

- **Honorable Ministers,**
- **Governor of the Eastern Province,**
- **Board Chairperson of Agahozo Shalom youth village Laurie Franz,**
- **Executive Director of the Agahozo Shalom youth village, Danielle Burenstein,**
- **Seth Merrin, CEO of Liquidnet and husband to the late Anne Heyman,**
- **ONE UN Resident Coordinator,**
- **Agahozo Shalom staff and students,**
- **Members of the Rwandan business community,**
- **Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,**

Good evening,

I am so happy to be back at this village. I was here about 4 years ago. It is always rejuvenating to be in the company of such promising and vibrant youth. How fortunate you, are to be tucked away amid these beautiful hills 50 kilometers from the capital, just focusing on building a solid future with few interruptions. It may seem like you are disconnected from the rest of the world, but tonight we have seen that being in this environment equals exceptional talent.

Pardon my bias, but I understand that last year's graduating class was named the: 'Imbutu' grade. The education they received here has taken them to different corners of the world; including some of the finest universities and institutions. It

is encouraging to know that seeds of achievement and transformation are being planted and spread, through the students' hard work and the school's commitment to its mission.

I encourage you to think of yourselves as a community of change makers. Understand that every opportunity demands you to be the very best of yourselves; you must always strive for the highest manifestation of your talents and realize that excellence will always be expected of you.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I wish to take a moment and pay special tribute, to a dear friend Anne Heyman. One of the caring spirits whose dream was to support our country restore the rhythm of life: a natural and beautiful rhythm that was disrupted, during the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi. We honor Anne's noble vision of creating a space where both healing and learning could happen – the Agahozo Shalom Youth Village.

Anne treated all the students in this village as her own children. This explains why she is known to most of you as mom, others grandma, I think we can call her sister. I have no doubt that if she were here with us; her heart would be filled with pride, as any mother's would. The Agahozo Shalom youth village was founded on an ideal, that I believe is important for us to aspire to, especially the young ones: *Tikkun Olam*, a Hebrew phrase meaning *repairing* or *healing* the world.

Repairing the world is about leaving this place we call home better than we found it; this is humanity's shared responsibility. By establishing this village, Anne and her husband Seth Merrin along with all those who supported them, have done a considerable amount to repair this world. We hope the youth can borrow a leaf from the inspiring founder, and use the education and skills you are acquiring, to guide you in restoring harmony to our world.

You can think about ways to uplift other vulnerable youth, you can introduce a ground breaking invention, you can be a great leader, there is no limit to the good you can do young people.

The last time I visited you, I shared this Kinyarwanda saying that I would like to re-emphasize: **'Uburere bwiza bucisha imfura mu mwijima'** which in English can be loosely translated to: **'A strong foundation supports you to weather any storm'**.

If you take full advantage of the holistic educational approach: the intellectual growth, the healing and emotional component, and the exposure to practical skills, there is no doubt that this community of change makers will deliver no less than the incredible.

Distinguished audience,

Allow me to acknowledge the heartbeat of Rwanda's economy – members of our private sector here present. We are pleased that you have chosen to commit resources, to give back to our community's precious children.

Tonight's '*Stand up and be counted*' event is fitting as we just celebrated 20 years since Rwanda was liberated. Rwandans resolved to continue standing for dignity, by working towards economic liberation. Supporting Agahozo Shalom youth village is a symbol that we can and should support our very own and thus guard this jewel we call Rwanda.

If we make this a culture, together we can help prevent the negative effects of orphan hood. We can sustain valuable spaces such as this youth village and even create even more. We can make sure that there will never be a shortage of love, care, growth and mentorship for all our youth, to benefit from.

As I end my remarks, I wish to thank Agahozo Shalom for inviting me to be part of this emotional and formidable connection between captains of industry, youthful energy and the beautiful ideal of restoring life. In closing I would like the audience to consider these few questions:

- As Rwandans, will we all '*Stand up and be counted*' as drivers of our own destiny?
- Will the Agahozo Shalom youth '*Stand up and be counted*' as a generation of confident and critical thinkers?

- Will the business community 'Stand up and be counted' as a source of steady support, as we steer Rwanda towards economic liberation?

Thank you for your kind attention and I wish the fundraising efforts a great success.