

ONLY IN NIGERIA...: PATRIOTISM IN TIMES OF DISRUPTION AND DISTRUST

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Abstract

This article is inspired by the current situation in Nigeria. I wish to ask what true patriotism is! What it means to love your country, serve it to the best of your ability, defend its honor and care deeply for everyone, the natural resources and infrastructure and to be really proud of your country. A patriot is a person who loves, supports his country and is prepared to serve her. The question here is, are the present crop of political office occupiers truly patriotic? Will they be ready to make sacrifices and lay their lives for Nigeria? Do they give as much as they receive? How connected are they to the people they represent? Mark Twains says, “a patriot is a person who can holler the loudest without knowing what he is hollering about.” There are different ways to demonstrate these emotions. Different countries, cultures and even people belonging to similar cultures, areas and religions use different ways to be patriotic. This article is a prayer and a challenge to all Nigerians that we have the power to turn our declining nation into a very successful Nigeria. Patriotism signify strength, courage and devotion. Therefore, our patriotism is actually striving that Nigeria shall be righteous as well as strong. We should not look for reasons to be patriotic, to make Nigeria great and to serve it, because patriotism is an unconditional love.

Keywords: Nigeria, Patriotism, Honor, Culture, Courage, Devotion.

Introduction

One of the phrases that almost always upsets me is: *ONLY IN NIGERIA*. The next statement after this is a negative description of Nigeria. This is not idiomatic, so the immediate question that comes to my mind is *what kind of a person would denigrate his own country?* This is pathetic. I wonder if those who do this expect that those who listen to them from other countries would say something like, “Oh poor boy! I cannot imagine what you are going through. Please hurry up, come and live with us!” Of course, no person, unless they reach a level of patriotism that high, will ever designate their most certainly flawed country as 'the BEST' and mean it – most likely because they are in love with it – or they could simply be lying to themselves – just

⁵⁴Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad*, Amazon Kindle, 2022, p. 321.

to make them feel great about where they live. Every country has its deficiencies and it is undeniable that some countries have a lot more problems than the others. Every country is a story. Most times the story is never a simple story, and its meaning is usually contested. Therefore, our national identity itself is dependent upon how we tell our story – our past, present and future. In Nigeria, our story is even more complicated because most national stories are rooted in a particular ethnicity or religion that forms the core of that national identity. Recently I have heard a lot of friends asking if we as Nigerians actually have a national identity! Our founding fathers have sought to create this national identity, but throughout our history, the fundamental divisions in Nigeria have forced us to dwell on the meaning of our loftiest words: Who is the *we*? What is our *uniting* factor? In other words, what does the Nigerian story mean, and who eventually gets to tell it? Thomas Paine says, “I love the man that can smile in trouble, that can gather strength from distress, and grow brave by reflection.”¹ Nigeria has faced series of adversities recently, including extreme political polarization, civil unrest, insecurity and many more that we all know. The happy patriot in us is hidden as a result of these threats, making it so difficult to find people who say they are 'extremely proud' or 'very proud' to be Nigerians. In truth, whichever part of Nigeria you live in, patriotism can be a thorny topic. Unfortunately, political division is ever more toxic; one thing that all political groups agree on is that the Nigerian ideals and institutions is a farce. 2023 election is on the way and populism and demographic tribalism are on the rise nationwide. Those who know me well know that I will be the very last person to throw in the towel just yet, because I believe strongly that a healthy patriotism that there was in Nigeria when I was a child will still return along the ideological spectrum. And we will all be happier for it.

My task in the paper as a philosopher is to facilitate clear reasoning by making clarifying distinctions. As Socrates discovered that people are not always appreciative of such a service. I will therefore seek to clarify contested concepts, such as patriotism. Growing up I know that Nigerians love Nigeria! Why? Not because it is always great – or even good all the time – but because it is our home. It is our national family. As it is with every family, loving our family means knowing our family. And yes, it means telling our entire story, the good, the bad, and even the ugly. It means hearing from admirers and critics alike. I do not intend to spell out the history of Nigeria in this article but to encourage us to approach history with a sense of curiosity and security. I know that no one can make me hate my home. What anyone can, however, is to motivate me to preserve what is pristine and repair what is broken. You can make me proud of the beauty and sorry for the injustice. The

¹ Thomas Paine, *The American Crisis*, Amazon Kindle Format, 2022, p. 34.

