

ALUTA CONTINUA

DEAR SUCCESSOR,

I have grown up understanding a portion of my mind to work with principles even death is incapable of changing. My belief in God and my understanding of His helplessness and pity for suffering millions. My love for all mankind. My faith in truth, my almost insane loyalty to choice, liberalism, equal chances and democracy.

Ojo, Aderemi
UI SU President (2016/2017 session)

Dear Successor

Ojo, Aderemi



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Dedication

To the indefinable truth first found on the lips of the Creator, who first wrote in his words: "*the truth shall set your free.*"

To my fellow Ibadan varsity students and to the good teachers.

To those who have tasted from the "strike-back" of beleaguered corruption but have refused to abandon the struggle for a nation.

To Thomas Isidore Sankara.

To the first one million eyes to read my ink, understand it and use it productively, because many truths have been foretold, but not many last in us till we're old.

And most importantly, to that valiant stool, sitting untouched in the Union house or Kunle Adepeju Building, subject to my drools and cold nights, the bedsit of wisdom.

Prologue

'Remember' the professor told him, 'one day you will walk from one end of the University to the other end and not one soul will know you were ever a Student Union President.'

The statement is -manifestly- near epic, almost prophetic. He understands, through the benevolent the gift of insight, the *transgenerational* truth in the words. He does not wish to be known for another second beyond now that he was one student leader who occupied the Apex office for both the longest time, and the shortest: twenty-one days or three years.

Many were, at every announcement of his presence, content to amuse themselves with high-pitched chant of his name. It is an almost certain recurrence. One which was capable of leaving him with the reasonable doubt of that sincere warning from the grizzling professor -against allowing himself to be used by his power when it should be the other way around. He, the grizzling professor, was hoping to deter him from the youthful drive to make the world perfect in one day, year or lifetime or fell the *Ìrókò* in one stroke of the axe.

However, sought he to lift the yoke with which he was burdened -that his name refused to go away for a number of reasons: he considered himself ready to be a student leader who knew what to do, said what he intended to do with the office if elected and, damning all consequences, did it; he delivered on almost all his promises in spite of the sustainability question because he believes in the law of exception -if other leaders would dare disappoint, he didn't have the courage to; he loved his own colleagues, never thought he had the capacity to betray them. In turn, he became to them a friend-for-life; he was seen as too young to have beards. They were wrong.

For those things and many other things, he is either liked or passionately hated by his enemies who refused to respect the truth he told. What does he care?

Now, he must go. But first, his friends must replace him. They did him a favour by reposing the votes in a successor with a darker cluster of beards than young Fidel Castro.

Aderemi

December, 2019

DEAR SUCCESSOR,

I have purposed in my mind that if ever I want to say the needed words to you, I will make it short and brief. I plan on staying on this desire, but for the need to supply enough information to buttress the suggestions and instructions or rules I have to give. This, invariably, may include examples. A professor -different from the first- once cast a disdainful look at me and warned me to always be straight-to-the-point. He accused me of always being too verbose. I could care less about the not-so-well intended criticism of my writings. I live in a society where you need to explain yourself properly to avoid being misunderstood. Consequently, every word thrown at a question counts. My WAEC examiners can testify to this awkward tactic; I said everything I knew or could about every question I was asked.

I will attempt not to present a panoramic view of my experiences as a student leader. In other words, this is not a history lecture or a journalistic review. Much of that can be found on the Internet -for now. I simply want to advise you from experience. And quickly; the word "experience" can be used for deceptive ends. I believe you know experience can erode good character. Even the film industry agrees with me on that. Nollywood has successfully portrayed this fact countless times in its products. Our view after the experience remains important for scrutiny. Some have gone from being patriotic soldiers who fought for the homeland against terrorism to become terrorists. From leftist to rightists, religious apologetics to atheists and of course, there are Stockholm's. You know what makes the difference? "Conviction". It has shaped the world as we know it. I give two almost cliché examples. Prophet Mohammed founded Islam; not him but his companions took the messages in all directions from Arabia by every means. Who knew the *sabi's* new religious idea will be shared by such a large portion of humanity? What gave the disciples of Jesus the gut to attempt taking the message to places beyond the reach of the ancient astrologers? Convictions change the world; it has changed the world and will continue to.

