



NEW PATRIOTIC PARTY

Headquarters, Private Mail Bag, Accra-North, Ghana

Tel: +233 0302 264329/ 264288 Fax: +233 0302 229 048

Email: nppdcom@gmail.com Website: www.newpatrioticparty.org

4th February 2015

**SPEECH BY NANA ADDO DANKWA AKUFO-ADDO, 2016
PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE OF THE NEW PATRIOTIC PARTY (NPP),
AT THE COMMEMORATION OF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
DEATH OF DR. J.B. DANQUAH AT THE ACCRA INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE CENTRE, ACCRA, ON 4TH FEBRUARY, 2015**

**ON
"DANQUAH – THE UNFINISHED AGENDA".**

We are here to commemorate the life of one of the most extraordinary persons that the Ghanaian people have ever given to the world. He was born 120 years ago at Bepong in Kwahu, and died in the dungeons of Nsawam Medium Security Prison exactly 50 years ago today. In the 70 years in between, he lived a life truly fulfilled, rich in output, pregnant with significance and extensive in reach. Philosopher, theologian, scholar, jurist, historian, playwright, poet, journalist, freedom fighter, statesman, Joseph Boakye Danquah was a member of the legendary "Big Six", together with Emmanuel Obetsebi Lamptey, Edward Akufo-Addo, Ebenezer Ako Adjei, William Ofori-Atta and Kwame Nkrumah, who are acknowledged as the founding fathers of Ghana.

I dare say that I will not overreach myself when I say that Danquah's memory will continue to live, at least, for as long as this nation Ghana lives.

He gave our country its name, *Ghana*, after years of research into the history and traditions of the people of the Gold Coast. He fought, first for the union of the geographical entity, we now call Ghana, and then he fought for Ghana to be established as a free, independent state. Finally, he fought to defend the liberties of the Ghanaian people, by insisting on a democratic system of government under the rule of law as the best form of government for independent Ghana. It was in the course of this, the last of his herculean labours, that the Ghanaian colossus literally gave his life at Nsawam Prison.

A good insight into his character is given by a quote from a letter he wrote from prison in October 1961 to President Nkrumah, demanding his freedom: "**The turbulent national problems are invariably approached by me with philosophic calm. I am aware that such an approach does not always lead to "popular" or "quick" results, but what it creates becomes a permanent part of history**".

A prolific writer of books, poems, plays, pamphlets, letters and author of more than a few lengthy speeches in the Legislative Council and later in the Legislative Assembly, Danquah's thoughts on

the Ghana he dreamed of, have been fortuitously documented. What comes through clearly from his thoughts is that the Ghana of his dreams is still an unfinished agenda, a work in progress.

SELF-GOVERNMENT

In 1947, giving the keynote address at the launching in Saltpond of Ghana's first political party, the United Gold Coast Convention, UGCC of blessed memory, on that fateful Saturday of 4th August, Danquah articulated his strong belief that the people of the Gold Coast had the right to be free from British rule and Imperialism. He stated: "We have come to take a decision whether our country and people are any longer to tolerate a system of government under which those who are in control of government are not under the control of those who are governed."

In 1952, during a debate on Constitutional Reform in the Legislative Assembly, he declared: "There is no school nor University for liberty or freedom; neither liberty nor freedom is a degree or a diploma to be acquired after years of tears and toil and sweat in a school or in a University. Freedom is a birthright, and liberty is its expression. We desire to be liberated because we know we are entitled to be free..."

Thankfully, that part of his agenda was finished during his lifetime when Ghana obtained its independence from the British in 1957 under Kwame Nkrumah's dynamic leadership.

RULE OF LAW

Danquah was an ardent believer in the rule of law and in a Constitution in which the rights of the individual were secured against the great powers of the State. Today's Ghana is closer to what Danquah and others envisaged: a free, democratic, multiparty state, where the rule of law, respect for human rights, individual liberty and the principles of democratic accountability are generally accepted as the basic principles by which the affairs of state should be organised. As the Nigerian statesman, Nnamdi Azikiwe, predicted five decades ago at Danquah's death: "If the lessons of history mean much, then the sacrifice of West Africa's pioneer scholar, lawyer, journalist, poet, statesman and fighter in the cause of human freedom will not be in vain."