Nigerian story mirrors the best and worst of our national story. There is heroism. THE LABORS OF OUR HEROES PAST, SHALL NEVER BE IN VAIN. Regardless! I am grateful for their virtues and indicted by their sins. Together, they motivate me seek justice in my own turn in this country. There have been controversies generated in “Nigeria during the 2009/2010 academic session, that removed the study of history from primary and secondary schools' curriculum. Official reasons are given then were, among others, that students shun the subject; only a few jobs were available for history graduates, and that there is a dearth of history teachers.”² While the huge misnomer has been corrected on paper through a reversal of the policy, it remains to be seen if indeed it has been adequately reflected in practice. Let us remember that history lessons should not be designed to create patriots. They should be designed to educate citizens – secure in the knowledge that well-educated citizens are most apt to learn to love their country well.

Why should we love 'OUR' Nigeria even when we shouldn't?

This particular question is of great importance now than ever before: it is probably the prevalent dividing line today in Nigeria. The love of our country has been a topic of pleasant commendations; it is of course a noble passion; however, like every other passion, it demands regulation and direction. This is because there are mistakes and prejudices by which, many times we are misled. First, by '*our country*' I do not mean the soil or the spot of earth on which we are born; not the forests and fields, but that community of which we are members; or the body of companions and friends and kindred who are associated with us under the same constitution of government, protected by the same laws, and bound together by the same civil polity. Secondly, I want us to pay attention to the fact that our love for our country which is by nature our duty, does not imply any conviction of the superior value of it to other countries, or any preference of its laws constitution of government. Thirdly, we should distinguish between our love of our country and the spirit of rivalry and ambition which has been common among countries. It should never be a love of domination, a desire for conquest, and a thirst for grandeur and glory by extending territory, and enslaving surrounding countries.³ My biggest concern as a proud lover and citizen of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is to enlighten it. Why are the countries of the world very patient under despotism? Why do they crouch to tyrants, and submit to be treated as if they were a herd of cattle? It is always because they are kept in darkness. To enlighten them therefore is to elevate them. Because ignorance is the brain behind bigotry, intolerance, persecution, and slavery. We should then inform and instruct each other and all the evils we all complain about in Nigeria will end. Happy is the philosopher

² Editorial Board, 'History and school curriculum: Matters arising', The Guardian News Paper, 16 May 2021.

³ Richard Price, *A Discourse on the Love of our Country*, London: Nabu Press, 2011, p. 32.

who at the evening of his life can reflect that he has used his knowledge, he will be much happier if at the same he believes that he was successful, and actually contributed with his knowledge to make everyone realize themselves, their rights, of religion, and the nature and end of civil government. One other blessing of our human nature is virtue. For me this comes immediately after knowledge, and should also be directed by knowledge. This is because virtue without knowledge makes enthusiasts: and knowledge without virtue makes devils; but both united elevates to the top of human dignity and perfection. Hence, we must make both the objects of our zeal if we must serve our nation. We must discourage every vice in all its forms; and our endeavors to enlighten must ultimately be in view of a reformation of manners and virtuous practice. Another blessing of great importance for us is liberty. This cannot be separated from knowledge and virtue, and together completes the glory of a nation. An enlightened and virtuous country must be a free nation.

I imagine what will go through the mind of someone who has been living in the IDP camp for so many years and cannot go back home because of insecurity. And you ask the person if he/she loves Nigeria and why? His response can and should tell us a great deal about whether our love of Nigeria is rooted in a healthy patriotism or a toxic nationalism that Nigeria is the giant of Africa. People live in fear in almost every part of Nigeria. Parents are scared their children will not grow to love Nigeria unless they are taught that the country is good. Which means to learn the history of Nigeria is to learn to be patriots. With this in mind, education about Nigeria's mistakes is perilous. Hence, negative concepts must be gently and carefully introduced, it must be precisely in the right way, otherwise it will shake the confidence and affection of young minds. Let us now look at how and why we can love Nigeria as we should, in a way that is not only defensible but noble.