I have grown up understanding a portion of my mind to work with principles even death is incapable of changing. My belief in God and my understanding of His helplessness and pity for suffering millions. My love for all mankind. My faith in truth. My almost insane loyalty to choice, liberalism, equal chances and democracy. I am unable to conceive a society built on privilege as desirable. Under no circumstances including the threat of death will I be subdued by the desire to take for myself what does not belong to me especially when it belongs to the sons and daughters of toil - the working poor. Such determination for me is not to be considered a virtue. Instead, it is a duty. No one should be offered gratitude for being honest. At best, they should earn that acknowledgement due them simply for the purpose of the young boys and girls who need a reference. Those who need a personal example. Nigeria is sinking but I will like to lend a hand in her rescue. You must have a conviction that guides you.

That is one!

Mr. President, please pay attention to history. Because someday, your life will play out in history classes and only the facts about your life will be important. Perhaps you will enter the records for an outstanding performance. Maybe. It should not bother you so much. A student leader does not stay long enough to matter beyond the continuum. That is why there will never be a single dominant culture on University campuses that will last longer than a decade. Generations come and go but the smell- in form of tales will remain. What then should our time be on the campus?

I believe the answer must provide also the summary of the eternal functions of the University. You must be able to stand on your two feet afterwards. Only a few get the scope. They come and leave, yet they never lived per say. It is thoughtless to conceive of a university as another brick and paper making factory. A brick stuffed up, full, with highly repetitive but inapplicable information backed up only with the thick paper- a certificate. Then the real world beats them to pulp. Beats the day light out of them. In many cases, the artificial character they have acquired by years of intimidation and buffoonish culture becomes distasteful. Many lived regimented lives in school, although in secondary schools they had more freedom to make important choices. A university should make you ready. A thinker. Not a recording machine. Compulsory independent leadership training would not be a bad idea. After all that is what a student leader should naturally learn. Right? Well the answer depends on whether or not I will become a Vice Chancellor and use my power to modernize the system. We can't talk about the advanced form of practical training when we still grapple with establishing basic rights. But some other African countries are doing it, while we are still arguing about whether or not a Students Union should exist. In some African universities, half of the school is controlled by the students and Al Jazeera has not reported that heaven fell. I see a huge chunk of our academic leaders having no successors because they are training none. In a few decades or half of a century, we will still accuse Europe of under-developing Nigeria. (Actually, we should be having conferences where we give reports on how technology is exchanging hands among African countries.)

The third will come as important information I will and must provide. The Union which you have was not given to you by the Vice Chancellor acting on some natural streak of benevolence. Pressure did it. It is obvious from the Facebook posts of the Vice Chancellor that he was touched by the NANS threat. And yes, the protests would have happened and would have been elongated. I saw the unrelenting determination in eyes of the young boys and girls who were interested in your Union coming back. In the preparation for the main action, there was a rally where they looked in the face of gun totting policemen.

I saw the results, the police saw it, the other police saw it and the alumni network in the diaspora saw it quite vividly. All began to press their "buttons". The agreement was struck -the Union and the Union leadership must be back. But in exchange for a suspension of the demonstrations. The chat history, call recording -including the Vice Chancellor's proposal for settlement to me personally -and emails are there in the permanent safe. It is to God, conscience and those "college of education students" -whom I suspect you may consider inferior academically- that you own the gratitude for the reinstatement of the Students Union.

You should thank them in case you will need their support again. I strongly advise you to deal well with your allies, the role they will play in your future matters -a lot. You cannot find an ally in your sworn oppressor.

I remember quite clearly that we had a chain of meetings with the Vice Chancellor over the continuous suspension Students' Union. At that time I didn't, honestly, consider the constant advise of highs and lows - age, wisdom, convictions, and if you like social status too. However you would want to remember human dynamics -of and in everything.

An advice went like this; "Let's go and prostrate. I mean let all of us..." The advisor was precise. All of us should -in our unvanquishable number- go out to the presence of his eminence the Vice Chancellor, lie prostrate to him and beg. The giver of that suggestion was a "student leader" and that was his pristine suggestion. This person also passed through the matriculation process of Nigeria's foremost university, I assure you. Different counsels, meanwhile, flew in from people whose cosmos covered an expanse as wide as the universe and those whose "cosmos" - for the want of an intended alternative - occupy thin spaces naturally not larger than their ego could sprawl. In the end, I am usually left with what I believe to be right - the dignity of the people I lead even when they're ungrateful for it. Nothing matters more.