Indeed, his struggles and even his death have not been in vain. We live in a Ghana now where the Supreme Court has express power to pronounce on the constitutionality of legislation and to strike down offending legislation. This is what he unsuccessfully sought from the Supreme Court in 1961 in the case of *Re Akoto*, when he brought an application for an order of *habeas corpus* for the release from detention of the Asantehene's Senior Linguist and founder of the National Liberation Movement, the fearless Baffour Osei Akoto. History has been kinder to him than the Korsah Court was. We now also have a Human Rights 'Fast Track' Court, whose business it is to guard jealously the liberties of Ghanaian citizens, a development of which Danquah would have been proud. We live today in a Ghana where governments can change by ballots and do change by ballots and will change by the ballot. This is the political freedom for which the likes of Danquah, Obetsebi Lamptey, Dombo, Busia, Victor Owusu, Adu Boahen and the others sacrificed.

DEVELOPMENT IN FREEDOM

In 1950, J.B. Danquah stated: "Our duty is to liberate the energies of the people for the growth of a property-owning democracy in this land, with a right to life, and freedom and justice as the

principles to which the government and laws of the land should be dedicated to in order specifically to enrich the lives, property and liberty of each and every citizen.” This became the policy of the United Party, and is today the policy of the New Patriotic Party.

In the eyes of this great man who founded our tradition, a property-owning democracy for a free, independent Ghana could never mean luxury for an elite at the expense of the poor. His vision was to establish a foundation of equal opportunities which will enable the broad spread of the benefits of private ownership to the greatest majority of citizens, not just a rich and privileged few. Danquah’s vision was to build in Ghana a society where every Ghanaian was empowered with access to education, skills and job opportunities to contribute fully to nation building and self-enhancement. This was why the policy of the NPP government from 2001 to 2009 was to clear the ground for the purpose of inviting every Ghanaian to climb the ladder of competitive achievement. We know that, without many players, markets fail to deliver quality at the best price and without everybody on board, our democratic ship risks sinking under its own tilted weight.

This thinking is very much against what is being exhibited currently in Ghana, which permits a small class to have a near monopoly of the wealth of the country. A similar state of affairs in his day made Danquah declare in 1950 in the Legislative Council about the colonial government: “What we want is a Government in touch with the very life of their people, the sorrows, their groans, their wants, their sufferings and their grievances and until we get that government this country will forever continue to agitate and demand for a better Government.”

Ladies and Gentlemen, you would all agree with me that, as things stand today, this part of Danquah’s agenda remains unfinished.

PRESS AND OTHER FREEDOMS

Today, Ghana has a vibrant press and media. In 1930, Danquah set up the Gold Coast’s first successful daily newspaper, the *West African Times*, subsequently the *Times of West Africa*. In his day, he was a fearless critic of Government. At the time of Danquah’s death, there were only a handful of newspapers; the majority were owned by either the State or the CPP and sang the praises of the Government of the Day and President Nkrumah.

Currently, there are nearly 300 radio stations in Ghana, 31 TV stations and about the same number of political newspapers out there every day, including some that seem to be better informed of my medical records than even my doctor and I.

Danquah believed in the freedom of the press and of the individual and went to great lengths to defend these freedoms at a time when many did not think the ordinary people deserved such freedoms.

In a rejoinder to an article written by an Oxford Professor in the Gold Coast Observer on September 2nd, 1948, Danquah stated: “The people of the U.K are happier than the people of this Ghana because of the former’s opportunity to let off steam periodically in general elections. Give Ghana a constitution that affords the Ghanaian an opportunity to let off steam in an ordered periodic manner”. Today, we have such a Constitution, which supports our freedom to vote out a government which we consider bad and vote in a better alternative.

I know that there are some who still harbour the notion that governments would perform better if not encumbered with press and individual freedoms.