Nigerian Loyal Affection

Richard Blanco argues that, "Every story starts inside a story that others have already begun. Long before we came to be, there is a plot underway, with characters and a setting we did not choose, but which were chosen for us."⁴ A proper patriotic love begins with affection – the appreciation, the comprehension and esteem, of that which is *good* in its object. What is worthy of esteem attracts the appreciation of true affection. Hating our country will be to esteem the vices in our country. The good things in Nigeria ought to prompt the affection we have for her: our natural resources, the nobility in our history, the recent improvements in our judicial system, the numerous Nigerian doctors that we have bequeathed to the world. Usually the highest form of affection acknowledges its object's highest virtues. This period is

⁴ Richard Blanco, 'How to Love a Country', in *On Being* with Krista Tippett, (2021, November 27) <https://onbeing.org/programs/richard-blanco-how-to-love-a-country>

especially difficult to figure out that this value is in Nigeria. But we should learn to appreciate the fact that Nigeria does not copy other nations around, but stands as an example to them. We have enjoyed some successes in the areas of sports and in the movie and music industries. It could be argued that this affection is too thin to be called *patriotism*. But affection cannot explain the special love that *Nigerians* feel for Nigeria. One does not necessarily have to reside in Nigeria to discover its beauty and natural endowment regardless of the terrible stories we hear on daily basis. St Augustine writes, “nothing can be loved unless it is known.”⁴ This is to say that no one can love Nigeria like a Nigerian because Nigerians *know* her more than anyone else. However, to argue that knowledge is vital to love does not in anyway imply that patriotism is the unique field of intellectuals. The love that triggers the love of a nation is not necessarily or even often propositional. It is rather the firsthand experience of a place that gradually aids us to discover what is beautiful about it. I am not saying either, that only those born in Nigeria can sincerely and genuinely love Nigeria. In summary, my argument is that we love our country because the country is, in some important sense, *ours*.

Upholding Nigeria's Honor and Glory

The patriotic affection we have for Nigeria should elicit a further desire to protect and uphold her honor and glory. We are all beneficiaries of our forefathers who pledged their lives and sacred honour to birth Nigeria, those who gave their lives in the struggle to keep it, and those who according to their strength have worked relentlessly to shape it into a more perfect blend. We truly have so much blessings to be grateful for, and the best way to show this is our ardent quest to uphold these blessings. True patriotism is actually this desire to protect and uphold Nigeria's honor and glory, though this patriotism is of a particular kind. It is patriotism of a particular kind because when Nigeria struggles or our government makes mistakes, patriotism arouses us to safeguard the things we love. Our love for Nigeria is originally founded on all the countless lovely things about Nigeria. I often hear from elders, 'when Nigeria was Nigeria!' Let us remember that our love for Nigeria does not rest on its remaining lovely as of old. That is purely a false patriotism, and C.S Lewis beautiful says it is, “like loving your children only if they are good, or loving your wife only if she maintains her beautiful looks, or loving your husband only so long as he is famous and successful.”⁵ Hence, true patriotism spurs us to appreciate Nigeria's charms and propensities but refuses to esteem her faults, it does not cause us to blindly endorse everything our country is, and has been. It will not even let us to be untouched by the wrongs of our country. We uphold the goodness of Nigeria both by celebrating its virtues and by identifying - and remedying – its vices. A patriotism as

⁵ St Augustine, Church Fathers: 'On the Trinity' (Book X), New Advent, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/130110.htm>

⁶ Eric Patterson & Mark Melton, 'The Patriotism of C.S. Lewis' in Providence, (2016, November, 29) <https://providencemag.com/podcast/foreign-policy-provcast-ep-64-patriotism-c-s-lewis/#:~:text=And%20while%20Lewis%20argues%20that,is%20done%20carefully%20and%20seriously.>

such prevents us from marking as noble what is ignoble. It pushes us to cherish those goods that should be cherished and to repair the evils that should be repaired. The aim of this form of patriotism therefore is to protect and uphold Nigeria's *honor and glory*, not the *Nigerian government*. It does not involve a particular commitment to, or satisfaction with, the government in power. Rather, it will sometimes demand criticizing our government when it fails to protect and uphold Nigeria's honor and glory, invariably, what is good about Nigeria. I strongly admonish us to have affection for the justice and peace that our government secures, and our love for Nigeria should compel us to uphold these blessings, while we also hold our government accountable. A heart that is unpatriotic is thus not characterized by agitation, but by apathy. G.K. Chesterton argues that what is “really need[ed] for the frustration and overthrow of a deaf and raucous jingoism is a renaissance of the love of the native land.”⁶

