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FROM HOMO ARROGANS TO HOMO HUMILIENS

Fr Nzamujo was a guest at the Climate Summit in Bhutan. This is the address he gave at the conference.

LEARNING AGAIN TO LIVE, PRODUCE AND PROSPER WITHIN THE INTELLIGENCE OF LIFE

My dear friends,



It is a great privilege to be here in Bhutan.

There is something deeply appropriate about having this conversation in a country that has reminded the world that development cannot ultimately be measured by economic growth alone. It must also be measured by human wellbeing, cultural integrity, ecological vitality, and our capacity to live in harmony with Nature.

And this takes us immediately to the deepest question behind conscious food systems.

The question is not only:

What kind of food system do we want?

The deeper question is:

From what understanding of ourselves—and of Life—are we building that food system?

Because before agriculture becomes a technique, it is already the expression of a way of life—a worldview.

And I believe that the crisis beneath the food-system crisis is fundamentally an ontological crisis: a crisis in how we understand who we are, what kind of world we inhabit, and what relationship we have with the rest of Life.

The mechanistic worldview that powered the first Industrial Revolution reshaped not only our industries, but our entire way of life—including agriculture.

The farm came to be treated as a machine.
Soil became a support medium.
Water became an input.
Plants became production units.
Animals became units of conversion.

And whenever one part of the machine failed, we responded by adding another external input. This logic certainly increased production.

But it also encouraged fragmentation.

We separated soil from water.

Plants from microorganisms.

Animals from nutrient cycles. Production from ecology.

And as these relationships were broken, we increasingly tried to compensate for the loss of biological intelligence with more energy, more chemicals and more external inputs.

But agriculture is a living system.

And living systems are not machines.

They are nonlinear, adaptive, relational and self-organizing.

They work through feedback, diversity, symbiosis, exchange and cycles.

At Songhaï, this has led us to understand agriculture not simply as the production of commodities, but as: the intelligent management of living relationships.

And here my African worldview has been very important.

We often speak of Ubuntu:

I am because we are.

But in many African worldviews, relationality goes even

deeper.
I exist through my relationships with other people and community—but also with land, water, plants, animals and the living systems around me.
And I exist in relation to those who came before me, those who will come after me, the sacred, God, and the deeper order of Life itself.
So perhaps we need to take Ubuntu one step further:
I am because Life is.

— pause — I do not stand outside the web of Life.
I belong to it.
And once we understand that, our relationship with agriculture changes.
At Songhaï, therefore, we do not merely teach agriculture.
The farm becomes a classroom.
The laboratory becomes a classroom.
The fishpond, the compost heap, the soil beneath our feet—all become classrooms.
And plants, animals and microorganisms are not merely objects of production.
They are also our teachers.
We observe how forests organize themselves.
How microorganisms cooperate.
How water moves.
How nutrients circulate.
How living systems regenerate.

And then we ask:
What can we learn from these intelligences?

This is where biomimicry becomes so important.
We are not trying simply to force Nature to conform to our designs.
We are trying to understand the design patterns, metabolic logics and operational principles already at work in living systems—and to align ourselves with them.
I sometimes call this dancing with Nature.
In a good dance, neither partner dominates.
You listen.
You respond.
You adjust.
You move in relationship.
Our food and agricultural systems must learn this rhythm.
And when agriculture begins to dance with Nature rather than fight against it, something remarkable happens:
we begin to
communities.
The productive power of biodiversity.
The regenerative capacity of water cycles.
The photosynthetic power of plants.
This biological capital is fundamentally different from extractive wealth.
A mineral deposit becomes poorer as we exploit it.
But living capital, when properly regenerated, can become richer.
A degraded soil can recover.
Microbial life can multiply.
Biodiversity can return.
Water-holding capacity can improve.
Carbon can be rebuilt in the soil.
That is the profound promise of regenerative agriculture:
to produce today while rebuilding the biological foundations of tomorrow's production.
And this changes the question we ask.
The machine asks:
What inputs must I add to obtain the output I want?
The living-system approach asks:
What relationships must I restore so that the system can recover its own capacity to organize, regenerate and produce?
That is the real shift: from controlling Nature to participating intelligently in the metabolism of Life.
At Songhaï, this led us to ask:

What happens if we design agriculture as a metabolism rather than as a factory?
Plants capture solar energy. Water connects the system.
Animals participate in nutrient cycles.
Roots, fungi, bacteria and minerals transform matter beneath our feet.
Residues from one process become resources for another.
Energy circulates.
Water circulates.
Carbon circulates.
Nutrients circulate.
Life feeds Life.
— pause —
And once we see agriculture this way, even “waste” begins to look different.
In Nature, what we call waste is often simply a resource that has become disconnected from the next process that needs it.
The challenge, therefore, is not simply technological.
It is also human.
It requires a transition in the human person.

