

Key note Speech: "YOUTH AND INTEGRITY"

**Presented at
Bi-Annual Global Students Integrity Conference:
East Africa**

**At the Nelson Mandela African Institute of Science and
Technology in Arusha, Tanzania**

**BY
PROF. NOAH. O. MIDAMBA, PhD
Vice Chancellor, CEO & Professor of Defence & Foreign Policy
KCA University, Nairobi Kenya**

Monday, November 6, 2017

Good morning everyone. It is a great day to join you in this institution named after Nelson Mandela a great African icon.

First, I would like to pay tribute to the two young men and women, who came to my office personally to brief me about this wonderful gathering. Erick Mangese, CEO, Linda Kiplagat and Samson Samba, both program officers at the Global Student Integrity Centre.

(Talk about challenging Socio, Political and Economic challenges in Africa)

Today I would like to speak about becoming men and women of integrity. It is this attribute that often defines the greatness of a man or a woman. People such as George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Mother Teresa, Pope Francis and Barrack Obama are revered as icons of integrity. These icons are like spiritual magnets. Every time we read about their lives we are drawn to their higher way.

What then is this integrity that is such a dominating force in determining greatness? Integrity is a purity of mind and heart that knows no deception, no excuses, no rationalization, nor any

coloring of the facts. It is an absolute honesty with one's self, with God, and with our fellowman. Even if God blinked or looked the other way for a moment, it would be choosing the right - not merely because God desires it but because our character demands it.

Integrity is the very core of our being. It is who we really are. When all the scaffolding is removed, it is our integrity that both defines us and identifies us. Men of integrity are like the Rock of Gibraltar - steadfast and immovable. Men without it are like the shifting

sands on the Sahara Desert - tossed to and fro by every variant wind of life.

Ten years ago in the US, I put in the parking machine \$20 note dollars to pay for a one dollar worth of parking time. Well the machine returned \$19 dollars but I started walking away because I was in a hurry. A lady came running after me to say Sir you forgot your change.

(Talk about my daughter Lois and time out)

This story only speaks of a one decent act of humanity, but it teaches us great principles. Each of us might appropriately ask: Does our integrity, our honor, have a purchase price - a dollar, a thousand dollars, and the approval of our peers, some physical pleasure, or temporary recognition? Is there some point at which our integrity can be purchased? Or is it priceless - not for sale at any price? What about our leadership and political system in Africa? Why is South Korea, Singapore moved from a third world country to first world in one generation?

I read Robert Bolt's classic play *A Man for All Seasons*. It is the story of Sir Thomas More. He had distinguished himself as a scholar, a lawyer, an ambassador, and, finally, as Lord Chancellor of England. He was a man of absolute integrity. The play opens with these words of Sir Richard Rich: "Every man has his price! . . . In money too. . . . Or pleasure. Titles, women, bricks-and-mortar, there's always something." That is the theme of the play. It is also the theme of life. Is there a man or woman in this world who cannot be bought, whose integrity is beyond price? Let me see by

show of hands how many of you have read this book, and let me see again those of you who feel you cannot be bought at any price.

As the play unfolds, King Henry VIII desires to divorce Queen Catherine and marry Anne Boleyn. But there is a catch: divorce was forbidden by the Catholic Church at that time. And so King Henry VIII, not to be thwarted in his desires, demands of his subjects the taking of an oath that will support him in his divorce. But there is a further problem. Sir Thomas More, who is loved and admired by the common people, is a holdout - his conscience will not let him sign the oath. He is unwilling to submit, even at the king's personal

request. Then come the tests. His friends apply their personal charm and pressure, but he will not yield. He is stripped of his wealth, his position, and his family, but he will not sign. Finally, he is falsely tried for his life, but still he will not succumb. They have taken from him his money, his political power, his friends, and his family - and will yet take his life - but they cannot take from him his integrity. It is not for sale at any price.

At the climax of the play, Sir Thomas More is being falsely tried for treason. Sir Richard Rich commits the perjury necessary to convict

him. As Sir Richard Rich exits the courtroom, Sir Thomas More asks Rich, "That's a chain of office you are wearing. . . . What [is it]?"

Prosecutor Thomas Cromwell replies, "Sir Richard [Rich] is appointed Attorney-General for Wales."

More then looks into Rich's face with great disdain and retorts, "For Wales? Why, Richard, it profits a man nothing to give his soul for the whole world. . . . But for Wales!"

In the life to come, no doubt many will look back amidst uncontrollable sobs and repeat again and again, "Why did I trade

my soul for Wales or temporary physical pleasure or fame or a grade or the approval of my friends? Why did I sell my integrity for a price?"

For a few moments I would like to address seven principles of integrity that I hope will inspire us to make this a fundamental character trait in our personal lives.

First: Integrity is the foundation of our character and all other virtues

Integrity is the foundation upon which character and life are built. If there are cracks in that foundation, then it will not support the weight of other attributes that must be built upon it. How can we be humble if we lack the integrity to acknowledge our own weaknesses? How can we develop charity for others if we are not totally honest in our dealings with them? How can we repent and be clean if we only partially disclose the truth to our parents, teachers, friends and preachers? At the root of every virtue is integrity.

C. S. Lewis noted that once we make a mistake in a mathematical equation, we cannot just keep on going. His exact words are as follows: "When I have started a sum the wrong way, the sooner I admit this and go back and start over again, the faster I shall get on." Likewise, we cannot continue to fully acquire other virtues until we first make integrity the granite foundation of our lives. In some cases it may require us to go through the painful process of ripping out an existing foundation built upon deceit and replacing it stone by stone with a foundation of integrity, but it can be done.

