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NATIONAL

WORLD

SPORT

BUSINESS

ENTERTAINMENT

HEALTH

ARCHIVE

LIFE STYLE

E-PAPER

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Ayago dam

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contingency plan

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## Opinion

### Must Ugandan graduates take pride in washing toilets abroad? Publish Date: Apr 11, 2013

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By Rev.Titus Shem Makuma

Recently I read with mixed feelings and disappointment the story which appeared in Sunday Vision of March 31, stating “Kyeyo workers lose billions to relatives.”

One of the victims Anita Namisango a graduate from Makerere University in the early 1990s said that the pain of being jobless after graduation, with no lunch and no rent, made her succumb to the allure of trying her luck abroad in search of greener pastures. “I had seen so many of my relatives travel abroad and become millionaires overnight by just cleaning toilets and doing other odd jobs”.

Contrary to her expectations, Namisango confesses to have come face to face with the hard realities of life while in UK in search of greener pasture. She did all sorts of jobs such as laundry assistant, warehouse records assistant, packed fruits and vegetables, worked in elderly homes escorting the sickly to toilets and sometimes cleaned those who messed themselves up. She says some of these jobs were undoable and unwanted by the whites and they left them to the blacks. Unfortunately, Namisango is said to have lost all her hard earned fortune to dishonest relatives.

I would assume this could have been a different story if Namisango had patiently waited to progressively build her career from Uganda. I think our society today is taking a wrong path by focusing on becoming millionaires overnight instead of consistently working towards their career dreams. I have heard of cases of professionals who travel abroad and end up changing their line of profession by resorting to nursing. When you try to dig deeper in these nursing programmes, you will discover that the issue is about taking charge of the elderly homes, the work despised by even the illiterate and semi-illiterate white community. Why then should our respected graduates always find themselves in this kind of humiliation in the name of making money overnight? To me it is simply a cycle of poverty that follows the black race wherever they live and work. It is a cultural mindset which is self defeating and very compromising in nature. Ugandans need to free themselves from these mind-created constraints by removing assumptions and restrictions.

I have quite often interacted with some learned people who are resigned to fate and have shamelessly confessed to me; “For me even if it means going out to wash toilets...!” What kind

of attitude are they portraying in the first place? I wouldn't imagine washing toilets is the reason why such people went to school in order to acquire some skills. It is a big shame for our nation.

These unfortunate Kyeyo stories are not only embarrassing and a major obstacle to our personal development but poisonous to African societies. Our leaders must find measures to this scenario and save the next generation. This is an area of national concern which the government and the parliamentarians should focus on finding solutions which benefit all nationals. Redesigning the education system as well as putting emphasis on career guidance in all institutions of learning will equip the graduates for job creation and career opportunities nationally, regionally and across Africa. For instance, the Rwandan government has opened the doors for doctors, teachers and the business community from Uganda and other East African countries. The Angolan government is in search of English teachers to transform their institutions. The young government of South Sudan will gladly embrace human resource from across Africa to support their national growth and development initiatives.

All these are opportunities which are staring us in the face which can progressively turn one's life around without necessarily going to the west to endure all the hardship and human exploitation. It is one thing to travel out to study on scholarship offer and yet another story to go there in search of job opportunities. My advice is that we develop a value system for our careers and professionalism which are aimed at transforming Uganda and Africa as a whole. By refusing to take in advice and stubbornly going to the west to do all sorts of menial jobs, it defines your negative attitude about life, low self esteem (I am a poor African creature) and a clear statement that you have willingly dumped your valuable degree into the dustbins of the developed countries. In so doing you direct your would-be liberated mind back to the unfortunate state of illiteracy and poverty confinement which defined our forefathers.

I am pretty aware of the foreign currency that trickles in annually which significantly contribute to our national budget yet this should not be achieved at the expense of our African unifying values, heritage, professionalism and human dignity. Let's do something to save our African image. The Bible puts it clear that weeping may only last for a night but joy comes in the morning. Failure to find a job yesterday should not hinder your tomorrow's opportunities. "I have not failed. I have just found 10,000 ways that won't work"-Thomas A. Edison.

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