A transition from Homo arrogans— the human being who assumes that intelligence begins with us, that Nature is passive, and that our task is to control— to Homo humiliens— the human being humble enough to observe, to listen, and to learn.
I say this as someone formed in science and engineering.
The deeper I have gone into biology, microbiology and ecological systems, the more conscious I have become of how extraordinarily intelligent Life already is.
A forest organizes abundance without a central manager.
A healthy soil transforms death into fertility.
A microbial community accomplishes what no single organism could accomplish alone.
Science, at its best, therefore, is not an act of domination.

It is an act of humility.

It is learning how to listen carefully to reality.
Perhaps this is one of the deepest invitations of a conscious food system: not simply to make agriculture more efficient, but to change the way we see.



From fragmentation to relationship.
From linearity to metabolism.
From extraction to regeneration.
From control to participation. From fighting Nature— to dancing with Nature. And ultimately, from Homo arrogans to Homo humiliens. The human being humble enough to understand that we are not the masters of Life.

— pause —

We are participants in Life.
We are students of Life.

— pause —

And when we learn again to live, produce and prosper within its intelligence, agriculture becomes much more than the production of food.
It becomes the intelligent orchestration of living relationships—
producing abundance
while regenerating the
very foundations of Life.
That, for me, is where a truly conscious food system begins.

Thank you unock an extraordinary form of wealth— biological capital.

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The intelligence embedded in microbial communities.
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The regenerative capacity of water cycles.
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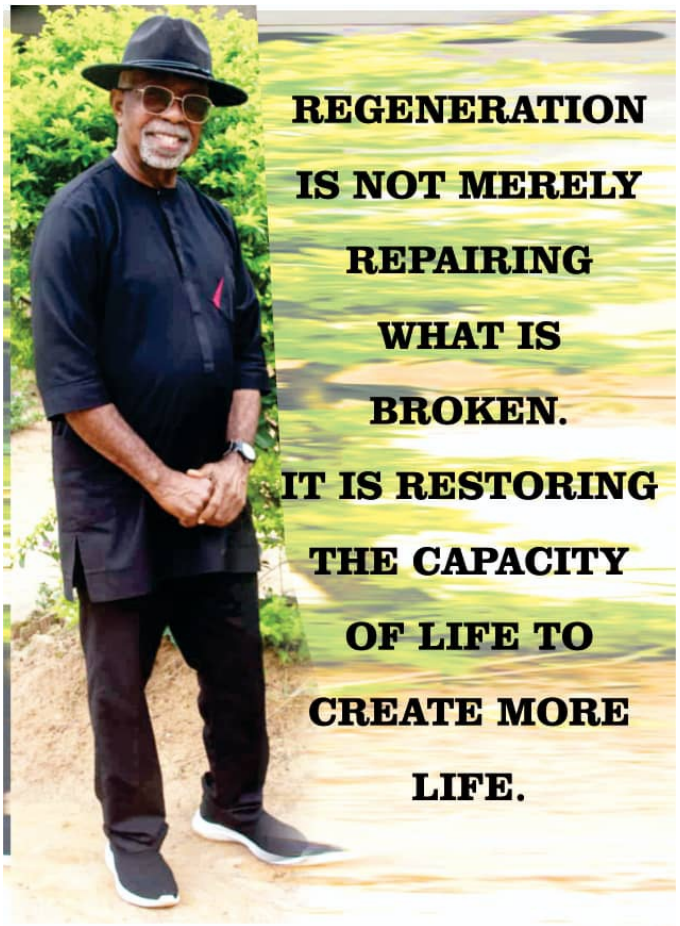
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That, for me, is where a truly conscious food system begins.

Thank you.

WHAT LIES BENEATH

I've been fortunate to visit Songhai for five years, and I hope to return more often in the future. That first summer, I was walking by the fenced pond right next to my apartment when someone asked if I had seen the crocodile. I laughed to myself. I had seen ostriches, pigs, chickens, and goats, but I very much doubted there was a crocodile! It wasn't until my third visit that I walked by that pond one morning, and there he was, sitting by the side of the pond, looking quite content. I wish I remembered who told me, so I could apologize for my obvious doubts.

