



## **Essay Topic: How Africa can stand together to end the COVID-19 pandemic.**

### **Winning Essay: Africa the Elephant**

Who can fathom the depth of Africa's entire potential? Standing before a multitude of enthusiastic young leaders from different races and ethnicity like a preacher addressing his congregants, I confidently hit hard saying Africa is the elephant. Descending on this to the understanding of those from the grassroots, I began expatiating on how Africa can stand together to end the COVID-19 pandemic as six blind men describing an elephant from the parts they touched.

The first blind man described the elephant as a wall; from the skin. As a wall, our continent can have stellar success in combating the COVID-19 pandemic, if we visualize her as being whole; a united indivisible continent endowed with a myriad of resources. I am convinced we need to zoom into integrating network models within different blocs which will go miles in promoting a nexus for consolidation and coordination of resources, connecting them within the trade blocs thereby boosting intra-African commerce and development amidst the pandemic. The creation of a suitable central backbone within the different blocs is essential. This will aid in decision making, the creation of a common agreement within blocks on how trade routes will be reopened, quantifying the financial risk within the sub-region, and the monitoring of migration patterns across borders to track spread or suspected cases. Due to the interconnectedness of African countries like blocks of a wall, teamwork and active involvement are required between government, health experts, private individuals, civil society, academia, business communities to end COVID-19.

The second touched the tusk and cried: "the Elephant is like a spear!" Africa must promote responsible governance while spurring solutions adaptable to the continent's local conditions making them "African owned solutions". Effective inclusive adaptable policies must ensure vaccines are made available to all through lobbying and inclusion of all at the decision-making table. We must dig deep in abrogating policies that vitiate the importation of the right vaccine into the continent or its production by competent African pharmaceutical industries. Regional warehouse hubs, medical equipment centers, health services, and experts in health and disease control with specific roles should be distributed equitably. In order to promote the recovery of African finance system, world leaders should implement debt standstill arrangements or deadline extension for debt repayment.

To the third who touched the trunk, the Elephant is like a snake. Africa should be wise to grasp hidden opportunities that go a long way to advance her while fighting the pandemic. We must not depend solely on international funds for our projects but generate our wealth through the engagement of private and public investors. Again, acting in wisdom, we must build trust as a united community, working in clusters, sharing hope to the population such that uptake of the vaccine is promoted and health misinformation is drastically reduced through evidence-based information. I am convinced collective preventive measures such as preventing imported cases, close monitoring of border-related activities among others will reduce the surge in infected cases and deaths.

Feeling the elephant's knee, the fourth blind man described it as a tree. With deep-seated roots, Africa will remain strong and unperturbed by the storms the virus has brought if continuously united. There is a need to fight resource and cultural chauvinism still prevalent in Africa by promoting deeply rooted homemade solutions during the pandemic such that sustainable fruits are borne after the pandemic.

At the crux of the issue, investment in the education of the population is key in ending the pandemic. Educative information dissemination through TV programs, radios, cartoons, distance learning platforms, social media should be incorporated to reduce the opportunity and equality gap that has been widened with schools closed down. To avoid guesstimates and obtain reliable data, there is a need for proactive reshaping and revamping of the research agenda within the continent. Equipping research centers will mean more authentic data and research results which will better inform leaders on practical adaptable inclusive solutions to end the pandemic.

Having touched the ear, the fifth blind man said: "the Elephant is like a fan!" Fanning the flames and making the continent more alluring amidst the pandemic, health heroes heading to the most remote interiors to sensitise and vaccinate the population to end COVID-19 across the continent should be protected, celebrated, and awarded. Also, awarding research grants to researchers for innovative research for this health challenge will provide evidence-based results needed to combat fear and panic in the population. There is a need to promote preventive measures through the use of posters, artworks, comics, songs, and dramas. Leveraging free trade agreement such that there is decreased borrowing, debts and economic losses could also fan the flames of African economies while combating the pandemic. Innovations and technologies by young entrepreneurs providing indigenous solutions to prevent the spread of the virus like solar hand wash machines among others should be promoted.

The sixth touched the swinging tail and screamed: "the Elephant is very like a rope!" The Africa we want to end the virus will only come from eliminating stereotypes. As Africans walk in the light of creative altruism rather than destructive egoism, we must not be improvident. Global partnerships should be promoted to ensure and enhance knowledge and data sharing, availability of vaccines in a secured and safe environment. There is a call for flexibility and adaptation to the changing environment by all. If we remain united, outstanding, and strong such that no one is left behind amidst the pandemic, we must explore the unexpected gems and the surfeit of unexploited resources our continent Africa possesses.

With a beautiful and holistic blend of the above views, Africa will be unfettered from COVID 19 and our continent will be an unsullied home sustained by enjoyable livelihood for all. I conclude by concurring with His excellency Kwame Nkrumah's assertion that "we must find an African solution to our problems and this can only be found in African unity."