Yet, the freedoms we are enjoying cannot be blamed for the economic hardships that we are enduring. Ghana's economy did not shrink in 2014 because of the criticisms that the President and his team of economic managers suffered at the hands of the opposition, trade unions, religious groups, the media or civil society, as a whole.

Our freedoms have nothing to do with a government that happens to be incompetent at governing. In fact, our freedoms must rather act as a check on the excesses of a poor government. It is, therefore, my submission that Ghana now is closer to the Ghana Danquah fought and died for: a nation of freedom. But, we are not there yet. God knows we are not there yet. This is just the beginning. And, I say so as a patriot of incurable optimism. 60 years is but a short time in the life of a country. Our forefathers, indeed, dreamed of a country of freedom, liberty, opportunities, progress and prosperity. That Ghana is still very much a work in progress.

SOCIAL JUSTICE & ENTERPRISE

Danquah believed in social justice and individual enterprise. He stated that the purpose of governmental action should be to enhance "the life, liberty and property of each and every citizen". This meant giving every Ghanaian the opportunity to help build and own, exclusively, part of the country's wealth. And on several occasions he stood up for the right of the citizen. When land was being sourced for the Tema Harbour in 1952, the government of the day acquired far more acres than it would need simply because it didn't want people to make money on selling their own land. Danquah was incredulous and stated in the Legislative Assembly: "Mr. Speaker, he (Ansah Koi) said that if Government acquired a small area for the port, all the land in the neighbourhood would rise in value and individuals would come in and benefit by it and therefore the Government must take the whole area to prevent the individual from acquiring property and benefiting from the development."

We certainly have a lot of unfinished business in setting out our economy to allow the enterprising individual to prosper. The unfinished agenda requires that we move away from the times when big government did everything, to a future when people are entrusted with self-governance. It means following the wisdom of our forefathers by moulding our economic system to suit our particular instincts for individual freedom and social justice.

Danquah criticised the state capitalist model, which was, ironically, relying on revenues raised from the toil of individual, private cocoa farmers of Ghanaian origin. He was clear in his mind that a welfare state could be created with a free market. To him, "the main purpose of a liberal government is to order things as to release the energies of the people for free and great endeavours in every field of life, and not merely in the gathering and eating of food."

LEADERSHIP

Back then, Danquah recognised that the main drawback to progress in Africa was the lack of good leadership. He remarked then to an English politician, "whether black, brown, olive or white, we are all human beings, all equal, and could really have it good if properly led." I, therefore, submit,

Mr Chairman, that the old quest for proper leadership remains in Ghana today a critical part of Danquah's unfinished agenda.

And what Danquah said some 60 years ago about the state of leadership in the Gold Coast resonates today: "Up and down the country the picture is dismal almost anywhere, and when the people of this country ask for a change in the form of Government, what they mean is that that dismal form of administration should be brought to an end."

Danquah pushed for a Ghana where we choose a leader with an agenda that can lead to a more just, more equal, more free, more caring and more prosperous nation. I am confident that Ghana is on the way up to the Danquah ideal; the kind of competitive politics where propaganda will lose its inflated value, and where voting purely on ethnic lines will become as unrewarding as living with no dignity.

CORRUPTION

It is sad that one other sphere of public life on which Danquah spent a lot of his energies remains very much a problem in our country today. Danquah abhorred the misuse of public money under any circumstance. In his day, his typewriter was always handy to write letters to those in authority in Ghana and beyond to see that some wrong was righted. He argued passionately that public money ought to be managed by people who were committed to the country's interests. He declared in the Legislative Assembly one day: "If you are going to entrust public money to persons who are not going to be honest, and who are going to yield to bribery and corruption and who are going to allow themselves to be influenced, then you are not doing good to the country."

I wonder what he would have made of WOYOME, GYEEDA, SUBAH AND SADA and all the reports of the blatant appropriation of public money for private ends today.