In a way, Songhai itself is like that hidden crocodile. At first glance, Songhai is a farm, or, more properly, an agricultural center. You turn off the main road in Porto-Novo, where the sign says Songhai. To your left are rows of trucks and cars used to transport produce and equipment, and to the right are buildings housing a shop and a restaurant with plenty of seating.



Security personnel greet you, and then you begin your tour of the 70 acres. In one corral, there are a few beautiful horses and a young filly, and in another, mules. To the right is a large amphitheater, and across from it is a large enclosure for 10-15 ostriches, usually with one running and stretching its wings. The dirt road continues to the new housing for the student trainees. I see the trainees everywhere, in their distinctive green pants and shirts, with the Songhai logo embroidered on them.

They work in the fields, sweep the roads, carry loads of feed for the animals, bring produce to the store or to trucks for transport to other villages, repair fences, and perform a variety of tasks, as on any farm.

There are buildings for computer classes and for all the educational requirements of the 6-month programs for the trainees, as well as ones that house machines for farm and energy equipment. I can't see inside them, but I can hear the sounds from the road outside. I pass a large digester. It's a huge, low-to-the-ground concrete structure with a curved top, probably 200 feet long. Organic waste is poured into the digester's “mouth,” much like a human mouth, then goes into three large chambers where microbes and natural biological processes turn it into energy. It provides a huge amount of energy for the community and is the largest one of its kind in all of Africa.

Solar energy panels line the roads. Some cover the crops in the fields. A new one that tracks the sun will be operational within weeks. Wind energy complements the trio of energy sources, and together they power all of Songhai.

I walk by crops of corn, tomatoes, beans, and papayas, so many I can't even identify. They're all covered in special degradable plastic that Nzamujo modified.

Pigs, chickens, goats, quail, and turkeys line the sides of the road in long cages. Their noise overwhelms the distant hum of traffic. Fish ponds dot the center. They are teeming with fish, large and small. When you throw in some food, they come to the surface. The water churns for a few seconds, then settles.

If you just walked through Songhai, you would be very happy with its success as an agricultural center. You would be pleased that it's entirely organic and uses sustainable methods, and you would leave very impressed by your visit.

But if you looked a little deeper, you could see even more marvelous things happening beneath the surface.

Those students who work hard at various jobs while walking around are not just learning about agriculture. They study technology and develop computer skills. They'll be able to use these skills in whatever profession they choose to enter in the future. They take classes in economics and acquire marketing skills. They learn how to farm their own land in the future using sustainable practices that renew the land rather than degrade it. The economics they learn is not based on how much money they can earn in a lifetime, but on how they can contribute to their families and their communities.



The economics that has been part of our world has failed most people. It works well for the rich, with the stock market serving as an indicator of wealth and prosperity. Accumulated wealth is passed from generation to generation, and the 5 percent or so keep their lifestyles for generations. But most people worldwide suffer without food, access to basic health care, or even enough money to support a family. This economics of greed is failing most people in the world, and Songhai recognizes it is not the future.

Nzamujo teaches a new economics, based not on greed but on equality and care for others. There is enough wealth to share rather than hoard it for a wealthy few.



Another part of their training is to develop the whole person, helping them become the best they can be. Nzamujo doesn't care about money; he cares about the whole person and about how they will lead a fulfilled, productive life. He emphasizes ethics, morality, and caring for others. Young people who have those values within themselves will help Africa rise and take its place in the world.

As of 2026, more than 50,000 young people have completed the training program at Songhai. Not all of them will embody the ethics, morality, and traits Nzamujo seeks to instill. But even if only a fraction of graduates understands and lives by the message, it will be enough to change the world.

I talked to a young man by chance yesterday while walking through the fields. He was halfway through his training program. He was from Nigeria and hoped to own his own farm someday. He was excited and committed to sustainable farming, and he sounded like he could hardly wait to start his life. He had worked in the Ministry of Agriculture before, but only in a desk job, so he jumped at the opportunity to learn something practical. He sounded very committed and intelligent.

Songhai maintains a relationship with its graduates so it can help them find land and start their own projects after graduation. They can get help if they need it.

Another hidden thing that a person wouldn't notice on a quick trip through Songhai is the soil. They would see the crops and how well they were growing, but wouldn't be aware of what was happening unseen beneath the surface. And that is one of the most amazing things about Songhai. Nzamujo realizes that the soil is the most important factor in the success of organic farming.

Nature itself can provide everything we need if we just sit back and let the microbes in the soil do their work. Nzamujo has put together a formula for reclaiming the soil using only natural methods. At Songhai, they use every waste product to enhance the soil or feed another creature, whose waste becomes compost for the soil.

