



Value-Based Strategies for Helping Our Precious Children and Youth Secure 'Safe Spaces.'

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'The hopes of the world rest on young people. Peace, economic dynamism, social justice, tolerance- all this and more, today and tomorrow, depends on tapping the power of youth,' – **UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres**

August 12, 2018 was the United Nations International Youth Day and the theme for 2018 is Safe Spaces for Youth.' United Nations summed up the justification for 2018 theme as follows: 'there are currently 1.8 billion young people between the ages of 10 and 24 in the world. This is the largest youth population ever. But 1 in 10 of the world's children live in conflict zones and 24 million of them are out of school. Political instability, labour market challenges and limited space for political and civic participation have led to increasing isolation of youth in societies.'

According to the United Nations, the day' serves as an annual celebration of the role of young women and men as essential partners in change and an opportunity to raise awareness of challenges and problems facing the world's youth.'

My interest today is the role of youths as 'essential partners in change' as same agrees with our #TheSAFE4MEMovement, which we launched on the World Children's Day, November 20, 2017. The focus of the movement is call attention to all forms of abuse that our children and youths are exposed to and their roles in their personal safety and self-protection, through the inculcation of the right value system. The movement is an outreach both young people and their caregivers (primary and secondary).

It is in the light of #TheSAFE4MEMovement, which we consider to be the heart cry of today's young people in Africa that I make comments on the theme of the 2018 theme of the United Nations International Youth Day.

While I am conscious that by the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), a child is anyone below 18 years of age and by the general definition of the United Nations, a youth is anyone between the age bracket of 15-24, please note that for the purpose of this piece, by children and youths, I refer to the age brackets 0-21.

Permit me to declare upfront that the number threat to Safe Spaces for Youth is not the conflicts, lack of education, shelter, health services, and engagement in all forms of seemingly uncountable vices they are exposed to day. I think the real threat Safe Spaces for Youth is the war that is waged on the minds of our youth. Safe Spaces must first exist as a value system in the minds of our caregivers and custodians of the minds of our youth, who must deliberately inculcate same in the minds of our youth. The goal must be

to help our precious children and youth to appreciate and take full ownership of the immense benefits of Safe Spaces for Youth. It is upon the foregoing foundation that they could be enlightened on their roles in creating same and how to take full responsibility for same.

I think the war on the mind of our precious children and youths has existed time immemorial. Adolf Hiller declared, as we planned the pogrom, which is today known as the Second World War, which claimed 62 million people (2.5 % of the population of the world then), *'I want to raise a generation of young people, imperious, relentless and cruel.'*

It is important to note that no cause, positive or negative has a future without the deliberate and active initiation of children into same. Hitler recognised this truth and set in motion a mission to achieve same.

It is important to note that the vision like Hitler's has always been constant. It is the mode of expression that has changed. The attack on the impressionable and 'absorbent' minds of our precious children and young people today have only been enhanced by the undue democratization of information through the new media, in which social media is one of the most prominent features.

It seems to me that there are always four kinds of people in the lives of our precious children and youths. The first are those who are part of the solutions to the precious children and youths. These ones are always few in number and they labour in making useful contributions to the sanity of our precious children and youths through peaceful and value-based development. The second are those who are part of their problems, who by their omission or commission fail in their duty of care to prepare these precious children and youths for the challenges of childhood and successful transitions to responsible adulthood. The third are those who are part of the problem of these precious children and youths by making deliberate efforts to pervert the conscience and render them morally bankrupt for their personal, social, political and financial gains. The fourth is those who have embraced silence, passivity, double-standard in the face of a drowning moral crisis, fast consuming the very soul of our precious children and youths.

The last three succeed in bequeathing to the society directionless and menacing children and youths, which make life unbearable for their immediate and extended neighbours.

It is sad to note that the second categories of people in the lives of our precious children and young people by their active, cowardly and often ignorant omission and third and fourth categories of people by their skilful and deliberate commission have over the years had more successes in their endeavours than the first category of people in the lives of our precious children and youths.

The people in the second and fourth category often do not understand the power resident in our precious children and youths and how to fan same into glorious flame of useful existence and enduring contributions, the people in the third category know the power and potentials of children and youths when they are properly developed. They know that in the words of Adebayo Williams that 'a properly educated mind will not accept an act of tyranny. Because to accept an act of tyranny is an act of intellectual self-dispossession.' Therefore since this category of people do not often represented the interest of the majority of the people, particularly when they wield political power, they make it a point of duty to deliberately keep the teeming majority of our precious children and youth uninformed and impoverished. It is not in the best interest of any kingdom to empower her enemies, who when become empowered they will displace her, except the kingdom is naive or not strategic.

I make bold to say that the people, who occupy the third category in Africa may be naive or less strategic in all things, they are not when it comes to suppressing the precious children and youths of Africa. It is important to note that it is not by accident that there is a silent war on education in Africa, particularly, Nigeria. It is not by accident that Nigeria has 10.5 children out of school and private education has become an alternative to public education. It is not by accident that the governments of most African

countries today do not budget for social protection and where they have such budget, it is often misappropriated or diverted for personal use.

