

Honorable Dr. Ida Hoffman's presentation at the Holocaust Memorial & Tolerance Center of Nassau County, NY seminar on Sunday May 22, 2016. The seminar was titled "**Africa to Auschwitz: Germany, Genocide and Denial**" and brought together Holocaust survivors and descendants of the Nama and Ovaherero genocides of 1904-1908.

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Director of ceremony, organizers of this very important event, ladies and gentlemen!

I am standing in front of you today to bring to the international world the **controversial** and horrifying issue of the German Genocide destruction of 1904-1908 in Namibia. The task invokes images of suffering, abuse, killings, hangings, rapes, and lynchings of innocent Namibian men, women, and children at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century from **1904-1908** at the hands of the German army. But I have to do it. Not all tasks are easy and pleasant but they must be done, if justice is what we are looking for.

Between 1904 and 1908 a series of wars were fought by the indigenous people of Namibia against the invading German colonial forces. Germany landed on the Namibian soil with 14,000 soldiers and a notorious and infamous German army general called General Lotha von Trotha, and the destruction of the Namibian people began.

The Nama and Ovaherero and indeed the rest of the Namibians for that matter, should not regard towns in Namibia such as Swakopmund, Lüderitz, Shark Island, and Shaloten as just another town or towns in Namibia that are known to tourist, especially the German tourist, who will never miss it when they go to Namibia.

Some of them go to Namibia in remembrance of the good old days of Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm II, who sent General Von Trotha and others to execute the extermination orders. They even refer to Swakopmund as "Kleine Deutschland". Is that how these towns should be seen?

Swakopmund and Lüderitz have different meanings for me. It means ocean, fishing, dunes, desert and so many more but above all it also means a graveyard to me, where many of my people who survived the atrocities on the main land were brought there and thrown into the notorious Swakopmund and Lüderitz concentration camps, where so many of my people have died, whose graves are seen by those visiting those places.

Ladies and Gentlemen, these are the graves where the skulls that we fetched from Germany in the year 2011 were taken from, where some of the headless bodies were dumped in, after their heads were cut off to be used in Germany as "specimen" by Germany.

It is there in Swakopmund and Lüderitz where our women were forced to boil these heads and then to remove the softly boiled flesh before the skulls were packed in wooden boxes for experiment purpose in Germany.

Some of these people were known to the women who were handling them because they were their husbands, children, relatives, friends, or people they just knew.

What can be more disgusting than that? But that was what our women had to do in those times. They had no choice because failing to do so, the **EXTERMINATION ORDER** would apply. They will be shot dead, in fulfillment of that order.

It was there in Lüderitz and Swakopmund that our women were forced to dig the graves of their loved ones that were killed through the **EXTERMINATION ORDER**; while the German soldiers were standing around with guns ready to shoot the women.

It was there in Lüderitz and Swakopmund where many of the Ovaherero and Nama people were shipped to Cameroon and Togo and where many died of malaria and other tropical diseases shortly after their arrival.

It was there in Lüderitz and Swakopmund where many of the Nama and Ovaherero people were taken to Shark Island near Lüderitz after it was realized that the concentration camp was getting fuller by the day.

In Lüderitz many died due to the extremely cold conditions and their bodies were thrown into the sea to feed the sharks and seals. Some of the remains of these people are having chains on them, having been discovered by divers.

Many of the people who were taken to Lüderitz from Swakopmund worked on the railway line between Lüderitz and Keetmanshoop under harsh conditions of the Namib Desert which caused death to many of our people.

It was from Swakopmund where the Nama prisoners of war were sent to Shark Island and where the bodies of seventeen (17) of them who died, including that of a one year old Nama girl, were decapitated by Dr. Bofinger, the concentration camp doctor on Shark Island, and were sent to Germany.

One of these heads belonged to the great grandfather of Chief David Frederick of Bethanie. It was from there where Ovaherero group of prisoners under Chief Manase Tjiseki was taken to South Africa to work in the mines.

It was there in Namibia in Swakopmund and Lüderitz where all the German Commissioners from Goring; Leutwein, Von Francois, Von Trotha, Von Estorf, Governor Lampe of Gobabis; Lieutenant Ralph Zurn of Okahandja and many more landed with their tools of war and also the poison that was put in the water points at Ozombuzovindima. They all landed there and from there they went to different places and directions throughout Namibia.

Therefore Ladies and Gentlemen, Swakopmund and Luderitz, seen from the perspective of those events should not be seen as a place or town only of pleasure during the Christmas season and other vacations but should also be seen as places that are built on the bones of our people who died during the 1904-1908 war of resistance.

It should be seen and remembered as a place where atrocities were committed against the Nama and Ovaherero people for no other crimes than the fact that they refused to be colonized by the Germans.

The atrocities committed against our people by imperial Germany are what we say is **GENOCIDE** and for which we **DEMAND REPARATIONS** and an official apology from the German Government.

The Late Paramount Chief of the Ovaherero Dr. Kuaima Riruako tabled a motion in Parliament of the Republic of Namibia which was unanimously accepted and endorsed as **GENOCIDE** and called for **REPARATION**. So there is nothing new about the use of these words and that is how history and historians have it.

