

Author's Preface: Synthesizing the Will and the Way

The struggle for a democratic Eritrea is as much a psychological battle as it is a political one. For years, I have observed our movement fluctuates between bursts of spontaneous energy and long periods of crushing silence. This article is born from the necessity to bridge that gap.

It is a synthesis and refinement of two previous reflections posted on this site: [Heads Without Feet: Why Top-Down Shortcuts Fail the Eritrean Struggle](#), which evaluates our historical strategic pitfalls; and [The Will to Overcome: Daniel Gebretensae, the Antifragile Spirit, and the Future of Eritrea](#), which explores the philosophical roots of our endurance. By merging the personal "Will to Overcome" with the scientific "Way to Organize," this piece aims to offer a holistic roadmap for those who refuse to sink into the "Bermuda Triangle" of our political history.

— **Dr. Gebre Gebremariam**

Beyond the “Bermuda Triangle”: Daniel Gebretensae and the Architecture of Eritrean Resistance

Dr. Gebre Gebremariam



For over three decades, the Eritrean diaspora-based struggle for justice has resembled a political “Bermuda Triangle.”¹ Countless waves of energy, hundreds of

¹ The **Bermuda Triangle** (also known as the Devil's Triangle) is a legendary region in the western part of the North Atlantic Ocean where numerous aircraft and ships are said to have

organizations, and thousands of dedicated activists have disappeared into its depths, swallowed by a cycle of fragmentation, hopelessness, and a staggering rate of attrition. As the liberation generation ages and the initial fervor of reform yields to the harsh reality of a stagnant dictatorship, many have simply vanished from the front lines, rendered invisible by a profound sense of defeatism.

Yet, history and philosophy suggest that the “sinking” of a movement is often a



psychological illusion rather than a terminal failure. In a recent interview, Daniel Gebretensae, Chairman of the Organization of Eritrean Unity (OEU), articulated a principle that serves as a structural anchor against this despair: “ዓወት ዝረገጸ ቦቶም ተሰፋ ምቕራጽ ዝኣበዩ ኢዩ” – “Progress is built/achieved by those who refuse to give up.” By aligning this visionary resolve with the rigorous “science of

struggle,” the movement can finally build the “feet” necessary to stand – and stay standing.

The Anatomy of Hopelessness: The “Head Without Feet” Syndrome

The current attrition rate in the Eritrean opposition is a structural consequence of what I have identified in my previous analysis as the “*Head Without Feet*” syndrome. For years, the diaspora has sought “top-down shortcuts” – forming commissions, governments-in-exile, and global councils that look impressive on paper but lack a mobilized, grassroots base (Gebremariam 2019). These initiatives are “*heads without limbs*,” and when they inevitably fail to move the struggle for democratic transition in Eritrea forward, they leave a wake of deep hopelessness.

disappeared under mysterious circumstances. In the context of the Eritrean struggle, it serves as a metaphor for the high rate of political attrition, where activists and movements vanish into a cycle of hopelessness and inaction.

This exhaustion is the antithesis of Friedrich Nietzsche's "**Will to Power.**" When activists feel their energy is being poured into a vacuum, their internal urge to overcome is replaced by nihilism. Nietzsche argued that the highest form of humanity is found in the individual who creates their own values and persists even when the world offers only silence (Nietzsche 1968, 36). The OEU stands as a vital component of the "**Bottom Level**" of a new, principled alliance - a move from a "coalition of convenience" to a "coalition of commitment." I joined this organization because its principles of sovereignty and the rule of law mirror the values that allowed me to survive and flourish (OEU 2024).

Historical Blueprints: Refusing to Sink

The feeling of "hopelessness" currently haunting the Eritrean diaspora is not a unique phenomenon; it is a psychological stage that has been overcome by every successful liberation movement in history. These struggles were saved from their own "Bermuda Triangles" only by a refusal to surrender to the "glacial speed" of progress.

The African National Congress (ANC): Following the Sharpeville massacre in 1960, the ANC was banned and driven into a "wilderness" that lasted thirty years. During the 1960s and early 70s, the movement was virtually invisible to the world, and many veteran activists died in exile without ever seeing a free South Africa. It appeared to be a sinking ship, yet under the steadfast stewardship of Oliver Tambo, the ANC refused to give up. They used this period of invisibility to build an "antifragile" underground structure – growing stronger precisely because of the repression they faced (Lodge and Nasson 1991).

The Indian Independence Movement: The struggle for Indian sovereignty spanned nearly a century. After the Rowlatt Act and the Amritsar Massacre, and particularly after the 1922 setback when Mahatma Gandhi called off the non-cooperation movement, many Indians felt a crushing sense of defeat. The movement was fractured by internal debates and a "glacial speed" of progress. Yet Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru pivoted to "constructive work," rebuilding social trust at the village level. They proved that the "Long Walk" to freedom requires a spirit that cannot be broken by temporary stagnation (Guha 2018).

The American Civil Rights Movement: For nearly one hundred years following Reconstruction, African Americans lived in a "period of despair" defined by Jim Crow and systemic terror. It took a century of "slow, painstaking, and initially invisible" work by organizers who door-knocked for decades with few tangible successes to reach the breakthrough of the 1960s. Their refusal to give up was the "muscle" that eventually dismantled the pillars of injustice (Payne 1995).

Daniel Gebretensae: From Resilience to Antifragility

Daniel Gebretensae’s leadership recognizes that “*never giving up*” is not a passive act of waiting; it is a manifestation of an unbroken spirit. As I explored in ["The Will to Overcome"](#), this is the essence of “*Antifragility*,” a concept developed by Nassim Nicholas Taleb to describe systems that improve and grow stronger due to stressors and disorder (Taleb 2012, 3). Daniel Gebretensae is calling for the movement to stop sinking and start building – to turn the “*Will to Power*” into the “*Will to Organize*.”

This truth is not an abstraction to me; it is the story of my life. Despite twelve years of malnutrition and brutality in “*Alem Bekagn*” – the “*Farewell to the World*” prison, I



refused to accept the “farewell.” Alongside my fellow prisoners, we established a “Secret School,” turning our cells into classrooms. This refusal to give up led to an academic record that remains unbroken in the history of that country (Gebremariam 2024). It is the same spirit that drove Haben Girma, the deaf -blind Eritrean American lawyer, to conquer the barriers of the sensory world to become a champion of the law (Girma 2019, 210).

Conclusion: Forging a Sovereign Future

The struggle for Eritrea is at a crossroads. We can continue to disappear into the “Bermuda Triangle” of top-down shortcuts and hopelessness, or we can embrace the “science of struggle” and the resolve of the unyielding. Daniel Gebretensae’s philosophy is the antidote to the attrition that has claimed so many of our comrades.



My own life is a testament to the fact that the most crushing conditions can forge unparalleled brilliance, provided one maintains an indomitable agency - a defiant conviction that no circumstance is too dire to be overcome. By organizing from the bottom up and refusing to give up, we ensure that the next time we stand up, we have the “feet” to stay standing until Eritrea is finally free, sovereign, and ruled by the rule of law. Through the OEU, Daniel Gebretensae is not just leading a movement; he is constructing the architecture of our national salvation.

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