Patriotism anchored by reciprocal love

The beauty and the bounty of a nation should be reflected in the lives of its citizens. Hence, loving your country is to be happily embedded in the values and customs that are shared by fellow citizens. You cannot be patriotic when you have no love for a fellow Nigerian, and the most genuine demonstration of that love is the willingness to make sacrifices for others. In a healthy community, the readiness to make sacrifice would be distributed across the shoulders of many; but in the Nigerian situation, it rests heavily on the shoulders of a few. The few who do the most for Nigeria – social workers, the military, police officers, civil defense, teachers, to mention but a few – are punished for the sacrifices they have made with ever-increasing financial insecurity, poor-to-nonexistent health care, low social standing, and very high diminished prospects of supporting a family or dying peacefully of old age. At this point, I think of my love for Nigeria just as the love I have for my parents, an unvarnished and straightforward kind of love. But many times I become disillusioned by the acts of hate and suspicion that is very common in Nigeria; especially the division along religious, ethnic and political lines. Can my hope be restored? I remind myself a lot of times of the really good people in our wonderful but irritating Nigeria. I am an unrepentant and unapologetic believer in the greatness of Nigeria, and so my faith is restored by others who do same and refuse to give up on Nigeria. This leads me to seek the betterment of Nigeria, and I express that love by caring for those who are disenfranchised, misunderstood and in need. To love Nigeria is for us all to ensure that those who are less privileged are given the resources and assistance they require to stand themselves up with dignity, create a new life for themselves and eventually become productive citizens who proudly and lovingly call Nigeria a home. By this, I suppose that patriotism is not something that excites a lot of us. As a matter of fact, most times you bring up the issue of patriotism

⁶ Gilbert K. Chesterton, *What's Wrong with the World*, London: Mint Editions, 2021, p. 34.

it is probably going to induce a yawn or suspicion about the motive of the person bringing it up. This is not in any way saying that Nigerians do not have a sense of pride. Meet a Nigerian abroad and you can always notice the difference between a Nigerian and other Africans judging by his self-confidence, which some see as being cocky. But let a non-Nigerian never make the mistake of saying something uncharitable about Nigeria or to even innocently join the Nigerian pastime of self-condemnation, there and then will you realize that in spite of all the negativity, Nigerians care for their country and still believe that some day the much talked about potential of Nigeria will be actualized. I believe and pray that Nigeria will confound all those telling tales of its fall. I think we have come far to realize that the 2023 general elections will spur us to elect leaders who are more likely to inspire others who believe that it is possible to realize a Nigeria where our differences in creed, ethnicity and tongue do not become obstacles to our Nigerian spirit.

Patriotism and Politics

In his address to the delegates at the All Progressive Congress (APC) Special Convention for its Presidential Primary taking place at the Eagles Square in Abuja, on the 7th of June, 2022, Nigeria's Vice President, Prof Yemi Osinbajo says, "Everything we can imagine or dream is within our reach. All that is left is for us to make the right decision." He added, "to our dear delegates, when you vote tonight, know that your vote carries the answer to your prayers for our country and its future." On its surface, the patriotism of the Vice President shares some resemblance to the "new nationalism" which we see in the body language of some of the cabinet members of the present presidential administration. For example, Matthew Continetti explains that new nationalism brings people together "by their love of the land, its natural beauty, its inhabitants, its history, by what their people have achieved, what they have lost and what they have endured."⁷ In a similar path, Rich Lowry and Ramesh Ponnuru have both endorsed a nationalism that "includes loyalty to a person's country: a sense of belonging, allegiance, and gratitude to it ... [that] attaches to the country's people and culture, not just to its political institutions and laws."⁸ The yearning to protect and uphold the goodness in Nigeria will lead us to care deeply about what our government does, sure; however, to arrive at particular policy prescriptions demands identifying not only what is good about Nigeria but also which policies will protect and uphold this goodness. As Nigerians we will always have different views about what is good, and therefore it is essential that we see that those who disagree with us on this question are no less patriotic than we are. The bad news is that we will never reach an agreement on exactly what is worth loving in Nigeria. But the good news is that many of the things Nigerians love about Nigeria are not mutually exclusive. In my article some years ago I argued that "If

⁷ Matthew Continetti, *The Right: The Hundred Year War for American Conservatism*, New York: Basic Books, 2022, p. 42.