One thing I can assure you though, Ladies and Gentlemen, if Danquah were alive today, President John Mahama would be receiving letters or more probably emails from him all the time and so would the Minister of Finance on how the country's resources should be put to better use! As he wrote to Prime Minister Nkrumah on November 4, 1959, "This country can only prove itself fit to govern itself if those primarily charged with that governance first set the supreme example of incorruptibility."

We need to strengthen the institutional mechanisms for dealing with corruption to promote this end. Above all, we need the personal examples of our political leaders, especially the President of the Republic, to demonstrate that public service is exactly that, public service. Those who seek wealth in public service have no place there. Their place is in the private sector where the making of money is a legitimate and necessary activity.

NATIONAL PRIDE AND PATRIOTISM

Danquah loved Ghana. In 1936, when he had completed his research into the name 'Ghana' to replace the Gold Coast, he wrote a poem, "*I love a woman*", and its last verse reads:

*“A black woman
Golden is her personal name,
Guinea’s Golden Lady,
And christened by her God-fathers
But from birth,
Ghana”*

He believed Ghana was capable of being as good as any other country on earth as long as its citizens applied themselves and excelled in their chosen endeavours. And he believed it was up to the Ghanaian to develop Ghana and every citizen had a role to play in this regard.

A few months after launching the UGCC, he declared in the Legislative Council “We must find a way to make our country live as a force and the force must be self-generated and generative – indigenous, so to speak.”

He had no doubt that Ghanaians could make a special contribution to the growth of world civilisation. This is what motivated him to write the first Twi play, “Nyankonsem”, and to contribute to theological debate in his now critically acclaimed work, “The Akan Doctrine of God”. Our and future generations must continue to be inspired by his example.

Danquah loved Ghana. There are hundreds in this room, and millions out there, inside our borders and outside, who share this love for the place where all of us feel completely at home. What is that ultimate statement of patriotism? Most people would say: “My country, right or wrong!” In fact, as the distinguished orator and senator Carl Shurz elaborated: “My country, right or wrong; if right, to be kept right; and if wrong, to be set right.”

That was Danquah’s belief. That should be our purpose. When we make the wrong choices, we must act to set things right. When those put in charge of running the affairs of state get it wrong we must have the courage, the humanity and the selflessness to say so. That is our patriotic duty.

We must continue this part of the agenda.

DANQUAH ON AFRICA

Anyone who sets out to read up on Danquah is bound to discover a lot of surprises; you would discover that the official political history of Ghana has been economical with the truth. Nowhere more so than in the area of African unity. Danquah was not against the integration of Africa as his detractors may want us to believe. As a founding member and 1st president of the West African Students Union (WASU) in 1922, he understood perfectly the essence in linking up the mass of nationalist intellectuals across borders for the common struggle for liberation and economic empowerment. Having also studied at the feet of the great Casely Hayford, his mentor, who founded West Africa’s first nationalist movement, the [National Congress of British West Africa](#), he was also familiar with the collective quest for the people of the region to be free. To him, the strength of regional unity meant having viable parts. Danquah foresaw the wider objective of unity, whether West African or African, as being better fulfilled by first making Ghana work as a role model.

That is why he was adamant that Ghanaians must concentrate first on getting Ghana right. In Professor SKB Asante's 2007 J B Danquah Memorial Lectures, he referred to a telling incident. At a meeting of the Working Committee of the UGCC, to confirm Nkrumah's employment as the General Secretary of the nationalist movement, on 29 December 1947, Danquah cautioned his younger colleague, "This is a Gold Coast national movement" and not a "West African movement; to bring all these people together is not an easy thing. We want to concentrate on making the Gold Coast a nation to serve as the base for launching the liberation of the rest of West Africa. Are you prepared to accept our policy?" He was soon proved right, when Ghana's role as the first West African state to gain independence inspired a domino of independence victories across the West African region within three years.

I have no doubt that, today, he would approve strongly our policy and determination to make of the West African regional community, ECOWAS, a genuine regional market. Already a market of some 350 million people, with the potential of 500 million people by 2035, i.e. in 20 years time, can provide immense opportunities for Ghanaian enterprise and ingenuity. We have every interest in taking the lead to realise the goal of regional integration.

