brought freedom and independence, and indeed laid a foundation for economic development. Our generation needs NOW to deliver Economic emancipation. We need to become 'economic warriors' that are going to take on the bureaucratic and selfish corporations that are taking resources from our country without empowering our people or adding value to our economy. We need to provide our country with global solutions of economic restructuring and to invest in our economic infrastructure in order for this economy to respond to our need as people of this country. We need a national growth strategy that delivers at least 8% annual economic growth, in order to achieve VISION 2030. VISION 2030 cannot be attained through pay as you go scheme, but only through a substantive investment into our economy to stimulate robust economic growth.

The process of change management, leadership and succession must shift toward creating a knowledge based economy. Because we must continuously see Namibia, not from within but from the global perspective otherwise we will not attain global competitiveness. This speech comes at a critical time in history as we have just inaugurated a new President and a new government. So much was said during the campaign about the youth vote being the "deciding voice". And now that the youth have delivered their votes we are hopeful that all the focus on the youth during the campaign trail will continue in the system of governance and

economic empowerment. Tell us and we forget, show us and we remember, involve us and we understand. Therefore invest more in our youth and provide them the mentorship and knowledge that will prepare them for the future. The same way I was appointed as a young person to lead a very important National Institution by President Pohamba and his Cabinet. I thank the President for that. (ICT, Maths, Science, Technology, Strategy and Innovation). And when Blacks and coloured millionaires are coming up, we treat them with suspicion. We need a paradigm shift, from believing that when one of our own becomes a millionaire rightfully, its' a crime. The success of these new generation Namibian millionaires came about after they refused to give up anyway. Therefore we need to use these few men and women and their success to inspire our youth into believing that they too can make it. I can guarantee you that if nothing happens in terms of economic transformation, an economic revolution and confrontation is eminent.

By 2006 NWR was a bankrupt national company. The NWR was set up to fail by those who had interest in benefitting from its collapse. Starved of international market, competitors on the board then, lack of control, product dilapidation, untrained staff, inadequate investment, financial backlog and operational inefficiencies. All this and many more lead to a company in peril. NWR eventually collapsed in 2005. I became MD in 2006 and immediately, the different economic interest groups went on the very destructive journey in order to divert attention from their economic failure. That's why most of my time at NWR was spent on managing crisis, because NWR was not in a normal operating state.

The message I want to give you out of this is that when all the wrangling were going on, we never focused one bit on any of that negative energy! We just focused on what we were mandated to do. Yes the NWR turnaround plan was not perfect. There is no perfect plan in the world! When some talk about SOEs and other corporation they are sometimes narrow minded to think that success is guaranteed. A business plan is a risk that shareholders take in the market, it may turn out successful, and it may also fail. During the implementation of the NWR turnaround plan we took a lot of risks, and that is why we achieved what we did today. Business is a risk-taking venture. It is unrealistic not to experience mistakes in the implementation of any plan. FOR A MAN WHO HAS NEVER MADE ANY

MISTAKES, HAS PROBABLY DONE NOTHING. But at least in terms of NWR, challenges were there but we managed to lay down a strong foundation for future economic growth. ***And for that, whatever happens I will always be proud of the men and women who worked tirelessly to save hundreds of jobs and created hundreds more.*** I want all of us as a nation to summon a new spirit of risk taking in order to move our country to achieve economic growth and prosperity, because if you want to keep on learning, if you want to keep on growing then you must keep on risking failure all your life.

As youth we need to have self confidence. We need to have an unwavering spirit of unity of purpose. It is only when we are divided that we become vulnerable to those who seek destruction and deceit. You must always focus on reasons why you can, and not on why you cannot, Success in itself is a mind game. Focus on offering solutions rather than discussing the problem. "Some people will have thousands of reasons why they cannot do what they want to, when all they need is one reason why they can". Some people will tell you that you won't make it and every time you try to break away and reach for your goals a hand reaches out to pull you down, but you must never give in "because each of us have a passion that is imprisoned within". 'Regrettably most of us waste our lives away bored to death because we are trying to fit into the status quo or other societal credential'.

Lastly, you graduates are going to face challenges out there just like we did! But don't go around complaining. Just shake it off, laugh and move on, it comes with the territory. Because I believe "there is no chance and no fate that can circumvent or hinder or control the firm resolve of a determined soul". I want to advise that while you are out there, remember to always be full of yourself otherwise you will be full of someone else. I have always respected those who dare to challenge the conventions and be different. ***So our country's hope is in your hands. Prove beyond doubt that when we were tested we refused to back down; Prove beyond doubt that while we suffered and were dehumanised we persevered, while we come across regrets along the way we remain hopeful and so get real, graduates get real! Stand up, rebel against mediocrity, take massive action and pursue your dreams until they cry for mercy.*** Thank you very much!