In one of the meetings, *his ancientness* asked a question which I consider to be deserving of the Solomonic judgement of "stick on the back". He asked 'why do you need a union?' While naive colleagues present blabbed their best answers, the restriction on me occasioned by all forms of pressure you can imagine - including the need for avoidance of blame by those mixed tosspots whose reactions always, and recklessly ignore common sense, logic, fact, wisdom, knowledge or understanding of the slightest measure. And will blame your loss of money to a thief on your "dereliction of property" -not the pickpocket whose fingers, in prestidigitation, crept into your pocket. They even find excuse for the thief's choice to be a thief. In the end, the thief is right and you are wrong. To them, I was the one who lead a legitimate, non-violent march. Isn't it? I have, in my entire twenty-five years in Africa and -by the availability of the Internet and diplomatic channels- the world, never heard the most reasonably benign national police of any country shower praise on a protest, adjudging it as peaceful. The commissioner, still stunned by the matured conduct of my colleagues, took time to confess his respect that day and on another day, although I am glad he got his own share of the pebbles.

Mr. President, apologies for going that far in a bid to simply express my perplexity at the blatant show of disregard for civility. In what context can we place that question? Is it factual, moral, of the truth, cultural or of what is right? Let me explain the answer in context of morality, defined as: rightness or wrongness of an action. In the modern world, right and wrong is defined only on the premise of generally accepted norm -the values that we share. Fair enough. At this point, I think it sensible to make clear that I identify first as Nigerian because I have to use the Yoruba example. However, morality here should have a cultural context. In earlier times in the Yoruba society -if the linguistic source of the traditional variant is loosely translated- the ancestral home, Ile-Ife, was founded because both old and young people, regardless of gender, were wise. Ife, being the "first" city of the world in Yoruba cosmology, was created by a fair consideration of the opinions of young people -including teenagers and old people. By implication, if society had

relied on the wisdom of old people alone for direction, progress would have been impossible and the building of the city -a symbol of the social possibilities of mankind would have been unlikely. The Yoruba mankind would have been condemned to a culture without social constructions, great ideas. *Ōmōdé gbón, àgbá gbón li a fidá Ilé-Ifè.*

So what? The old and young met and talked to each other -an almost impossible phenomenon in today's culture. Therefore, assuming I am asked the question over again, I will recount the cultural reference and my answer will continue like this: 'your indefatigable suspender sir, that gives evidence to the need for students to have a platform upon which they could always stand to speak, talk to other people in power, even talk to you whether or not to avoid your *sangoic* rage. Every sentence in their speech must start with "your excellency, indefatigable muscular lord of this fiefdom you have successfully made of a university"'.

Without the young talking to the old, ideas, new ideas cannot be brewed. If those talks do not exist and by a natural streak of accumulating change, the ideas and new ideas are not brewed, that society will suffer a wound. The dialogue of generations is a necessity for the progress of society, a necessary ingredient for good culture.

We often talk more about the Wisdom of Solomon but less of the age of Methuselah. Age and wisdom are two parallel lines that never met and will never meet.

Why do you need a union? And you expect an answer? It is a moral demand on society to let young people talk and thrive. The measure of sense in their words will be determined by the measure of freedom you give to them over a period of time for the necessary mistakes to be made, for the lessons to be learned. Babies must be given the space to creep, crawl, walk and grow.

Why do you need a union? And you expect an answer? It is my God-given right. I should not be asked. You, dear president, are not obligated to answer questions that upset your humanity at this point of evolutionary achievements in philosophy, technology, *and etcetera.*

Rule four.

Let us be practical; stand up and stretch both hands in opposite directions. Look at the tip of your fingers. If you have done that, then good of you. Now pay attention to the following: in life or anywhere, do not, I urge you to never, confuse oppression -sadism, for discipline. Simply imagine the distance between the tip of your fingers when both hands were stretched, that's it. They go opposite directions. A sadist has no discipline. It is there around you. Some developed sadistic temperament from the hangovers of a miserable loveless childhood. But whose fault is it? Certainly not mine. What marvels me is the protracted delay in outgrowing the bitterness.

