

NIGERIAN YOUTHS AND THE FUTURE

BY BEN UMOLE



As the Nigerian population increases, the youths also increase. The number is bludgeoning and bursting in its seams. College and University graduates are streaming the streets, and are not only constituting nuisance but becoming a swamp.

Nigerian youths, like most youths in other parts of the world are sturdy, vibrant, vigorous, virile, audacious, brainy, and courageous. But our youths have become victims of a society that has betrayed their trust and confidence. The Nigerian youth, themselves know that they are unruly, obdurate and even contumacious. But they choose to take that path of life because their fathers and the governments that emerge year in and year out have dashed their hopes and aspirations.

While our Universities, which many now call glorified secondary schools, are happily churning out graduates yearly, the society and the governments of the day, have no plan, no agenda and no viable or virile plans for them. Most of them manage to pass through the portals of a University, only to graduate into idleness, debauchery and the general decadence of the society.

What are the Universities training or grooming the youths for? To become "okada riders", "pure water sellers", "security personnel", (gatemen), in the private residences of the aristocrats and bourgeois in the society, kidnappers, internet fraud stars, assassins, truck drivers, to mention but a few. These are the jobs that now await our youths that laboriously pass through our Universities and Polytechnics. The Ivory Towers (Universities), have become relics and shadows of themselves. There is massive infraction of ethical values and infrastructural decay. Over one million secondary school students write JAMB yearly, seeking University admission, while the equivalent number, graduate from our Universities/ Polytechnics every year into joblessness and hopelessness. What a country! Our youths are getting messier and more sordid as every day passes. They have come to hopelessly realize, though regrettably too, that the Nigerian society is becoming a void. Nobody, is reassuring them that there is any ray of hope for them.

But you know what? The youths have resorted to travelling to other countries to realize their destinies. They are now prepared to do all kinds of works, no matter how nauseating, demeaning and derogatory it maybe; save money and travel to other countries, where it is assumed that the pastures are greener and juicier. Should this be the case? The youths have coined a jargon for it. They call it, "Japa". They see this as the future to their numerous and endless problems. The youths have come to realize that even with all the vices they indulge in to survive, there is still no hope. They are perpetually in pensive mood, because their future is inexplicably and impregnable bleak.

In academics, where are the future Soyinkas, Achebes, Awojobis, Akinkugbes, Jubril Aminus, Benjamin Oshotokun, Adebayo Williams, Niyi Osundare, Ola Rotimis, to mention but a few, who were and are still Professors of international repute. In Law, do we have youths to replace the calibre of Rotimi Williams, Gani Fawehinmi, Richard Akinjide, Afe Babalola, Teslim Elias, Atanda Fatai Williams, Mohammed Uwais, Wole Olanipekun, Bolaji Ajibola to mention but a few? In Journalism, where are the youths to take over from icons and titans like: Babatunde Jose, Peter Enahoro, (Peter Pan), the great Allah de, Segun Osoba, Tony Momoh, the great Dele Giwa, Ray Ekpou, Dan Agbese, Achike Okafor, Innocent Okparadike, Chidi Amuta, Reuben Abati, to mention but a few? These were writers and journalists par excellence. They really made the pen to be mightier than sword. In Business, where are the youths to replace Aliko Dangote, Moshood Abiola, Dantatta, Femi Odetola, Mobolaji Bank Anthony, mention but a few? These are Business monguls in their own rights. The list is endless. But it only suffices to say that Nigeria running short of quality and very outstanding youths, who are supposed to be in the offing to take over all the aforementioned caliber of titans in their respective professions. If all our vibrant, industrious and sagacious youths "Japa", as it were, what will remain of Nigeria?

Let all the states and Federal governments declare a state of emergency on youth's unemployment. This drift on unemployment must stop. There must be a purposeful, meaningful and revamped plan to get our youths meaningfully employed; especially after graduation from the Universities and Polytechnics. There must also be a sturdy plan to properly absorb the uneducated youths. The singular and tenable reason why Boko Haram war has thrived so badly in Northern Nigeria, is solely because of unemployment in Northern Nigeria. The Almajaris are swarming like bees from part of the country to another, all in a bid to survive. There must also be a quick plan to beef up, the security apparatuses in Nigeria. In the event of another civil war in Nigeria (God forbid), the consequences of guns getting into the idle hands of our youths, are better imagined. Finally, Nigerian youths must realize that much as their conditions are currently malodorous and pathetic, indulging in crimes to survive cannot be a valid and viable way to redeem and help themselves. The youths should sit up and be more creative. They cannot afford to disappoint themselves by lustful and wanton indulgences. Nothing unethical and morally fractious can ever turn around to become invaluable. East or West, Home is home. "Japa", to other countries is not a solution. We must all stay here and salvage our country together. Hopefully, the youths can find the chink in the armour.