⁸ Rich Lowry & Ramesh Ponnuru, 'Conservatism: What Now?' (2016, November 29) In *Politics and Public Opinion*: American Enterprise Institute, <https://www.aei.org/events/conservatism-what-now/>

happiness depends on health, financial security, power, electricity, good road and social amenities, then most Nigerians will not be happy.” And again, “....Nigerians have lived under dictators of all shades, benevolent, repressive and civilian. They have seen genocide, massacres and bombs. But then this is Nigeria! It is still Nigeria! A happy nation amidst these challenges.⁹ To love Nigeria wholeheartedly requires the capacity to relish the countless visions of her goodness held by Nigerians nationwide.

To have a healthy form of patriotism that leads to happiness regardless of politic views or location in Nigeria, let us learn to cultivate a patriotism that can benefit us and can also help inflect the national mood in these ways:

1. *Highlighting the positive:* articulating our disagreements with a fellow citizen is never wrong; in fact, a competition of ideas is a necessity for a free society. However, to remind ourselves of the things that unite us – the things we are all proud of as Nigerians – is of great importance. When frustrated or angry about the ugly situation of the country, let us take time to think about the things going on well. John Gottman argues that all relationships have negative interactions; the only issue is when they overwhelm the positive conversations. He therefore recommends that for every complaint, you make sure to offer five words of praise. Why don't we try that when talking about Nigeria as well?
2. *Staging a patriotic protest:* of course, patriotic affection is not blind to problems – for example Alexis de Tocqueville's irritable patriots, who concurrently denounced and lauded the government. This is not a contradiction in terms. It is a recognition that things can actually be better than they are, when we choose to work together to effect the change we desire.¹⁰ This is the crux of Martin Luther King Jr's message where he used overtly patriotic language to challenge Americans to live up to their own national ideals. In his famous “I have a Dream” speech he recited an entire verse of the patriotic hymn “My Country, 'Tis of Thee.” For him, patriotism was not about ignoring what was clearly with America; but an expression of faith in what Americans could be. We can adopt this also in Nigeria by framing activism for change in terms of Nigeria's stated ideals and values.
3. *Adopting Values:* when we think of the ideal version of Nigeria, it likely reflects on our own personal values. We vote in accordance with our values and we live our lives according to them as well. No wonder! Vital to the success of citizens and their nations are the values they adopt. Personal values are central to where people end up in life. This is because values

⁹ Felix G. Zombobah, 'Suffering and Smiling: The Nigerian Experience', in IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities, Vol. 6, No. 5, 2020, p. 343.

¹⁰ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America and Two Essays on America*, London: Penguin Classics, 2003, p. 87.

influence actions and these subsequent actions help determine life's results, both in terms of happiness and financial success. For example, those who value friendship over work, experience a different world than their more diligent colleagues. And as this is true for you, so is it true for your country. And I think for Nigeria as a nation, cultural values influence what institutions are formed and they perform. It is very difficult to maintain a democracy if the underlying values necessary to sustain it are not respected in the first place. In any case, let us notice the twist here, the values that shape personal success are not always the same as those that govern national success. It is no news that we have problems in Nigeria to be fixed. Many times we complain about them, blame the government and the system, and finish off saying the situation is beyond repairs. How about we stop playing the blame game and try to do a little bit what is within our power to do to bring about the change we desire. After all, *it begins with you!* Francis Fukuyama says, "While the structures of state can be created by outsiders, national identities can only be created from within, and they commonly arise through shared language, culture, history, and ideals."¹¹

Patriotism amidst Security Dilemmas.

By our nature, no one wants to feel insecure. Because the foundational element of the social contract between people and their government is security. To live a better life has always been the yearning of humankind throughout the ages. Humanity has developed great civilizations for so many years. But wars and conflicts have never ceased. The wars and conflicts in addition to natural calamities as well as diseases and plagues, inflicted untold sufferings on humanity. Nigeria has been enjoying a rapid growth and development, until it was, or is still ravaged by turmoil and upheaval of blood and fire for a little over three decades now. This comes at a time when national security has been defined all too narrowly in the Nigerian political debate. Nigeria has experienced an upsurge in violence in recent months. Kidnappings and attacks have been reported across the country. A score of worshipers were killed according to media reports, during the attack in St Francis Catholic Church in the town of Owo, Ondo state during a Pentecost Mass on 5th of June 2022 and the entire world is linking this attack to multiple domains of insecurity alongside concerns about violent extremism and terrorism. This moves national security beyond the current narrow focus of government to a more holistic framing. Every nation faces one internal and external threat or the other. The national threat spectrum involves threats on the economic, military, international, and domestic fronts. National security is the overall apparatus that ensures the safety of a nation. It protects as well the integrity of the nation's systems and institutions. This explains why there is a sense among people that insecurity and instability affect them more than the well off, be it through crime and violence, conflict, or through unresponsive,