It is common with people living in the third world to blame themselves for the painful realities of their political economy. Self-abnegation I call it. Many Nigerians, who didn't witness the humiliation of the country between 1983 and 1985 in the hands of a tribal-leaning corrupt

military during the infamous Buhari-Idiagbon era, ended up supporting a leadership they ordinarily would not have wished to ever be. The witnesses gave a wrong testimony of the strategies of the regime to "curb indiscipline" in the already battered people but not in the people in government. Instead of expanding the public utilities to reduce scarcity, terror, through armed men and women in boots and uniforms, was unleashed on the local population. A sad story for a young country.

Sadists must be refused harshly. If you refuse a sadist nicely, you are encouraging the broaching of your space. They are corrupt but don't want you to complain. That is not discipline, it is pure madness. And what do you do to madness? Confine it, restrict it in a straitjacket. No matter how powerful your enemy is, however vulnerable you are, you must say no to cocky and oppressive behaviors and keep a straight face. Your defiance must be seen.

Five.

a) No student leader should nag. I learned that from General Thucydides; he remained sane through his wars, his tiredness. b) And to add to that, no other representation must be made with the school or other institutions outside the Executive Committee. If you allow that, you would have successfully rendered your Union irrelevant. If your identity or the Union's is assumed by your own colleagues, deal with it quick, and decisively. I have been impersonated many times and my silence about it -in a bid to maintain order and unity was, in the long run, worthless and disastrous. Let your colleagues know those with inordinate ambitions. Let us know the future thieves.

Sixth!

You are the president of a union that draws membership from people of different background. Some are taught to respect to the point of self-abasement defined by Dr Ian Trail as 'a state of excessive, unwarranted humility, self-inflicted humiliation and degradation'. Some are spoiled, some are aggressively religious. These idiosyncrasies affect the behavior of the student body. There are different *tribes* you have to keep united and interested in the workings of the Students Union.

Be careful not to disenfranchise them with any ludicrous policies. Be sure you are doing the right thing. There are quietly sharp students who were disenfranchised for a long time. Many of whom never saw their proclivities gain expression. There are the ones you find in social discussant hubs and literary societies. They always feel absent from the activities of the Union. I saw them come into the fold once I won the elections. I am a member of that tribe, can speak and understand the language but then, I am lengthened with another possession - the temperament cum interests of a student leader. In me they found a friend. In you and your successors, they must find a brother. In case you are unable to figure it out, you should learn - the intellectuals are proud but easy to convince. They know the end of your request the moment

you begin. Your duty is to create a safe spot for them in the Union house. To enfranchise the tribe, the Union house must become a free expression zone for uncensored political discussion. In the Union house, the most powerful tyrants alongside tyrannical cultures are dealt blows they cannot endure. Because, dear president, all tyrannical regimes that have fallen ended when enlightened discussions began. The Union house; she is your Olympus. The place where all rumors come -first. It is the home of everyone who is tired and needs to be energized, the fearful, the brave, the happy, the ones with the relevant stories, the wise. The liberals, the Christian, the Moslem, the non-of-the-above, the angry, the timid, the progressive. Name it.

Why do you have to make an extra effort? Because when the sand storm comes, they are the trees that defend the land. If you don't go after them, you will walk alone. Discussions must continue. Great sages and intelligence debaters must appear frequently at the Union house to tell their stories. The very old men and women of the patriotic intelligentsia must lay down their mantles for younger people to take and continue the long walk.

The seventh.

I have heard people thank the Vice Chancellor for the benevolent gift of the Students Union, irrelevant as their thanksgiving might be; I have no comment about it. What is certain, in whatever manner it manifests, is the insincerity that accompanies punitive laws. The academic requirements for contesting for an executive position has been set higher to increase the stake to cause any genuine union leader -who might have a reason to reject anti-student policies- to have a rethink about whether he wants to jeopardize his cumulative GPA. That smack of disregard for civility again. How would an academic leader stoop so low to attack an undergraduate student in the first place? But then you would think it will work, no it won't. Whoever recommended that policy is a poor student of history. The University once attempted to "disgrace" a generation of student leaders thought to be disruptive. The plan was to publish their cumulative GPA for the entire university community. In response, the student leaders dared the administration which reneged. You know why? Because all the members of the executive committee and the principal officers of student representative council were on first class save the president who was academically -but not morally- deficient. In the executive committee I lead there were two first class candidates. Why much ado about nothing?

