

They Ruin Our Schools, School Their Kids Abroad

By Emmanuel Nnadozie Onwubiko

This is certainly the season of intense competition among politicians in Nigeria to show off their foreign-educated children in the mass media, for whatever reason. Perhaps they do this to let the rest of us—the wretched of the earth, in the words of Frantz Fanon, the French psychiatrist and political philosopher—know that they are building political empires and grooming successors who will take over from where they stopped destroying Nigeria. Some of these politicians were once governors who purportedly built state universities but would never send their own children to those institutions. This is indeed their season and, from our observations, these politicians are increasingly educating their children abroad because Nigerians have failed to insist on accountability and transparency in government. This is why they send their children overseas for schooling and have started showing them off in the media for the rest of the people to see.



This was followed by the Governor of Anambra State, whose younger daughter also graduated from a university in the United Kingdom. The Governor's wife issued a lengthy press statement in which she praised her daughter to the high heavens. The only apparent exception among these celebrations of foreign education is the Governor of Osun State, whose daughter graduated from a Nigerian-based university owned by her uncle, the father of musician David Adeleke

(Davido).

Many senators, members of the House of Representatives, and governors have children who hold second passports. Likewise, the son of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Seyi Tinubu, travelled last month to watch the recently concluded FIFA Club World Cup with his family, where they sat in the VIP section. Seyi was shown on television conversing with the American-born TikTok personality IShowSpeed, who was informed that Seyi is Nigeria's First Son because he is the son of the current President. Amusingly, the American social media influencer jokingly asked Seyi to persuade his father to give him a Nigerian passport.

Most recently, the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Mr. Nyesom Wike, was seen in what appeared to be a private jet alongside his political acolytes and associates, flying to the United Kingdom, where his daughter graduated from one of the country's expensive universities.

Mr. Wike ensured that the graduation ceremony of his only daughter featured prominently across mainstream media in Nigeria. After all, many newspapers have been repeatedly patronized by the Federal Capital Territory Administration under his leadership to showcase the roads and flyovers built since he became minister. These generous advertisements have generated substantial revenue for the newspapers, which are now, in turn, repaying those favours—funded with public money—by prominently displaying to millions of ordinary Nigerians that Wike's daughter has graduated overseas.

The minister and his associates also organized lavish wining and dining sessions, which were extensively reported with photographs in the Nigerian media. Mind you, Save the Children recently published a report stating that 36.2 million Nigerians across 26 states are facing acute hunger. Yet, the political elite continue to celebrate their children's graduations and rub these flamboyant parties of wining and dining in our faces. Many other serving political office holders have also recently showcased their foreign-educated children in newspapers.

Perhaps this request was informed by the perception in parts of the Western world that African political leaders wield enormous powers and often act without due regard for due process. That may explain why the influencer jokingly requested a Nigerian passport from Seyi. But why are politicians who wield power in Nigeria unwilling to trust either public or private universities within the country to educate their children? Ironically, the politician who owns Baze University in Abuja was also shown in the media celebrating the graduation of one of his children abroad, despite operating one of Nigeria's most expensive private universities. The simple reason governors and ministers send their children to schools abroad is that they have easy access to enormous financial resources. In Nigeria, winning elections and holding public office have come to be seen as tickets to unearned wealth, and sadly, this is what many politicians have made public office represent.

This reality becomes evident when we examine some of the cases filed by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) against politicians who have fallen out of favour with the ruling party. We are repeatedly shown how some of these politicians amassed enormous wealth to our detriment while they were supposed to be serving the public.

Recently, the Federal High Court in Abuja ordered the permanent forfeiture of 48 properties linked to former Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Abubakar Malami (SAN), to the Federal Government. Delivering judgment, Justice Joyce Abdulmalik held that the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) had successfully established that the assets were reasonably suspected to have been acquired with proceeds of unlawful activities, while the respondents failed to provide satisfactory evidence of legitimate sources of income used to acquire them. Among the forfeited assets are Rayhaan University and its facilities in Kebbi State, Rayhaan Radio, luxury hotels, residential buildings, commercial plazas, filling stations, warehouses, factories, large parcels of land, and several other high-value properties spread across Abuja, Kebbi, and Kano States.

The ruling followed an interim forfeiture order granted earlier this year, after which the EFCC invited interested parties to challenge the action. Although Malami and several associates contested the forfeiture, the court ruled that they failed to discharge the legal burden required to overturn the Commission's case. The judgment marks one of the most significant non-conviction asset forfeiture decisions secured by the EFCC in recent times. The disturbing reality is that politicians holding public office often use their positions to corner enormous privileges for themselves, and their proximity to unmerited wealth is unmistakable. They train their children in European and American schools and then splash photographs of their children's graduations before us, almost as if to ask, "What can you do about it?" We are, therefore, trapped in a Catch-22 situation, where the very people responsible for destroying, undermining, and destabilizing not only our educational system but also the nation's broader social and strategic infrastructure send their children to some of the most expensive universities in the Western world while doing virtually nothing to repair the broken schools attended by millions of ordinary Nigerians. This pathetic situation can only change if

citizens resolve to transform the country's political culture by refusing to be bribed into voting for the same politicians who continue to preside over the deterioration of Nigeria's educational and governance systems. From available data and the overwhelming weight of evidence, many ordinary Nigerians appear content to accept the crumbs that fall from politicians' tables and then repeatedly vote them back into lucrative political offices—not to serve the people but to continue enriching themselves at the public's expense. Unfortunately, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has yet to undertake sustained public enlightenment campaigns against vote-buying. Consequently, we may continue to witness these routine media displays of politicians proudly celebrating the foreign university graduations of their children.

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