At that moment when we profess erudition and utmost comprehension, our ignorance and mental darkness becomes vividly obvious. Of that which we should know we have neglected, and of that which we claim to know we know nothing of. In the bazaar of indoctrination we have been sold, sold back to the hands of the subjugator. The key to unlocking our chains we have but refuse to use.

Some years back, when Asa sang the song ‘Fire on the mountain’, I thought it to be a sublime analysis of the country and the whole continent at large. However, recent development has overruled that judgment. The fire is no longer on the mountain, but now burning on the roof of our house, pathetically, no one seems to be aware of this catastrophic happening. We are oblivious of the fact that we are at the precipice of dissipating, holding on loosely to our last life-line, hunted by the sins of yesteryears. Our leaders feast on the seeds that should be given to mother earth; blind are they that are orchestrating the famine of years to come. But what do they care, they have stolen enough to last them a life-time.

Nigeria’s independence from the hands of the colonialists was birthed with the hope of an auspicious country. Nigeria then was the cynosure of all eyes, and it was fittingly regarded as the giant of Africa. Less than sixty years into her independence, it seems we have botched up everything we have done so far as a country. In the 1940s, 1950s up to the 1970s, education was free in Nigeria, and where it wasn’t free, it was largely affordable, with the government trying to get parents who grew up on the farm to send their children to school. Schools in Nigeria boasted of modern facilities, with magnificent structures and qualified teachers. The contrary seems to be our tale in the present generation, with parents being better educated than their children. The present crop of leaders in the country is mostly the beneficiaries of this golden era of Nigeria, some were even lucky enough to have gotten scholarships to study abroad. The dividends of democracy they so benevolently received they return with a malevolence.

The only similarity this generation bears with the golden era is that youths are being forced and coerced to go to school just like it was then. Just that then, parents were reluctant to release their children; now, there is mass apathy amidst the youths who prefer to chase a career in the entertainment industry or sports. Even the bulk of those who make education their priority do so not because they are so interested in gaining knowledge, but because they are trying to insure their future against poverty and joblessness. Those who are celebrated by the youths and the entire society are those who contribute nothing to the society but to set in motion a process of rat race, and instill the ideas of conformity and reliance on the ruling class into their listeners. Celebrities who themselves are victims of a poverty-stricken mentality.

In the course of my interaction with youths, I have discovered that we are in a very serious situation in this country, as the thoughts of an average Nigerian youth is not independent, but that of conformity and adherence to the rules. If the youthful minds of our country are busy doing what they have been told, then who are those to challenge the status quo? Who are those to come out with analysis of the country’s situation and come with a charter of demands as was done by NANS in the military era? The mind of an average Nigerian youth is that of a brainwashed and enslaved human being. Even the so-called intellectual youths are not exempted from this miasma; they are also consumed by the thought of doing what is legal and not what is right. Universities used to be a place where ideas are debated, where national and international issues are debated and room is given for superiority of argument. It used to be a place where despite the heavy repression and victimization by the juntas, activism thrived and both the student and the staff unions were at the forefront of the battle for the democratization of the country. Hilariously, with the advent of the so-called democracy died radical intellectualism in the country, with only view upholding this tenet.

In all the mission universities in Nigeria, not one is not governed by strict laws and rules which students must strictly adhere to, and the gullible students as they are follow the rules without asking any questions. When the life of people who are mostly eighteen years and above are so meticulously planned that they have no plan of their own, then you wonder when these students are expected to start making plans for themselves.
There is the need to urgently demand for the government for invest in education and stop the shenanigan being played with the future of the Nigerian youths. Not only is the government to invest in education, but it should also encourage intellectual activities among the youths and in our universities by restoring the education system back to where it was. If youths are motivated to study, even the music and the plays they produce will witness drastic turn around. The whole country is in a mess because of the neglect the education sector has suffered for a long time. Only a renewed interest in intellectualism can put us back on track.

* Oladele Oluwasogo is a member of the Education Rights Campaign (ERC).

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Article-Summary:

In my interactions with the youth, I have discovered that we are in a very serious situation in this country. The average Nigerian youth is not independent, but their mind is focused on conformity and adherence to the rules. If the youthful minds of our country are busy doing what they have been told, then who will challenge the status quo?

Category: Governance [7]


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