Shakespeare understood the inseparability of our integrity and all other virtues:

*Mine honor is my life; both grow in one;
Take honor from me, and my life is done.*

Second: Integrity is not doing just that which is legal but that which is moral

It may be legal to have premarital relationships, it may be legal to gossip, but none of those actions is moral. Integrity is not just adherence to the legal code; it is adherence to the higher moral

code. It is as former US President Abraham Lincoln suggested - living in accord with “the better angels of our nature.”

Every young man and woman in this gathering has the moral duty to protect and preserve the virtue of his or her date. It is a test of his or her integrity. The man or woman who is striving for integrity will develop a resolve and a discipline that transcend even the powerful passions of physical emotions. It is that integrity to self and to others that sustains them and empowers them even when Satan unleashes his arsenal of moral temptations upon them. To

this generation the Lord said: "I will raise up unto myself a pure people." God is counting on you to be that generation.

Third: Integrity makes decisions based on eternal implications

Two years ago, one of the young women in Kenya was taking her Kenyan certificate for primary education, as she looked up, she saw one of her friends cheating. Their eyes made contact. Embarrassed, the friend shrugged her shoulders and mouthed the words "I need the grade." Somehow this young lady had lost her eternal vision - it is not grades but godhood that is our destination.

What good does it do to be accepted to the most prestigious university but forfeit our soul in the process? Every time someone cheats, he or she trades his spiritual birth right for a mess of time. In her short sightedness she has opted for some money today rather than infinite wealth in the life to come.

Today most people focus their heart upon temporal net worth. People of integrity have their heart focused upon spiritual net worth. No doubt there will be a lot of millionaires, even billionaires, who in the life to come will find themselves spiritually bankrupt and a lot of goodly Saints who with meagre net worth will become

spiritual billionaires - discovering that integrity has been the wisest investment of all. Those with integrity have that eternal foresight.

(Talk about Pope Francis recent visit to Kenya)

(Talk about Jane my former student who was married for a month)

Integrity is not short sighted - it is not just a temporary change of behavior; it is a permanent change of nature.

Fourth: Integrity is disclosing the whole truth and nothing but the truth

Africa and African people are entering a period of a complex modern society. There are serious integrity issues surrounding our life. The question is often asked: When should we confess our sins? When the sin is of such a serious nature that it might warrant a disciplinary action or it continues to linger in our mind so we cannot find peace. If we then fail to confess, our spiritual horizons become limited. It is like being surrounded by a circular, impenetrable wall. In such a circumstance we have some limited

room in which to move, but we are trapped. We will look in vain for a slit through which we can squeeze, an opening through which we can escape, an end around which we can travel. There are no end runs, no secret openings, no hidden passages. Years of service do not obviate confession; one-on-one pleading with God is not a substitute. Somewhere, sometime, somehow we must face the wall, square up, and climb it. That is confession. That is total integrity—disclosing the whole truth and nothing but the truth. When we do this, our spiritual horizons become unlimited.

Fifth: Integrity knows no alibis or excuses

There is something ennobling about the man or woman who admits his or her weaknesses or takes the blame “square-on” without excuse or alibi. Today in the world we live in, there is a lot of integrity tests one is expected to go through before you are offered a job. What does this tells us? Your integrity will be tested over and over again wherever you go. Your integrity will determine your success or failure in life.

Sixth: Integrity is keeping our covenants and our commitments

Even in times of inconvenience. Integrity is the courage to do right regardless of the consequences and regardless of the inconvenience.

In his recent ruling about the Kenya Presidential Election, Judge Maraga of the Kenyan Supreme Court said he made the ruling based on his best judgements on facts and do not mind what happens to him. The ruling becomes a landmark judgement in the

Continent of Africa and an example to many countries, around the world.

A man or woman of integrity does not yield or succumb merely because it is hard or expensive or inconvenient. Even if it costs them their worldly possession or their life.

One of the acid tests of our integrity is whether or not we keep the commitments and promises we have made to our families and our friends, or whether there are loopholes in our word.

We might appropriately ask: Do we live the honor code with exactness, or are there loopholes in our word—cracks in our foundation of integrity? Do we honor our commitments as students, as employees, as leaders, as home teachers and visiting teachers, or are there loopholes in our performance? In other words—is our word our bond?

Seventh: Integrity is not governed by the presence of others

It is internally, not externally, driven.

We have a choice. We can either seize the moment and take control of our lives or become mere puppets to our environment and our peers.

Would you steal someone's money in front of your mother, your date, your spouse, or your pastor, preacher, bishop? If it is wrong in the presence of others, it is just as wrong in their absence. The man or woman of integrity who is true to self and to God will choose the right whether or not anyone is looking because he or she is self-driven, not externally controlled.

A lack of integrity is a major problem in the world today especially in Africa. That deficiency undermines our government, school system, every business transaction, every spousal, family, and social relationship it touches. It is a concern of every profession. There are lawyers who bill for hours of service that they never rendered; physicians who recommend surgeries and procedures that were never needed; teachers who fail to prepare lessons but deposit their paychecks just the same; and, unfortunately, politicians and leaders whose integrity is governed by their pocket popular polls rather than by eternal principles. It is a day and age

in which men and women of integrity are in desperate demand but in short supply.

May the integrity of our souls have a sign that reads in bold, black letters "NOT FOR SALE AT ANY PRICE" so that it might be said "We love you for the integrity of your hearts and the purity of your lives".

May we all become men and women of integrity - not because we have to but because we want to.

Thank you everyone for listening.