

Until the Lion Tells Its Own Story, the Hunt Will Always Glorify the Hunter: The Second Pan-Africa Newsletter (2024)



Blessing Ngobeni (South Africa), *Blunt Truth Diptych* (2019).

Dear friends,

Greetings from the desk of **Tricontinental Pan-Africa**,

I have been a broadcast journalist for over ten years. For the first seven years of my career, I was always told that people sadly don't care about African news. The juicy news is in the United States, Europe, the Middle East or Latin America. But not Africa.

I pitched story after story related to the continent, and time and time again, they would get pushed back. The odd few did make it through, but they did not gain the same traction as the stories I did on Latin America, the Middle East, the US, or even Europe. This only strengthened my editor's assessment: 'Nobody cares about Africa'!

I saw things differently. If you don't consistently cover a region, your audience who might care will go

elsewhere for updates. I was determined to prove him wrong, and this planted the seed that would eventually grow into *African Stream*.

Ironically, the same person who raised doubts is the same person who inspired me that it could be done. He set up a media company focusing exclusively on Muslim news, and its success showed me the way. So I began planning, speaking to people, taking on excellent advice and leaving the lousy advice where it belonged. One example of bad advice came from a media producer who said that Africans didn't want anti-imperialist outlets that dwelled on the negative things past and present. I disagreed, arguing that media exploring African stories without an anti-imperialist lens is not only missing the whole picture but also woefully lacking critical context. Furthermore, it helps to reinforce negative stereotypes about Africans that only further contribute to and legitimise our exploitation.

The prevailing narrative in the Western mainstream media is that Africa is where it is because of poor leadership and corruption. My vision was not necessarily to dispute these claims but to add much-needed context. There is no need to provide PR for corrupt African leaders such as Bola Ahmed Tinubu of Nigeria or Paul Biya of Cameroon. But to explore who helped them get into power and who benefits from their corruption.

Furthermore, have we only had corrupt leaders or progressive leaders with emancipatory programmes in our history? I set up *African Stream* to provide that crucial context. To tell the stories of our leaders like Burkina Faso's Thomas Sankara, who did more in four years to develop his country than his successor, the French-backed dictator Blaise Compaoré, did in 27 years. To explain the purpose of leaders like Compaoré, who was accused of orchestrating the assassination of Sankara and Mobutu Sese Seko, who is accused of staging the assassination of Congo's Patrice Lumumba.



Boris Nzebo (Gabon), *Surprise City 2* (2016-19)

It is vital for European and North American economies that Africa continues to export cheap raw commodities. At the same time, the West develops the goods and, for this process of extraction and exploitation to happen, leaders like Mobutu and Compaoré are essential. In contrast, leaders like Sankara and Lumumba are obstacles.

But *African Stream* is not just about analysing historical events: We try to guide people through contemporary events and provide crucial analysis around why and how events like the July 2023 coup in Niger happened. Of course, in that instance, the Western corporate and mainstream media discussed what happened without exploring the imperial relationship between Niger and its former coloniser, France, which made it one of the poorest countries in the world despite supplying around one-fifth of the uranium used to power France's nuclear power. It was never discussed why French company Areva received 30% of its uranium supply from

Niger but yet paid Niger only 7% of Areva's payments to producing countries, considerably less than that given to Kazakhstan, which Areva paid 74% for producing 37% of its supply. The contested election result that placed French-ally Mohammed Bazoum into power should have been discussed.

The fact that insecurity in Niger only worsened after the presence of US and French troops entered the country, should have been analysed. According to the US State Department, there were just **nine terrorist attacks** in the whole of Africa in 2002 and 2003, which was around the time the US began its counterterrorism assistance to Niger and, in 2014 and 2015, French troops began entering the country. Yet by 2022, after 20 years of US 'support' and eight years of French 'support', in just Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso, there had been around 7,900 people killed in terrorist attacks. This crucial context explains why the streets of Niamey were flooded with people coming out to support the military taking power. Since the coup, Niger has vowed to increase uranium profits that return to the national coffers and launched a mass audit of mining licences to take back control of the billion-dollar industry, which multinational corporations like Areva had previously dominated.

Additionally, the World Bank (of all sources) projects Niger to be the world's fourth fastest-growing economy, respectively, in 2024, with a GDP of 12.8%. Benin, which initially had condemned the coup and was contemplating being part of an ECOWAS invasion force, has since done a U-turn and is working with Niger to complete Africa's longest oil pipeline, which, if finished, could lift Niger's GDP by 24%.



Ali Narey (Côte d'Ivoire & Niger), *Solidarity* (2015).

Without this critical context, which was hardly presented in the mainstream media, the audience will reach some pretty absurd conclusions about Africans loving military men to rule over them. The story is a lot more complicated and nuanced than that. That is the need for *African Stream*, and it has always had an anti-imperialist lens. As the old African Proverb goes, until the lion tells its own story, the hunt will always glorify the hunters.

Warmly,

Ahmed Kaballo



Ahmed Kaballo

Ahmed Kaballo is CEO and founder of *African Stream*, a pan-African digital media organisation based exclusively on social media. He is also a filmmaker who has produced and directed five documentaries from Sudan, Nicaragua, and Venezuela.