As we celebrate Nelson Mandela day, what comes in to mind is freedom of Africa from colonial rule. Since 1503 when Zanzibar became the first Africa country to be colonized by the Portuguese up to 1994 when South Africa became the last African Nation to free itself from colonial rule, Africa has not only been fighting colonialist but also desiring to gain freedom from many other social, political and economic issues that continue to inhibit its freedom. Many of these issues emanates from us as African countries. We tend to condone what is politically and socially wrong.

Some of these issues include:

- The value of freedom of press – this is very important because the press acts as the voice of the people and when it does lack freedom then oppression creeps in.
- Proliferation of Restrictive Laws – parliament tend to enact and pass restrictive laws making it difficult for citizens to breath
- Entrenched Leaders and the Abuse of Term Limits – many sitting African presidents would love to be declared or declare themselves “life presidents”. This act makes them feel that they are some sort of god and in some instances develop into oppressive leaders.
- Weak Regional Human Rights Mechanisms – many times making a state look like a country in a killing spree, since human dignity is no longer of any value to anyone.
- Economic Competitiveness – this is caused by corruption, poor infrastructure, high transportation costs, government inefficiency, and combined with low levels of education, make Africa an expensive and risky place to do business
- Freedom of expression – this right belong to everyone and it is conjoined to freedom of press, also include lack of free access to information and ideas, and the right to express one's own views freely, citizens cannot even vote properly, let alone take part in ongoing public decision-making that affects their lives.
- Security – large cases of criminal activities is still a major issue in Africa
- Criminal defamation laws – many African presidents have granted themselves immunity, imprisonment and prohibitive fines etc
- Censorship of information that is in the public interest
- Hate speech – usually perpetrated against certain groups or tribes
- Gender equity – discrimination of women
- Unemployment – many African countries continue generating a large number of graduate but
are faced with challenges of creating enough jobs to absorb them
- Marginalization of the poor – e.g. snatching their asserts
- Hailing public health system – a big scenario in Kenya
- Tribal division – sometimes resulting in massacres in Africa
- Poor performance of public service – due to corruption and nepotism
- Population growth – due to lack of access to family planning, cultural issues etc this has become a thorny issue
- Drought and famine – many a times due to destruction of forest and water catchment areas by greedy government officials and citizen who have a don’t care attitude
- Poverty – Addressing the widening gap between the rich and the poor.
- Poor education – many cannot afford education and many can’t read and write
- Hunger – due to poor weather, poverty many are affected by hunger
- Low economic growth - making them rely on donation and further increasing their economic dependence on develop countries
- African industrial development has been stalled since the 1970s.
- Corruption – generating to poverty and poor services to citizens
- Brain drain – many educated and skilled African opt to seek employment in the developed countries in search of “green pastures”
- Endless conflict – genocides, coups, civil unrest etc are the order of the day
- Over reliance on primary exports

The list seems to expand everyday and the freedom we fought for as Africans continue to lose meaning to all of us. May be when we finally manage to tackle all these issues only then we can claim to be free.

Compiled by Grace C. Sitienei - University of Nairobi Library

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