

BE ASHAMED TO DIE UNTIL . . .

Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity. The statement is credited to American lawyer and educator, Horace Mann in an address to students in 1859. A Greek writer, Anaxandrides, in 376bc, said it is good to die before one has done anything deserving death. For Bernard Shaw, Irish Playwright, life levels all men but death reveals the eminent. And for Marcus Cicero, Roman statesman, No man can be ignorant that he must die, nor be sure that he may not this very day. After considering many aspects of life among which inter alia inhumanity by man against man and all sort of hatred, Dele Giwa (1947 – 1986) succinctly put it is probably a good thing to die. Death, the only reason for fragility of happiness. While each of us prepares for death in own way can guide to appreciate every day and recognize what is worth living for. The 2013 like immediate past is a trying time for our country, Nigeria. Let us remember those the year has violently taken away by praying that our Lord give their family and love ones the fortitude to bear the loss in their sacrifice for Nigeria. Their deaths through bomb explosion, road carnage, insecurity, disease and public hospital inadequacies are all consequential on bad governance. Bad government in Nigeria is virulent and ravaging everyone in all the communities and have resigned to fate. The only task remaining for us the survival is to resolve that their deaths are not in vain.

Nigeria society has become extremely individualized with snobbery added to it. Even among the children. Three men have huge impression and inspiration for me and coincidentally are all Professors of economics. Mohammed Yunus need no introduction. Robert Samuelson whom I only knew to be a professor in 2009 changed my position on the so call climate change debacle in 1993-94. Robert Forgel, Nobel laureate (passed on last June) in one of his classic publication in 2000 (The Fourth Great Awakening & The Future of Egalitarianism) which I read in 2004 asserted: the greatest social inequalities today are more spiritual than economic. What qualities some people have in excess, other lack entirely. These include self-discipline, a sense of purpose and a feeling of community and they cannot be acquired in the market or transferred by government programme. They are instilled mainly by the family. Changing technologies and economic conditions collide with moral values to produce according to Forgel, spiritual crises, social reform and political upheavals. Samuelson in his “the limits of materialism” concludes that materialism complicates freedom and that abundance breeds anxiety because it increases freedom. Finally, in his word, “We are increasingly liberated to ‘be ourselves’, but self-expression can slip into self-indulgence, and sometimes self-destruction”.

Nigeria boasting one of the highest church/mosque per person ratios in the world, yet evidence on ground is bewildered. Corruptions are going on unabated in an unimaginable quantum in involved money. According to former US Ambassador to Nigeria John Campbell, “it infested even the universities and religious establishments”. There is mutual cooperation and competition among the leaderships of this country that the boundary line in religion faith is blurred or nonexistent when it comes to stealing from national treasury and rigging election. What is disturbing is not the corruption parse but the frequency and its normality to extent instead of revulsion, it is celebration. The luxurious lifestyles of the religion leaders, their complicity and the impoverished followership that are more contented and supportive are everything but bewilderment. Nigeria rulers according to Prof Niyi Osundare have grown more defiantly incorrigible in their infamy and the followers more despondent in seeming helplessness. Karl Max can point at Nigeria from heaven with pride and tell God “Did I not say that religion is opium of the people”? Religion in Nigeria is perfunctionary considering the overwhelm contradictions in every fabric of the society that St. Augustine’s prayer: Lord, make me chaste, but not now” the subtle act.

Forgel converges search light on the vital ingredient of any virile and sustainable happy society, -feeling of community. This is lost in the Nigeria society. Even for Dr Campbell to have opinionated Nigerians not generous for the little philanthropic infrastructure with no particular tax advantages to its practice. Let the death of the victims of bad government and governance inspire and motivate everyone give back to the various communities. Where do you stand on humanity ladder? After leaving the White House, President Bill Clinton said that no matter the good intention of government programme it won't reach some people and it is only individuals that can reach them. Former US President George H. W. Bush, once said: "any definition of a successful life must include serving others". Therefore, we must remember that in our diversity lie our strength and common humanity. We should not allow any manipulation in the practical affirmation of this common humanity. We should stop exhibiting complacency in any situation that scorns human dignity. At any point in time everyone can contribute to this course because everybody can give, share, and love. The first point of call is health and follows by hunger. Visit the sick at least once a month and donate blood once in 3 years. To that patient in most cases your visit may mean a whole world. Now is the time.

TORTURE OF IDEAS

My aspiration is to endow a professorial chair in the name of my mother in two departments: Economic and Civil Engineering. The proverb that say the truth could only grow stronger with time, no matter how twisted is applicable because for over 10 years this aspiration keep waxing stronger in me. It has become my central life fulfillment. The torture of ideas held up in the mind unable to find expression in practical term is very painful. This is opening up for like minds that have suggestions to fast track its accomplishment.

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January 1, 2014