

As Nigeria's democracy has lost its majesty

By Martins Oloja

Who should we hold responsible for demonization of democracy the iconic Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, once called 'dem don crazy', 'demonstration of craze...' in this country? It's a time to speak truth not only to power that the majesty of democracy has been defiled. And so it is a time to ask whether democracy can be sustained to deliver the much-needed development to the most populous black nation on earth. Yes, it is a time to evaluate democracy we have been monitoring for 25 years because the main strength of its majesty, the rule of law, has become the rule of man, indeed the rule of only the ministers in the temple of justice. They are the ones who now determine who should occupy elective offices after elections. The Bar and Bench powers are the electorate, after all. And so we do not need to read law before awareness that where man alone rules without the law, there will be chaos and underdevelopment.



majesty of democracy in this place. And here are the gifts of the strong man some World Bank's development experts have just tagged "Civic Incompetence": He is a sycophant. He does not like pen pushers who speak truth to power. He does not read. He is not discernible. He is perpetually afraid of any governing cabal that is ruthless and doesn't tolerate the rule of law.

The prominent but insignificant man Complacency is perpetually filled with Epicurean spirit (loves pleasure and good life). He likes a little learning and so is ruled by intuition, not by learning or knowledge. Oh, he does not like the power that knowledge gives. He worships mediocrity in all his ways. He does not like anyone to peddle any excellence spirit in his domain. He doesn't like to see law enforcement agents. The only adorable thing he likes is media trial of corrupt people where suspects are named and shamed before investigations. And so the offspring of the limited man,

As a student, I read Chief Obafemi Awolowo's book on, "The travails of democracy and the rule of law" but I did not understand the significance of that classic until now. I have covered this dispensation of democracy as a senior journalist for almost 26 years, (since 1999). But I am beginning to conclude from its performance indices that this house (of democracy) has fallen not only because of the effects of those who ruled the country as "Federal Republic of the Nigerian Army" as general Chris Ali, former Army Chief captured in his book. Democracy has failed us in Nigeria not only because of the effects of the unfavorable political economy of press freedom. Democracy appears to have lost its brand reputation not only because some of "soldiers of fortune" conspired and annulled our best election. Let's do some introspection before the next 2027 plunge. Behold, the man who should be held responsible for the collapse of democracy is called, "Mr. Complacency"!

Complacency are always reinforced in the system by the "economic man" who also has a cousin called the "administrative man". Both men are not patriots, after all. They also do not care about gains that democracy can bring to the people. They work only for the gods of their bellies. And worse still, his expectations of the governing system are very low. According to a managerial economist, Ripunjay Tiwari, the "economic man" is purpose-driven. He is rational in that he can order his various preferences according to his hierarchy of values and then actually make his choice to maximize some desired value. To the "economic man", there is complete awareness of various alternatives, and the outcome of each alternative can be identified so that the alternative with the best outcome is selected. It assumes that there is no limit on the collection of information and its processing. That is the way of the "economic man" who benefits from an atmospherics of the main man, Complacency. In the same vein, the "administrative man" is a relation of the "economic man" in the kingdom of "Complacency". According to Herbert Simon, a policy guru, the "administrative man" has only a limited, simplified view of problems confronting his society because he has only limited information. Besides, he does not have full knowledge of all the possible alternative solutions to the problems and their outcomes. What is more, he does not have capacity to navigate the competitive environment and technical information therein. Therefore, human and organizational limitations make it impossible for people to make perfectly rational decisions where the "economic man" and the "administrative man" dominate in a society ruled by Complacency.

Yes, Complacency, also known as "contentment", "gratification", "pleasure", "civility", "courtesy". Really, the God of man, not any man of God, please, has revealed that yes; "Complacency" is the man, the stronghold that has ruined the

There are always 'boundaries to rationality' in such a milieu. Sadly, these men always seize power at the center because democracy is fragile here. That is why we have to sound the alarm that Mr. Complacency has to wake up from political stupor that the "economic man" and "the administrative man"