ENHANCING GOVERNANCE AND ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT

Anyone who claims Danquah's inheritance must necessarily undertake his passionate belief in the proper running of this country. Two things stand out in stark relief from our recent history, especially for those of us in the NPP who have the solid foundation of good governance of the Kufuor era on which to build.

We have as a matter of urgency to redress the balance of power in the one-sided relationship between the Executive and the Legislature; that is between the President and the Parliament, so that we can enhance the capacity of Parliament to exercise effectively its oversight responsibilities over and control of the public purse. The reckless expenditure of recent years demands it.

Secondly, to realise Danquah's oft-cited goal of policy that will release the energies of the people, the time is ripe to take democratic principles fully into local governance. Local officials must become accountable to their local electorates. District Chief Executives should be directly elected if need be on partisan lines, just like Members of Parliament and the President. It will strengthen local self-confidence and initiative.

As the presidential candidate of the NPP, I have been asked what the first priority of an Akufo-Addo government would be and my answer was straight to the point: bring back macro-economic stability to the management of the economy. Without it, all our efforts will get down to naught. Danquah realised this long ago and I should at this stage share another of Danquah's sayings from the Legislative Council with you. He is talking here about the Colonial Government's management of the economy. "Now I say, Sir, that the Government has been extravagant in the manner of handling the country's finances because never once does it seem to consider the question of the country's economy. The very word economy appears to have disappeared completely from the dictionary and vocabulary of the present Government."

Does this in any way, Ladies and Gentlemen, sound familiar?

Petrol prices remain high today, only because our government did not have the competence to keep our currency stable. We can't afford to buy crude oil to power our lights because of the high

cost of buying the dollar in an economy saddled with suffocating national debt. And this is at a time when the world price of crude oil has fallen drastically. And, we all know what high fuel prices mean even to the Ghanaian who does not own a car. Such is the situation that £1, which was exchanging for GH¢1.75 in December 2008 is now fetching GH¢5. Such is the situation that the price of kerosene, which was GH¢3.15 per gallon when the NPP handed over power in January 2009, is GH¢13.14 per gallon today.

Commented [G1]: Please check the current price, and let us also exchange the dollar for the pound

We need to bring back confidence in the economy so that businesses and families can plan their budgets properly. What the NPP will do differently is that we will bring back that confidence. We will ensure fiscal discipline on how taxpayers' monies are spent and ensure macroeconomic stability. Investors, domestic and foreign, will only be interested in Ghana when they can be assured of the bankability of investing in our economy. We will move away from high budget deficits and reckless borrowing because we know of the benefits of fiscal responsibility – low inflation, reduced interest rates, exchange rate stability, avoiding HIPC and making savings for social and capital expenditure.

Danquah chastised the Colonial Government for its penchant of always looking to taxation as a means of raising revenue for the State. "This government has been very careless of the highest public interest. They do not seem to care who is to be taxed or who is not to be taxed, so long as the people pay the tax and the money flows in." Recent taxes on condoms and cutlasses come readily to mind.

We must move away from focusing on taxation to finance high deficits to a focus on production. This means providing incentives (including tax incentives) to enhance production and reducing the cost of doing business. We have to speed up the policy of linking every Ghanaian to an address on a national database to help us plan properly and spread thinner and wider the burden of raising taxes.

To say that Danquah was way ahead of his time in his thinking and approach to life is to say the obvious. He saw the need for Ghana to build an economy that was self-reliant and to move away from being a primary producer. Here he is, in a statement he made to the Legislative Council on roads and bridges in 1949, and I am not quite sure how many of us today look at infrastructure in such a comprehensive manner:

"Frankly neither Roads and Bridges nor Water Supplies nor Social Welfare can be said to be wealth-producing in the sense that Adam Smith would speak of the wealth of a nation. No doubt roads and bridges for transportation of goods are a means to the production of wealth, but if these roads are used only for importing and transporting imported consumer goods in what sense can they be said to be wealth-producing?"

