

A CORPER'S MUSINGS ON 2011 ELECTIONS

I know not why and yet it happens that I get excited by news that corps members like me will form the bulk of electoral officers in next year's polls. Pleasure in a measure arouses me to think of playing an important role in power transition that has been one of the most thorny issues in our democratic experience.

Jega says the elections stand a better chance of credibility with greater involvement of the National youth Service Corps. True? Can I and my fellows be those agents of change so desperately needed by our motherland? We, like most Homo sapiens in this part of the world know how to pontificate on national ills. We know how to blame the government, political parties, godfathers, plus a hail of bigwigs and stalwarts for the quagmire that Nigeria is crying out for help from. We know, trust us, exactly how to analyze, criticize, condemn or pour vituperations on our leaders for making our existence as a nation so miserably miserable. We know how to take them to the cleaners but we hardly wait at the cleaner's to ensure that our politics gets a proper cleansing.

One mischievous cartoonist for my campus newspaper did a rib-cracking drawing captioned "Tomorrow's leaders, today's gorillas". He was making a caricature of that cliché, "youths are the leaders of tomorrow". If we are would-be leaders worth our onions, we must dare to insist that justice be done in the forthcoming elections.

But can we? Many of my compatriots say that's a tall order. They claim the system is far too decrepit, too dangerously rotten that mere youths with no claim to power or affluence cannot challenge the status quo. Money answereth all things and so they ask me: "can you refuse a Ghana-must-go (God save the poor bag!) if it is given to you at INEC office just before polling begins?" or "what can you, a mere weakling do against an army of ballot snatching, gun-

wielding thugs?” “ Can you dare to challenge the Powers That Be if they order you to obey the rule of free and foul elections?”.

Like one black man living in a white house, I say, yes I can. “Eh! Did I hear you well? Do you want to die? Or worse, do you want to die poor?”- a typical admonition from some average Nigerian. Yet I insist that I can and I will. There’s this damned phrase many quote like scripture: if you can’t beat them, join them. Thank you, but I don’t have to join them because I can beat them, that’s what I believe.

I believe, that my Nigeria will one day be free from the shackles of graft, mismanagement and underdevelopment. I believe that our freedom is possible, even practicable in the near future. Yes it will come to be when I and my generation arise in defence of social justice without regard for our personal or ethnic interests. I believe, that in spite of the rot, untainted, incorruptible people abound in Nigeria, waiting in the wings or working in the land to make this country habitable for all of us. I’ve got faith- faith in God and faith in the survival of my Nigeria. Political and economic analysts or crusaders can predict all the bleakness they want, but I do know that Jesus loves Nigeria and is redeeming her from the devil’s stranglehold.

So can we do it right in 2011? Again, yes we can and yes we will. I’m not alone in these sentiments. There are men and women in this country who cannot be bought with money or selfish interests. But because corruption has assumed systemic proportions and even an acceptable position in our society, many people of integrity have gone into oblivion, never speaking up nor daring to confront the manifestations of dishonesty in everyday life. But not again! We will not fold our hands to watch conmen (and women) suck our nation dry. Oh no, we cannot afford to let Nigeria continue in its downward slide on the hill of infamy. We the youths of Nigeria are ready to prove that money, quick money is not all that we live for. So we daresay: let the moneybags go to hell with their cash, for we are poised to create a positive change in our political system.

What is the matter with Nigeria? Greed is the matter with Nigeria, and greed we will confront in all its vestiges. We will achieve that after taking an introspective look at our lives to discover that money does not buy happiness. A good life is one that is at peace with God and is not indebted to society as a result of stealing, bribery or negligence. This mad rush for money must cease and the 2011 elections is our test case.

We refuse to be bought for use as political thugs. Let all who require young people for rigging or electoral violence apply to their sons and daughters, for we are not ready to die and bury the nation with us. And for those who would manipulate election figures from “above”, let it be known that we will resist them and damn the consequences!

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