



The National Council of Eritrean Americans (NCEA) would like to express its profound dismay at what appears to be a deliberate distortion of facts by Michael Rubin's latest article in *The Washington Examiner*. On November 2, 2020, the Washington Examiner published Michael Ruben's OPEd, titled "The State Department can and should stop Eritrea's illegal 'diaspora tax' in the US." The author, based on a baseless premise, calls for a punitive measure against the Embassy of Eritrea by urging the State Department to take action to stop an African Diaspora from helping a promising African country. The writer erroneously describes Eritrean-Americans in the USA as "fleeing" from dictatorship though the majority has been in the USA going all the way to the 1960s, years before Eritrea achieved its independence in 1991.

The matter of the Diaspora taxes, the principal issue Mr. Rubin raises in his attempt to undermine the hard-fought sovereignty of this young African nation, has long been rendered as a voluntary remittance and a means of supporting the various development projects in Eritrea regarded by many as a model of a country striving to promote self-reliance rather than dependence on foreign handouts. To show you how wrong Mr. Rubin has been about Eritrean-Americans, let's give you a recent example demonstrating diligent and conscientious citizenry on how Eritrean-Americans across the country took proactive roles and raised millions of US dollars in less than 2-weeks to help the fight against COVID-19 in Eritrea. It must be understood Eritreans in the Diaspora are not willing to see their country of origin beg for aid if they have a means to help it. No one is forced or coerced to participate in these noble humanitarian causes and thus the article's accusation is baseless.

Another opinion, without contextual clarity or evidence, imbues an erroneous picture of the reality in Eritrea, yet again. Although one can wonder intent, continued historical rhetoric of maliciously crafted propaganda to destroy a superior example of self-determination and self-governance provides a clear picture of an agenda in the modern-day scramble for (or scavenge of) Africa's resources.

Here is a glimpse of the reality of Eritrea for those without hidden political agendas who truly want to know about and understand the essence of Eritrea. Eritrea cannot be understood without understanding Eritreans. For over 50 years, Eritreans have been a people targeted, if not for absolute genocide, for absolute domination. Eritreans have persisted in resilience, fighting for the right to be self-reliant and to self-governed. The Eritrean people, with virtually no assistance from the international community, gained their independence and secured their statehood. An achievement not handed to them by inked pens, but by the flow of the blood of their children. To render Eritreans feeble is ignorance, be it innocent or malicious. Attempting to impress a false narrative the Eritrean masses are not participatory in Eritrea's present, past, and future is also spiteful.

The majority of Eritreans in the diaspora have historically been proactive participants at every step of Eritrea's journey: from the harrowing struggle for liberation to nation building, to preserving her sovereignty. Within this context and the continued desire of the Eritrean Diaspora to infuse itself in a development process based on self-sufficiency, the Eritrean Diaspora initiated and embraced the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Tax (RRT) soon after independence. The policy specifies that every Eritrean citizen in the diaspora is entitled to all rights and privileges that citizenship provides without regard to payment of the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Tax. The policy is only activated when a citizen seeks administrative or legal services of the government. Even in its procedural flow, it is the citizen that initiates the process for payment.

The NCEA strongly condemns all attempts designed to take Eritrean-American rights to help Eritrea.