One of his mottos from the very beginning has been “waste to wealth,” and if you look carefully, you can see it in every part of Songhai. This is about the regeneration not only of the soil. The environment is important, but so is regenerating people, giving them the opportunity to learn and create. It isn't enough to cultivate this in one person; it requires creating and working together as a team that shares the same spiritual and ethical values. Songhai has always emphasized the technical aspects of agriculture, with computers, science, infrastructure, everything that will bring Songhai up

to date in its approach to sustainable farming.

Once I became aware of what Songhai was trying to achieve, I realized it was much more than a farm. It was the regeneration of agriculture, of lives, of ethics and morality in business and in life, of community, and of Africa's place in the world. I realized there was so much going on beneath the surface, from the crocodile to the microbes to the very real search for a meaningful life. Each time I visit, I become more aware of how unique and valuable it is to the world.

All this from one little crocodile—I will thank him the next time I see him.





Delayed Gratification and the Formation of Internal Capacity

Building Human Beings for an Uncertain World

Fr. Godfrey Nzamujo

One of the most important lessons I learned in life did not come from a university classroom, a management seminar, or a leadership conference.

It came from my parents.

Looking back today, I realize that they were teaching something far deeper than discipline, hard work, or perseverance.

They were teaching the formation of internal capacity.
This reflection adds something profoundly important to our understanding of human development and character formation. It moves beyond the conventional notion of delayed gratification and invites us to consider a much larger question:

What kind of human being are we becoming?

Delayed gratification is often presented as the ability to postpone pleasure or resist immediate rewards.
While this is true, it is only part of the story.
Delayed gratification is not merely about waiting.
It is not simply about self-control.
It is about building the inner architecture that allows a person to remain creative, productive, disciplined, and hopeful when life refuses to cooperate.
Life rarely unfolds according to our plans.
The rains may fail.
Markets may collapse.
Resources may become scarce.
Opportunities may disappear.
Circumstances may become hostile.
The question is therefore not whether difficulties will come.
They always do.

The real question is:

Who have we become when they arrive?

Most people can function when circumstances are favorable.

The true test of maturity comes when circumstances refuse to obey our plans.

My parents understood this instinctively.

They did not raise us by giving us comfort.

They raised us by giving us responsibilities.

They did not seek to remove every difficulty from our lives.

Instead, they taught us how to engage difficulties constructively.

Long before sunrise we were already fetching water, working on the farm, caring for animals, helping with household tasks, and contributing to the functioning of the family economy.

At the time, these activities appeared to be ordinary necessities of rural life.

Today I understand that they were exercises in human formation.

Without realizing it, we were building capacities that no school curriculum explicitly teaches.

We were learning discipline.

We were learning perseverance.

We were learning responsibility.

We were learning cooperation.

We were learning delayed gratification.

Most importantly, we were learning that value is created through effort.

Every task strengthened invisible muscles of character.

Every challenge expanded our capacity to endure.

Every responsibility enlarged our ability to contribute.

My parents were not merely raising hardworking children.

They were building resilient human beings.

They were building what might be called **internal capital**.



One particular lesson from them has remained with me throughout my life.

Whenever difficulties appeared, they never encouraged us to wish for an easier life.

Instead, they taught us something far more valuable.

They would say:

"Son, we will never pray that your road becomes smooth and free of obstacles. If we did so, we would be bad parents, because no real road is smooth. Life itself is not smooth. We would rather work hard with you and help you build a strong and determined character that will enable you to navigate any bad road."



At the time, I did not fully appreciate the depth of this wisdom.

Today, I recognize that it contains one of the most profound principles of human formation.

Most people spend their lives trying to change the road.

My parents focused on building the traveler.

Modern culture constantly promises smoother roads.

More convenience.

More comfort.

More shortcuts.

More protection from difficulty.

Yet every meaningful human experience teaches the opposite lesson.

No matter how advanced society becomes, life will continue to present uncertainty, disappointment, failure, setbacks, losses, and unexpected obstacles.

No technology can eliminate them completely.

No amount of wealth can fully protect us from them.

No institution can guarantee a life free from adversity.

The critical question therefore is not whether obstacles will appear.

The critical question is whether we possess the internal capacity to navigate them when they do.

This is the true meaning of character.

Character is not developed when everything goes according to plan.

Character is developed when reality refuses to cooperate and we must find a way forward anyway.

My parents expressed this philosophy in another powerful way.