I was excited to discover that Danquah had a dream, before Nkrumah returned from his studies abroad, of developing the Volta Basin not only for light, water and power but also to exploit its vast mineral resources to benefit the people of Ghana. This is the question he posed to the Colonial Secretary at Question Time in the Legislative Council on September 17th, 1947: "**Dr Danquah:** Would Government consider the appointment of a National Committee to enquire into the possibilities of a Volta Basin Corporation to develop the resources of the river for light, water and power, and to exploit for public benefit the vast mineral resources of the Volta Basin?" "**Colonial Secretary:** In the present circumstances, no Sir." A few years later, he argued unsuccessfully against the Nkrumah Government negotiating a deal for the Volta Basin Project that would not include the exploitation of Ghana's bauxite for the proposed aluminum smelting plant. We have a

lot of work to do to exploit our mineral resources and add value to them. In much the same way, we would be following in Danquah's path when we add value to our petrochemicals and bauxite resources. Adding value to these resources, manufacturing, i.e. making things, developing the appropriate skills of our population – these are the paths to our future prosperity and jobs for our youth. We have to travel down them and do so now, not tomorrow, not the day after tomorrow, but now.

CONCLUSION

Even though Danquah never exercised executive authority in the State, his influence on Ghanaian history has been truly astonishing and can be felt in virtually all areas of our national life – constitutional, cultural, economic, intellectual, political and religious. Several key institutions of our country owe their origin directly to his work – the Cocoa Marketing Board; the University of Ghana, Legon; the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi; the Bank of Ghana; Ghana Commercial Bank; and Accra Sports Stadium, amongst others.

Despite the passionate controversies that engulfed his life, he remained remarkably free of personal animus and hatreds. A memorable occasion arose when, soon after his release from his first period of detention in 1962, he decided, much against the advice of family and friends, to present himself, as a founding member of the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences, at the ceremony marking the award by the then Soviet State of the Lenin Peace Prize to President Kwame Nkrumah. He found no difficulty in exchanging pleasantries at the event with the man who had until recently been his gaoler, because to him the award was an honour for all Ghanaians, and not just Nkrumah. He thought his presence was necessary to make that point.

We need to take a cue from him. It is time that we moved on from the understandable bitterness that continues to fill the hearts of many who love his work and contribution because of the cruel circumstances of his death. Let me, on behalf of lovers of Danquah, especially his family of which I am proud to be one, use this occasion, which commemorates the 50th anniversary of his tragic death, to forego all feelings of bitterness and to say unreservedly to Kwame Nkrumah, his family and his supporters that we forgive what took place on that day. Let us promote a spirit of reconciliation between all of us for the sake of Mother Ghana, her progress and prosperity.

Gregarious and charismatic personality with a compelling presence, he was a man of exceptional charm and wit. Great lover of life, he was drawn to all things fine and beautiful. Indeed, the women he married at different stages of his life – Mabel Dove, Comfort Carboo and finally Elizabeth Varden – were all hailed as amongst the great beauties of their age. That was him – only the best was good enough.

In a petition Danquah sent to President Nkrumah a few weeks before his death in detention, he composed a poem, "A Song of Glory" which befits the theme of this lecture, "Danquah – the Unfinished Agenda". The verse reads:

*"Glorious Ghana, arise and shine
Thy star and thy eight regions' stars,
Arise and shine, with God's guidance,
To crown thy spheres of high command
We praise and sing "hurrah hurrah"
For Ghana's glory of the past,
Today's challenge is greater still,*

Arise, with energy, to gain that glory.”

So it was that his beloved widow, Elizabeth Danquah, made the following inscription on his tombstone:

“Not lost, but gone before and departing, leaves footprints in the sands of time”

May God continue to bless him.

Joseph Kwame Kyeretwere Boakye Danquah, your place in the Ghanaian pantheon is secure. The Ghanaian people, whom you so loved, will never forget you.

Rest in perfect peace.

God bless Ghana, God bless Africa!!