Dear President, if all it requires, in the new "law", to get the Union proscribed again is squeezing your face -deliberately or not- twelve times in front of the Vice Chancellor, by the time you count three, the Union would have been proscribed again. That is the rule of the kind of law in this clime. I have interacted with several lawyers in the cause of the attack on the Union. I have met no lawyer who agrees with the illegal suspension of the Union. Yet, without cause, to some academic leaders whose penchant for hatred and sadistic proclivities clashed with the appearance of the Students Union- it was all war, fire and fury without a single infraction registered in my name. I could feel it; they wanted my neck snapped, my eyes gorged out, my ears carved, my limbs separated. If there is anything left of me, the zoo lions can have it. And if there is any other thing left, the unfed hyena can slurp.

"He should just be destroyed -utterly. His friends? Chain them to the back of trucks, piled on one another and drive far as you can reach until you get tired of driving. Then leave them for the vultures".

I look forward to a society where the judges of character will be able to stand the test of it. My suggestion here is for you to do your thing. An unjust law, if paid attention or heeded, makes an idiot out of you.

In loco parentis is the greatest academic deceit ever. There are cases of misconduct that deserve punishment and even further criminal prosecution committed by students on campus. If by chance the persona is directly related to any leader within the compound, the case will die a natural death; not so for "the others". The natural instinct that exists between a parent and the child does not exist between a teacher and the student. In loco parentis is having a bad day with additional proofs emerging from the recent barrage of scandals that have incessantly hit Nigerian tertiary institutions. So much for in loco parentis. It is, for a large part of it, a facade so thin a mosquito can fly through it and survive without noticing that anything was there. You don't have to be my father to be reasonably benign towards me. Your duty as a teacher to me, beyond the collective agreement on the burden of oppression, already covers all I may need in my sojourn. You can be close to your teachers and it is also preferable that you are able to find in them, your mentor. It is good. What is bad is extending the pleasantries beyond the wrists to the throat by putting it in policy. Then suddenly in loco parentis happens and the phone pouch which the teacher has been carrying since departing from the house becomes too heavy once the students are around. Of course you can, out of honor; help with heavy baggage, the problem is that it becomes evil when it is your duty. No. This is not the home. If we need more lessons on such, we have the real daddy and mummy. Some students have become victims of unnecessary delay in the campuses as punishment for the offenses that do not exist in the books. I understand that as young people in Africa, we have many "fathers" and "mothers" who are, biologically, not our fathers and mothers but Mr. President, you are a gentleman. You cannot refer to the Vice Chancellor or any member of the academic community as "daddy" or "mummy". You are not in your local family compound in Nnewi or Opobo. Do not be blackmailed with the charge of arrogance, the rule is "live, and let live". A professor should better be addressed as "professor so-and-so" and a doctor as "doctor so-and-so", if the addressee is not content with his or her honorable hard-earned title, too bad. If you let them have it for whatever reason you are able to come up with, you are, with all due respect, a blithering fool. I mean that not as an insult. If you concede the more important cohesive advantage of mutual respect for any form of gratification, it becomes a culture. You are putting the people you are supposed to be protecting in danger, remember? It will be easy for you to be pocketed. Put simply, the same policy that, initially, was intended to give you the best experience is now an access code to violate you. I am a witness.

The eighth rule.

Do not miss the gender question. The most active participation in the Students Union easily

emerges from the female section, yet they are the most vulnerable. They are not allowed to make laws of their own, own a parliament in their halls of residence and are easy targets for both the male and female teachers. Their complaints must shape the policies of the student body.

The ninth rule.