It seems to me that the only people who still believe or refuse to acknowledge that their forefathers committed these atrocities are the Namibian Germans. Maybe they have not read the German Colonial history of Namibia. It would seem history has left them behind, what a pity!

To pretend otherwise is tantamount to a rebellion against common sense, because the whole world knows about the Ovaherero and Nama anyway.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The time has come that we should stand up and ask for how long should we continue begging for talks with the German Government.

The international laws of the UN guide me in this objective, to endeavor for justice for the victims of the German Genocide.

The **EXTERMINATION ORDER** against the Herero and Nama is explicit and the German troops executed the order with brutality and impunity. On October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1904, General Lothar von Trotha issued the following **EXECUTION ORDER AGAINST THE HERERO**:

*“I, the great general of the German soldiers, send this letter to the Hereros. The Hereros are German subjects no longer. They have killed, stolen, cut off the ears and other parts of the body of wounded soldiers, and now are too cowardly to want to fight any longer. I announce to the people that whoever hands me one of the chiefs shall receive 1,000 marks and 5,000 marks for Samuel Maharero. The Herero nation must now leave the country. If it refuses, I shall compel it to do so with the ‘long tube’ (cannon). Any Herero found inside the German frontier, with or without a gun or cattle, will be executed. I shall spare neither women nor children. I shall give the order to drive them away and fire on them. Such are my words to the Herero people.”*

On April 22, 1905 **THE EXTERMINATION ORDER AGAINST THE NAMA** was issued as follows:

*“The Nama who chooses not to surrender and lets himself be seen in German territory will be shot, until all are exterminated. Those who, at the start of the rebellion, committed murder against whites or have commanded that whites be murdered have, by law, forfeited their lives. As for the few not defeated, it will fare with them as it fared with the Herero, who in their blindness also believed that they could make war successfully on the powerful German Emperor and the great German people. I ask you, where are the Herero today?”*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

These two extermination orders are stark in their brutal intent and ruthless killings.

As the descendants of the victims of the German Genocide we demand from the Federal Government of Germany for the purposes of Justice:

**1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The Federal Government of Germany should declare an official acknowledgement to the descendants of the victims of the German Genocide, and to clearly admit that indeed the massacre of 1904-1908 of the indigenous Namibians was indeed **GENOCIDE**.

**2. APOLOGY**

The Federal Government of Germany to be required to extend an official and sincere apology to the descendants of the victims of the German Genocide, and to clearly admit that indeed the massacre of 1904-1908 of the indigenous Namibians was indeed **GENOCIDE**.

**3. ACCOUNTABILITY**

The Federal Government of Germany to be accountable for the German genocide of the innocent Namibian people.

**4. REPATRIATION**

The repatriation of all human skulls, bones, and all other human remains taken to Germany for dubious racist science initiatives is a prerogative for all dealings in this issue of German Genocide justice; back to the Namibian soil; the Land of the Brave

**5. RECONCILIATION**

There can be no justice without reconciliation. And as Namibia and Germany seek justice, reconciliation is a requirement to pave the way for justice.

**6. ROUND TABLE**

A round table needs to be called in order to bring all the stakeholders of the Genocide issue around the same **discussion**, for them to work on their differences and work out a common solution. The primary participants of the round table are to be

- a) The Namibian government
- b) The NAMA/HERERO descendants of the victims of the German Genocide.
- c) And the German government as the responding party, and as the stakeholder which is called upon to put the wrongs right done by the genocide.

German officials including parliamentarians and Ministers have been in agreement with us that this brutal massacre of innocent Namibians is genocide. Not only that, they have taken the issue to their Parliament, the Bundestag, to acknowledge it as genocide and to

take it to its logical conclusion. From their part, the Germans endeavor to include the descendants who are also the victims in all relevant discussions of the German Genocide.

Can there be any doubt in anyone's mind that the intent and indeed aftermaths of these extermination orders and their atrocities and results are collective **GENOCIDE**. Fellow Namibians, the Germans were genocidal against the Namibians, for no other reason but for their own country.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

**ANY TALK ABOUT THE GERMAN GENOCIDE IS ABOUT US.**

**ANY AND ALL DISCUSSION ABOUT US CANNOT BE WITHOUT US.**

**ANY DISCUSSIONS ABOUT US, BUT WITHOUT US IS REGARDED AS AGAINST US THE DESCENDANTS**

Since the German government, through high ranking government officials at different platforms, admitted its "historical and moral responsibility" and for the colonial atrocities and genocide committed by its predecessor colonial government; the only sensible way forward is for it to officially acknowledge.

And subsequently open a dialogue with all the bonafide stakeholders by way of negotiations as was the case when the German Government, the State of Israel and representatives of the Jews from all over the world. All these were equal stakeholders in the negotiations for the Jewish Holocaust.

In our case we do not want to re-invent the wheel; the same must also apply to our situation. Any evasion will never put this matter to rest nor can the German Government and or their representatives in Namibia hope on forcing us to become silent; for we will never rest until justice is done to the Nama and Ovaherero.

**I THANK YOU!**