They would often say:
"Son, if you make your plans and everything works exactly as you planned, you are not yet a man. But when you make your plans and nothing works as you planned, and you find a way to rebound and make it work as you would want, then you have become a man."
This statement contains a profound philosophy of life.
The measure of a person is not whether he succeeds according to plan.
The measure of a person is whether he possesses the internal resources to create a new path when the original path collapses.
This is the essence of resilience.
This is the essence of entrepreneurship.
This is the essence of leadership.
And this is the essence of human maturity.
A farmer understands this instinctively.
He plants a crop.
The rains fail.
Pests arrive.
Markets collapse.
Equipment breaks.
Yet somehow he adjusts.
He adapts.
He improvises.
He learns.
He continues.



Life itself is a continuous exercise in adaptive creativity.
The same is true of every entrepreneur, every innovator, every builder, and every leader.
The difference between those who succeed and those who fail is often not intelligence.
It is not talent.
It is not even resources.
It is the ability to continue functioning constructively when plans fail.
That ability comes from internal capacity.
Internal capacity consists of many elements:
accumulated experience;
broad knowledge;
disciplined habits;
emotional maturity;
practical wisdom;
self-confidence;
adaptability;
perseverance;
creativity;
faith;
purpose;
and the willingness to continue learning.



When adversity appears, people draw from these internal reserves.
Those who have never developed such reserves often collapse under pressure.
Those who have built them become stronger through adversity.
This is why excessive comfort can become dangerous.
Comfort removes resistance.
Resistance is what develops capacity.
Just as muscles grow stronger through resistance, character grows stronger through challenge.
A life designed to eliminate all difficulty may unintentionally eliminate many of the conditions necessary for growth.
The tragedy of modern civilization is that it increasingly confuses progress with comfort.
For several generations, societies have pursued a singular objective:
Making life easier.
Making life faster.
Making life more convenient.
Technology has reduced effort.
Machines have replaced labor.
Consumer culture has multiplied convenience.
Entertainment has become permanently available.
Everything increasingly operates according to the logic of immediacy.
We communicate instantly.
Buy instantly.
Consume instantly.
Watch instantly.
And increasingly we expect success instantly.
Yet while comfort has undeniable benefits, a civilization built exclusively around comfort risks producing people who are externally equipped but internally weak.
The paradox is striking.
The easier life becomes externally, the more intentional we must become about strengthening ourselves internally.
For comfort does not build character.
Convenience does not build resilience.
Abundance does not automatically build wisdom.
Only meaningful engagement with reality develops internal capacity.
This is one of the reasons why the Songhaï vision places such importance on work, responsibility, production, entrepreneurship, community life, and regenerative engagement with the real world.
The objective is not merely to teach technical skills.
It is not simply to train farmers, technicians, managers, or entrepreneurs.
The deeper objective is to form human beings capable of carrying responsibility and creating value under real-

world conditions.
A young person who learns to transform waste into wealth, degraded land into fertile ecosystems, scarcity into productivity, and obstacles into opportunities is simultaneously building productive capacity and character capacity.

The farm therefore becomes more than a production site.

It becomes a school of resilience.
A laboratory of responsibility.
A workshop for character formation.
A university of life.
Perhaps this is one of the most important educational principles for Songhaï 2.0.

The purpose of education is not merely to transfer knowledge.
The purpose of education is to build human beings capable of navigating uncertainty.
Young people must learn how to:
solve problems when there are no obvious solutions; create opportunities where none appear to exist; persevere when results are delayed; remain disciplined when distractions abound; adapt when circumstances change; learn continuously; and transform adversity into possibility.

In many ways, the future belongs not to those who have the best plans.

The future belongs to those who can continue moving forward when the plans fail.
This may be the deepest lesson of nature itself.

Every living system survives because it possesses regenerative capacity.

Forests regenerate.
Soils regenerate.
Wetlands regenerate.
Ecosystems regenerate.
Civilizations regenerate.

Human beings must also learn to regenerate.

The ultimate mission of Songhaï may therefore be much larger than teaching agriculture, technology, or entrepreneurship.
Its deeper mission is to form regenerative human beings.

Men and women with sufficient internal capacity to rebuild life after failure.
To create new possibilities when old possibilities disappear.

To transform uncertainty into opportunity.
To remain rooted in values while adapting to change.
To generate hope where others see only obstacles.
The greatest inheritance we can leave to future generations is therefore not wealth alone.

It is not comfort alone.
It is not possessions alone.
It is the internal capacity to create, adapt, persevere, and flourish regardless of circumstances.

Not a smoother road.

But the strength, wisdom, courage, discipline, resilience, and faith necessary to travel any road.
For in the end, the greatest form of wealth is not what a person possesses.

It is what a person can become.



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