¹¹ Francis Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order*, New York: Profile Books, 2012, p. 421.

corrupt and abusive security actors such as the police. The poor live in insecure areas, they have the most insecure assets and rights, have fewer resources to protect themselves, and suffer the most from crime.¹²

At the very heart of the prosperity of any nation lies the safety and security of its citizens. Citizens desire to feel safe – protected from every risk or injury and secure – free from danger or threat. In Nigeria today, security is challenged in all aspects of our daily lives and trust in the institutions that should keep us safe is very low. Presently, as a result, even the stable states now feel or perceive themselves to be unsafe. The security of Nigeria is dynamic and uncertain, replete with numerous challenges. Ethnic conflict and outlaw states threaten regional stability – terrorism, drugs, organized crime and proliferation of arms. Today Nigeria faces a more diverse range of serious threats than at any point in our history. And I wholeheartedly believe as every Nigerian that protecting the country from these threats is the first duty of the federal, states and local governments, which requires Nigeria to maintain the most lethal, agile, and robust military in Africa that has always been the commanding force in peacekeeping in Africa. The truth is much more complex.

Education as a recipe for Patriotism

We have always been taught that motivation is key to learning. Hence, highly motivated students will always find ways to acquire knowledge and skills even in suboptimal conditions. Students with less interest in learning will always be hard to teach no matter how well furnished the school is. So, education is a very important channel to enhance knowledge and instill values. Education is vital to development and growth. The human mind makes possible all development achievements, from health progress and agricultural innovations to efficient public administration and private sector growth. For countries to reap these benefits fully, they need to unleash the potential of the human mind. And there is no better tool for doing so than education.¹³ Some of the critical contemporary issues affecting young people – juvenile delinquency, intolerance, and indifference to the country – should be addressed subtly. In Nigeria today, any attempt to make students have love for the nation – instilling a sense of patriotism in them – is in dire need of and calls for tangible, concrete and compelling ways. Especially that students in public universities have become uncertain about what happens in the school because of frequent strike actions. I will argue that it is more honest to say that a love for the country is more about the value rather than cognitive achievement. There is no clear link between higher academic grades and the act of patriotism or feeling patriotic. We were taught to stand still when the national anthem is sung or the national pledge is recited. And that became a norm wherever you hear that. That act shows how the love

¹²Narayan Deepa, et al., *Voices of the Poor: Crying Out for Change*, New York: Oxford University Press for the World Bank, 2000, p. 54.

¹³Elizabeth King, *Education is Fundamental to Development and Growth*, Keynote address at Education World Forum (2011, January 10-12), QE2 Conference Center, London, <https://www.educandojuntos.cl/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Discurso-Elizabeth-M.-King.pdf>

of Nigeria arises from one's dictate of conscience, suggesting that values speak louder than passing exams and maturity when it comes to patriotic acts, despite their simplicity. We should deliberately and consciously implement the link between patriotism and children or the youth stereotypically; in case they are not yet mature and do not understand the essence of love for Nigeria. Bearing their young age in mind, some are likely to believe that any attempt to instill a patriotic spirit in young people must be carried out with a doctrinal approach. What we may easily assume is that encouraging a sense of love and defense of the country for children and young people must go hand-in-hand with the progress of the times they are familiar with. I say this because majority of adults have a mindset already based on their experiences. Thanks to technology, the young people today are cyber literate and adept at using gadgets, so to cultivate the spirit of patriotism in the younger generation it needs not to be done only in classrooms but virtually. And it must be done through education for two major reasons:

- A. In the first place, it will create a reflective learning tradition among the young people. To instill in students a patriotic spirit through visual products, such as films or video clips through YouTube, is fast and effective learning process, because visual contents provides students with lots of information in a short period of time, while enriching their perspectives and encouraging their ability to reflect. We have great Nigerian jingles that promote patriotism and we have many speakers who reflect the true Nigerian spirit. Therefore, psychologically speaking, sparked by such jingles and speech the young people will change for the better, much more than good marks on assignments and exams in school. These high marks often stop at the cognitive level, while the awakened soul will build and contribute greatly to the nation.
- B. Secondly, it will aid the maintenance of the collective memory of our dear country. Victimizing children or the youth for their poor comprehension and acts of patriotism will not change them for the better, but make them lose their strong grip on the collective memory of the country. From my personal experience, mostly juvenile delinquency is a consequence of their disappointment with the tension between expectations and bitter reality, high ideals and harsh truth that causes them to rebel and create havoc expecting to draw attention to themselves. This disappointment is multiplied when they have no chance to actualize themselves.

