

SPEECH BY KOJO YANKAH, FOUNDER/EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN OF PAN AFRICAN HERITAGE WORLD  
MUSEUM AT THE SOD-CUTTING CEREMONY – MAY 5, 2021

Your Excellency the President, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo,  
Nana Chairman,  
Nananom  
Ministers & Members of Parliament,  
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,  
Heads of Missions, Organizations & Corporate bodies,  
Special Guests, Ladies & Gentlemen.

Almost a year ago, in September of last year 2020, an idea nurtured over a decade saw the light at a global virtual launch that was witnessed by over 3000 people across the world. Thanks to His Excellency the President of Ghana who addressed the occasion, expressed his support and invited his colleagues and the pan African community to rally behind it.

I am happy to report that since then, I have been invited on over 100 radio and television stations and more than 50 zoom meetings throughout the world to talk about the Pan African Heritage World Museum. The enthusiastic response to this project is immeasurable and it assures me and my colleagues on the team that there could not be a better time.

Your Excellency the President, Ladies & Gentlemen,  
We chose this day, declared by UNESCO as African World Heritage Day, for this ceremony, to emphasize the importance we give to our mission. We people of African descent have been separated for far too long. Our Civilization was trampled upon and deliberately destroyed. Our legacy was stolen, and our self-confidence dimmed by paralyzing accounts of our past, and even our present. And that is why we are fond of disregarding the wise sayings and indigenous knowledge of our own people and quote eloquently from sources alien to us for our daily living. We call our traditions and practices 'fetish' and 'savage'. We see ourselves as 'condemned' and cursed, as if we were not created in God's image.

It is no secret that we people of African descent do not know ourselves; we do not trust each other, and we sometimes hesitate to call each other 'my brother' or 'my sister'. In some other situations, we simply hate each other. We who were separated and robbed of our wealth and dignity during the period of slavery and later at just one meeting in 1884 now see ourselves as competitors and rivals, going for each other's throat. Artificial borders have divided us so badly that even our media perpetuate that hatred for each other. And worst of all, miseducation on both sides of the Atlantic has blinded us to the beauty of our common heritage as one people with a common destiny - our Ubuntu, Umoja, and Togetherness Principles of living.

The Pan African Heritage World we are creating aims to bridge the gap that has widened for over 400years. We seek to create a Pan African Heritage City to teach, to heal and to inspire. We have an Academic Council of eminent scholars from all corners of the Pan African world that is authenticating the history, art and culture that we will share in our galleries. We have the best Museologists and scholars forming our Curatorial Board who are building our Digital Museum ahead of the physical one we will Commission in 2023. We boast of competent Herbal Plant scientists from Africa and the Diaspora who are currently selecting 10,000 species from across the Pan African community to nurture in our Herbal Plant Village in our Museum Complex.

On another two-acre plot, we will replicate a selected number of African Kingdoms, ancient and modern, and showcase their history, art and culture and learn from their skills, craftsmanship and indigenous knowledge. That will also be the location for African cuisines to draw our appetite for variety of African dishes. So you can have a Nigerian breakfast, Ethiopian lunch and Caribbean dinner.

Your Excellencies,

We are creating in addition, a Central Park for Concerts, Festivals, and Games. We should celebrate our strength and prowess in entertainment, sports, and festivals - events that will bring all of us together to learn and inspire each other.

Our one-acre Heroes Park is one for inspiration. We have a committee listing our past heroes and heroines who are hidden from history books - not just political leaders, but achievers in art, science, technology, sports, entertainment and literature.

Now, looking up to the future: our youth will enjoy every single part of this Museum Complex, but most of all, our Innovation and Creativity Hub where, after going round the entire city, they will have the opportunity to build on new ideas for the future.

Accommodation is going to be provided in this city, not only in the Herbal Plant Village but also around our University campus which is adjacent to the complex.

In our master plan, we have space for a Film Studio, Writers Retreat, and a landing pad for light planes and helicopter.

And by the way, our city is going to a Green City, relying more on renewable energy.

Definitely we will need more than \$50million, above our original estimates, but we are certain we will exceed our target for donations.

Mr President,

Ladies & Gentlemen, I stand here to thank my dedicated International Board of Trustees, the Academic Council, the Curatorial Board and the Executive Council, all of who bought into my vision and have brought our international NGO this far.

I wish to thank Architect George Wireko Brobbey of Ghana who did the original concept, but more particularly James Inedu-George of Nigeria whose designs are now the talk of town. (Rise for a bow, George, and welcome from Nigeria). I must appreciate Rap artist Okyeame Kwame who is spreading the message of the project, and has offered to stage two concerts to raise funds for the project before the end of this year. Similarly, my love to young Gambian, Ousman Touray, who is our youth ambassador and sharing our message worldwide. Thank you, most graciously, Brother Julian Adomako-Gyimah, for your incredibly astounding support to our museum's construction.

Finally, I would like to assure the people of Ghana and all other regions of Africa, including the diaspora that this is a project for the entire world, dedicated especially to the Youth. We believe that everyone needs to unlearn and relearn from stories written by people of African descent which will be exhibited here. I am seeing in my mind's eye new songs, new compositions, new films, new books, new inventions, and new architects coming out of our modest contribution to world civilization. Should the self-confidence of the average ordinary African child be raised for the future as a result of the living experience we are going to create here, the expectations of myself and my team would have been met. As we say and share with you, it is only our story that can shape our own future. For how long shall we live in borrowed robes ?