would like us to remain in this age that the skilled young ones are daily disrupting with social technologies that help them to make progress. I would like to challenge all the young ones below 40's to be interested in this country that democracy and its drivers have relegated to one of the poorest on earth. Let no young one be deceived by the common public enemy called Complacency ruling everywhere you go in Nigeria. This democracy that has survived for only the “economic man” since 1999, cannot lead this country to greatness. Democracy is even unsafe at the moment. This is a time to tell some home truth to the young ones from 30 and above too that they should print out the lyrics of the old national anthem and spring from their rhetoric in the social media to action, “lest we should be the last” as a Ghanaian writer, Kwesi Brew once warned us. The old and the just rested national anthem should be their (call-to-action) weapon of social mobilization so that the cursed democracy (since 1999) will be rescued. The young ones that successive generations, including mine have failed should brace up to take back their blessed country, which politicians have ruined with an atomic bomb they call democracy. There is some glimmer of hope in the architecture we can find in the rubble. And so, the young and vibrant ones should arise and obey Nigeria's call. This is so because instead of fulfilling the pledge to Nigeria, to be faithful, loyal and honest, our leaders have become unfaithful, disloyal and dishonest in all the arms of government. Instead of “serving the country with all their strength”, they have been looting the country's treasury with all their strength. Instead of defending her unity, they have been condoning

been asking questions: why even the often sickly leaders, some of whom have died in office have not considered it expedient to fund even the University Teaching Hospital in Ibadan to a world class health center where they can get medical services – as it used to be.

Where is the ray of hope where 'legisloters', 'execu-thieves' and 'judi-sharing' as citizen journalists now call them, collaborate to protect their accused members in an enclave nurtured by complacency? As we have seen through the ages as noted by a political thinker, James Laxar, democracy emerged in a particular historical and cultural context as a consequence of specific social, political and economic struggles. And yet, there has been no compelling evidence that there is a universal yearning for democracy in all cultures and social settings, and we can therefore dispense with the dubious proposition that democracy is an outgrowth of human nature. And so the appetite for democracy arises not from political theory but from the tangible needs of millions of people. The young ones should note that above all, democracy is advanced by the success of political movements whose goal is to improve the lives of the majority of the population in a number of ways. This has not happened in our country.

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Today, as Chinua Achebe noted in 1983, the trouble with Nigeria is still simply and squarely failure of leadership that has institutionalized corruption as a fundamental objective and directive principle of state policy. Doubtless, corruption that has incredibly given birth to mediocrity and hopelessness in the country. Part of the fallacies of democracy has just re-echoed in the centre of drama called Lagos. Yes Lagos where a former Speaker could break into the chambers he presided over for 10 years and declare himself Speaker with the help of our lawless police officers. Haba, democracy, where is your classic majesty?

“disunity” that the governing party's leadership has been unleashing on the country with insufferable and unending “parochial appointments”.

There is neither honour, nor glory left for the citizens to cherish. Every day, young ones weep for the state of anomie in a country, where most of the leaders are virtually sleeping on duty. And as a foremost African writer, Ngugiwa Thiong'o notes, “Hope of a better tomorrow is the only comfort you can give to a weeping child”. In this case, there is no glimmer of hope of a better tomorrow beyond sloganeering. Almost twenty-six years of democracy has delivered only a man called Complacency to the nation. The economy is a shambles. Electricity has always been around 4000 megawatts for the more than 200 + million people in 36 states and the nation's capital. Generally, after 26 years of consistent democratization, there are no good link roads from states to states. Even the roads to the economic agencies including the Air and Sea Ports in the so-called economic capital of West Africa, Lagos are not remarkable. Democracy has only delivered private jets to the very prominent power elite who daily fly over bad roads that the people ply, suffering and smiling. As the roads have been left to God in heaven to fix, even the schools – from primary to university levels- are not institutions where innovations can be delivered to the citizens in the 21st century. As for healthcare delivery, this column has

incredibly given birth to mediocrity and hopelessness in the country. Part of the fallacies of democracy has just re-echoed in the centre of drama called Lagos. Yes Lagos where a former Speaker could break into the chambers he presided over for 10 years and declare himself Speaker with the help of our lawless police officers. Haba, democracy, where is your classic majesty? And so to the young ones, don't lose hope, organize, yes, organize.

Don't agonize anymore. This is the big data age. Get cracking in organizing your data on how Nigeria's power elite, politicians, civil servants and some morons called barons have demonized democracy as government of the corrupt few for their families and their in-laws. That is why the paralyzed man called Complacency should be banished for democracy to be a pleasant conversation, a boon. And so, the young talents here should not allow the greedy kingmakers to cast a pearl called democratic leadership before a swine anymore, lest they continue to mess up our country. The weapon they always use is called Complacency. The cure for it is pursuit of civic competence: the power that knowledge and integrity can give to defeat fear of our “very bad people” who have within 25 years crashed democracy and are dancing on its grave.