

Essence of leadership

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In the prelude to Nigeria's 2019 election, many are conjecturing or positing views inherently projecting their hopes and aspirations for the choice of the next Nigerian leadership team. A number of individuals have stepped out to announce their intentions to run for the elected office of the President of the country. There are a few polarising determinants conflating the choice for majority of ill-informed and myopic voters committed to maintaining the status quo of known and familiar characters. For the better informed hard nosed electorate, determined to risk the unknown young aspirants with grit and guts; full of new ideas, the choices are probably less opaque.

The challenge would essentially be between the old vs the new, that is if the new aspirants indeed maintain their cause right through until election day and do not break rank.

It is intriguing to observe the reality on the ground. After over twenty years of decadence and retrogressive leadership evidenced by infrastructural, socio-cultural and economic decline masterminded by ineptitude and corruption in high places, seemingly well informed persons are choosing to join the same parties whose leadership have been shown to lack integrity or indeed the moral fabric to be further entrusted with the affairs of state. Their argument is their hope to make the difference by joining them. An honest position, currently pursued by a few, would be to embark on a new journey preferably with a 'new breed' untainted by the unwholesome lust for ill-gotten wealth currently the hallmark of today's seasoned politicians, but for a few.

Some may demand evidence for the claim that all current politicians from the duopoly are unsavoury and possibly corrupt. Such evidence is not farfetched. The inequalities and lack of equity in access to the most basic of resources such as healthcare, education and income to name a few speaks for itself. It is saddening to observe that the leaderships across the arms of government would turn a deaf ear to the call that they redress the obvious disparity in their allowances and salaries compared to that of all other persons and professions across the country. This dichotomy in wealth distribution reinforces the desperation observed in society with career politicians now engaging in theatricals to ensure their fiefdom is immutable. Cross-carpeting is now the de facto response to dissent which is essentially a fear of losing rank or office.

The absence of a well articulated vision, the dearth of a moral compass for civil society and the pervading instability with numbing of response towards the loss of lives, reflects a society lacking in direction, purpose and meaning. Nationhood is a state of being where the collective conscience is represented by a spirit of '*all for one and one for all*'. The evidence this state of being exists presently is certainly not experienced talk less of it being a reality.

The observed reality of politics in Nigeria is that power corrupts and absolute power innately corrupts absolutely. The politics of Nigeria today is fatuous and indeed sickening. There is no ideology, no accountability and no constituent response to repugnant and impetuous disregard for the wishes of the people. Very few persons in politics there are that may have remained untainted by this broad stroke. Very few indeed. However for any politician in the arms of government who have allowed themselves to be enriched by inequitable allowances and salaries in office, there is no reason to want to think they are not part of the problem. And there is certainly no reason to expect they would be part of the solution.

One must therefore applaud the few who step out to chart a new course. Very few indeed have the metus and suasion to remove themselves from these saprophytic aggregation of obdurate persons in politics who do not represent the essence of leadership.

Against this backdrop, the qualities of aspiring presidential candidates would indeed come under this divide of the new vs old, the informed vs the ill-informed. The visionary vs the lackluster. The known corrupt vs the unknown and uncorrupted. The academic vs the uneducated. The role of parties in electioneering preferences, will be a major challenge. Fraternities formed over the years have tended to defy reason with the likelihood malevolent groups would seek to assert themselves.

The independence of the electoral commission has always being questioned and rightly so. It is a body whose leadership is appointed by the ruling government. It would have to be seen to be transparent, indubitable and rigorous. Unfortunately candidacy is based on costly nomination processes which is biased in favour of the rich or extensively financed parties. This is an aberration and undermines true democracy making it a process for the rich who continue to perpetuate their cycles in this exclusivity.

Whilst everyone are free to exercise their constitutional rights to vote or be voted for, it is essential that the 'essence' of leadership is sort in each candidate or indeed each party. The electorate have habitually, like Biblical Esau sold their birthright for a morsel of bread. People are enamoured by seemingly captivating promises by persons who have never invested in their immediate communities talk less of delivered on previous promises.

Social change for good is predicated on constituents being better informed and prepared to assert their rights as citizens without fear or favour only standing for the truth which sadly is not being told.

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