Bearing all these in mind, to teach patriotism to children is not about training them to be soldiers and sending them off to war. It is also not about singing the national anthem and reciting the Nigerian national pledge everyday or on Children's Day. Patriotism is rather about respecting the nation, the people of the nation and every

aspect that builds Nigeria. It should never be a feeling of compulsion. It must be a deliberate choice and the option should be available to the young minds. Media activists such as journalists, influencers of the media (mainstream or social media) should produce positive content that builds a sense of pride for Nigeria's young generation. The National Orientation Agency, the Ministry of Education and Culture should collaborate with media activists, including teachers and students through educational content. Teachers in schools should be aware that jargon, challenges, and opportunities in the future are needed to be transformed into students' fresh collective memories being the actors of the next Nigerian history. To remind them of the collective memory of the past as the identity of Nigeria is not wrong: we fought for independence (though without bloodshed), fought for the unity of the nation (The Nigerian Civil War 1967 – 1970).¹⁴ However, the past collective memory will not be complete until it is accompanied by real-time comprehension, being something that the youths encounter here and now. Teaching patriotism therefore is a necessity not only for the sake of Nigeria, but for the student's personal development as well. So let us make full use of every opportunity to instill patriotic values along with the regular lessons. This is because the right teaching today can safeguard the country tomorrow and that is basically what it is all about.

Let Us Remember the Pledge we Made

Normally and ideally, we would all love Nigeria and be proud to serve her with all our strength. You don't have to believe it is the best country globally to strive to make it the best it can be. However, as it is the case with any relationship, it is not easy to sustain love for a country especially when you don't feel loved by it or when you don't enjoy how it treats others. Patriotism is something we can all understand even though the experience may differ. And while we all engage in acts of patriotism, we should realize that it is important to understand that it contributes to our national identity – it brings us all together, makes Nigeria a stronger nation, a patriotic spirit is one of fortitude and strength.

The Nigerian national pledge we recite is an oath of allegiance or a solemn promise to show our wholehearted support for Nigeria. If we pick up the individual challenge to live up to our national pledge, I believe strongly the country will change for the better. Regardless of what the current situation is today! When we drink from cups of self-belief, the journey to make the desired change can begin already. The joy of reciting the national pledge was always there as children in school. Standing at attention and boldly wording the pledge always came with some emotional feeling, and of course, pride. It was always a thing of abject ridicule and inglorious shame for

¹⁴Hurst Ryan, (2009, May 20). Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970). BlackPast.org. <https://www.blackpast.org/global-african-history/nigerian-civil-war-1967-1970/>

anyone who couldn't recite the pledge. This is simply because we were made to believe that every Nigerian was expected to make this very important promise to Nigeria. The teachers taught us that we are being good citizens, when we pledge and learn to adhere to it always.

Conclusion

At this point we have come to realize that without patriotism there can never be the personal and public feeling of importance. The most patriotic thing most people can ever do that will help the country most is whoever you are, be good! Because the greatness of a nation does not rest on its military might, its gross national product, its achievement in the field of arts or sports but in the kind of people it produces and the values that guide them. Nigeria's most important patriots are often humble, unsung heroes whose daily lives quietly nourish the deepest roots of our nation. Doing all these things is not nearly so simple, but they really count even more than simply waving the Nigerian flag. And again, we have many people in Nigeria and even outside of Nigeria who use patriotism as a cloak for self-interest. Yet we have so many Nigerians who demonstrate the very peak of patriotism: they show a sincere and generous love for fellow Nigerians and shared ideals. This is particularly the happy patriotism that can bring a country back together around a commitment to each other, a celebration of values that go beyond disagreements, and a belief that progress is possible, TOGETHER. Like Mahatma Gandhi, let us all say, "My patriotism entails the good of mankind in general." GOD bless Nigeria!

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