It is also the strategy of the people in the third category in the lives of our precious children and young people to bring distractions in the way of the precious children and young people in the name of entertainment. Entertainment and related adventures have today become the opium of our precious children and young people, strategically served as musical concerts and shows on days like the United Nations International Youth Day. The goal of such engagements on important days to our precious children and young people like Children's day and United Nations International Youth Day is to divert the attention of our precious but unwary children and youth from the real issues affecting their personal and social development, for which the days are created to call attention to and address.

Though, the first category of people mean very well for our precious young people, they hardly labour in the crucible of visionary, missionary and strategic thinking and superior engagements of the precious children and youths and the society in which they are being raised. Therefore, the other two categories of people have always had an upper hand. Something the first category of people always forget is that since it is always easier to destroy than to build, they always have more smart work to do than the other two people.

Today, we have more directionless and menacing young people than purposeful and sound ones. We have more wasted potentials than harnessed ones among our precious young people. More are more disoriented than cultured. More are subdued than submissive. More live in the fortified cocoon of denial, delusion and despondency than live freely in pursuit of God-ordained dreams.

Our precious children and youths today are best referred to as an orphaned generation. In my definition, an orphan is also a child, whose parents are not available, alive. The greatest and most invaluable need of our children and youths today is direction in life. The direction they seek will address how to help them cultivate a meaningful and productive relationship with God, which will culminate in helping them to imbibe and demonstrate POSITIVE VALUE SYSTEM. Direction will address how to help these precious children and youths to achieve resourcefulness, combining soft skills with hard skills to make a difference and build relevance in their private and public lives. Direction will address helping the precious young people understand how life and her principles and they can begin to relate with same and shepherd life and her principles in the direction of their personal and societal favour.

Direction in the foregoing areas can only be provided by conscious primary and secondary caregivers. The question is, if these caregivers are truly alive, how come their existence is not making a definite and enduring difference in the lives of our precious children and young people today? What would have been the difference if there was an aggression on our continent and people from age thirty and above were killed and these precious children are left to grope their ways into meaningful and productive existence?

I believe today, we will be challenged on the ways to rescue our precious children and youths from the attack on their lives and minds, which renders them susceptible to many social vices and render them impotent in making meaningful contribution for personal and public advancement.

It is important to note that it is pathetic that though, the primary and secondary caregivers are alive today, we seem very docile and unconcerned about the state of our precious children and youths. Our seemingly incurable nonchalance and frustration is best captured in the words of the Irish poet, W.B. Yeats, *The Second Coming*, where lamented the confusion and frustration that greeted post-first-world-war Europe: *'Turning and turning in the widening gyre/The falcon cannot hear the falconer;/Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;/Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,/The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere/The ceremony of innocence is drowned;/The best lack all conviction, while the worst/Are full of passionate intensity.'*

For days like United Nations International Youth Day to make sense first to our precious children and youths and to the generality of the African people, I today proudly offer the creed of #TheSAFE4MEMovement as vividly covered in our Securing A Friendly and PROTECTIVE Environment™ for Children Instructional Manual released on the last World Children's Day, November 20, 2018. The creed is centred on helping our precious young people and their caregivers and custodians to develop moral stamina through the inculcation of what we call the POSITIVE VALUE SYSTEM. We see this POSITIVE VALUE SYSTEM as an effective propeller of meaningful and rewarding social engagements and tested antidote to surrendering themselves to abuse or engaging in destructive vices, which are today rampant among young people. What is this POSITIVE VALUE SYSTEM? It is simply appealing to our basic sense of what is right or wrong, first according to common sense and second according to obvious moral code of human existence and interactions, with a commitment to always carefully consider all of the consequences of our actions and omission to self, immediate family, community and the world at large before embarking or omitting to embark on same.

The perpetration of the foregoing creed demands superior strategy, noting that the moral force of such superior strategy is the positive example of the caregivers and custodians of today's precious children and young people.

Men and women of good conscience, who represent the best interest of the precious children and young people of Africa must note as a subject of sober reflection that a good cause with poor strategy will always fall flat before a bad cause with superior strategy.

I have often heard people say, 'good things take time.' The impression such assertion often creates is that it is only good things that take time. It is important to note that bad things also take time to take root. If good people do not understand the foregoing principle, it is important to note that bad people do and therefore takes time to build their castle of evil, in which they host our precious children and young people in their billions.

Permit me to submit most humbly that any agenda, aimed at securing Safe Spaces for Youth, which does not take the foregoing principles into adequate consideration may end in nothing but frustration.

I am glad we have been able to bring closure to this discussion and I hope it has helped us as caregivers and custodians to again be reminded about the real issues plaguing our precious children and youth today and how to help them turn the tide for the personal benefits and that of humanity.

Thank you for reading to and do have an INSPIRED experience working with the principles shared. .

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