There is no liberty without protests. I've written earlier that you are vulnerable to becoming a historical idiot if you allow yourself be lulled into a false sense of security. You feel secured until life happens to you. I have never changed my view concerning the matter. There is a place for dialogue which, very well, is not the end of the matter. I wish the threats of protests are unnecessary but that decision is not yours to make. There are a hundred things that require quick response. But no, they are busy, too busy, they want to feel powerful. Deliberately delaying matters and seeing a sprawling crowd or a long queue waiting to get a service is a way to elicit pain which in turn proves that they are in control. Take for example in a metaphorical depiction of a true event; a female hall suffers the protracted unavailability of water supply and electricity. You and I know the importance of the former in life, toilets, bathrooms, laundry and the latter in studying, projects, -and as a matter of scientific necessity - water. The warden of the hall then decides to take a trip to London or elsewhere *pro tempora*. The Students Union might decide to help put things in order, but shockingly, the academic leaders refuse, proceeding to threatening sanction if you dare help the girls out. I have witnessed it. Mr. President, that student leader was nearly made into skewered meat. If you asked me what I will do about it next time, I'll turn the school compound into a revolutionary camp and maintain it that way until the situation is changed. You may meet with the arguments that protests are outlawed or that there is one stupid law prohibiting protests, that's not true. No Nigerian law says that. Then if all else fails, the argument begins to take a new turn; due process. Due process and protests are the same. Protests are a process to get what is due. So don't let anyone bamboozle you with the boring talk about why you should go through a never-ending due process while the solvable problem persists. It is pure nonsense. Protests are allowed, unless you decide otherwise. That concludes it.

Ten.

Solidarity! In a meeting concerning the continuous suspension of the Union a student leader told had said that Ibadan varsity students need to see with other unions; he meant student bodies of other tertiary institutions. The Vice Chancellor comically quipped, 'you want to solidarize with other unions, which unions? NURTW? Up national...' He let out a loud laughter. The tenth rule is not about NURTW but I have, surprisingly, been approached by a section of that NURTW for endorsement. I felt a disruption in my comfort being approached by a transport union known for violent disruption in the city for endorsement. I, promised to think on it, am still thinking on it and will arrive at a decision later in life. I honestly thought on -not consider doing- it and while

doing so, I was reminded that the best courier services in Nigeria cannot match up with the service of a traditional NURTW. I have no evidence of parcels that have never gone missing. In a corrupt country like Nigeria, a parcel left to the discretion of a poor bus driver is delivered safely and accurately? Make no judgment yet, it is not bad being present in their office to secure student interests. Or their public symposiums. It is not bad. Just do not poke your nose in their politics - I do not need to teach you not to. Your head staying on your neck is important to the Union.

The real solidarity is with the labor unions within and outside the campus. Every labor association must be your ally. You should invite them to the Union house more frequently than you invite the politicians. ASUU too. Yes ASUU the forward striker. Never mistake ASUU for the Administration of the University. They are different. You may ask me what their inputs were during the attack on the Union. Though I can't explain away the soft persuasive positions they took on our side, the alliance is important. You should visit their secretariats and attend their Congresses. You should speak there too. It is better to have an ally in them than an unrequited enemy.

The eleventh rule. Telling the truth; short term disadvantage but long term good.

You are a lighthouse to which we all look. Not too many university intellectuals behave defiantly these days. Out of the not-too-many, a few are confused about the state of the nation. They don't know what the ideal Nigeria should be like. Perhaps they were uninterested in the information necessary to acquire the status of a public intellectual. Perhaps, the rest - with the exception of only a few who still stand upright - have kowtowed to the idea of "join(ing) them, if you can't beat them". The last strike action last year has gone by, taking with it precious time while leaving no scratches on the government like a mountain snake slithers over a rocky surface. Labor leaders are now too careful to embarrass an unyielding government.

Simply put, I am not averse to party politics; however, my business is that sacred institutions must not be traded. No. Take for instance the attempted conferring of the university's Honorary Doctorate Degree on President Muhammadu Buhari speaks largely on the state of the academia in Nigeria. -The duty of intellectuals is to tell the truth. In a chaotic world where there is need for light to guide our path to salvation; the Church, civil society groups and, very importantly, intellectuals have a role to play. What the barrack is to the military, the university is to the academia. The garrison of the intellectuals is the University. The duty of intellectuals, however, is to fight using the instrument of the truth. The courage with which the generations past have confronted tyranny cannot be separated from the knowledge of truth. - It is quickly forgotten the weight of the highest award for a honored individual especially in Nigeria's foremost university on its seventieth anniversary. It simply places Buhari on the same page with former president of the Republic of South Africa and Nobel laureate Nelson Mandela. Is that not absurd? Repugnant! On the conferral date, the president didn't come. Let us remember that there is a chorus of intellectuals who are always ready to sing for murderous tyrants. Perhaps their song will earn them a position in the leadership of the empire. Intellectuals also lie for a living. No society can

survive the contempt for truth. We all have had to lie at a time, at least, in our lives. But pertinent to the need for a just society is unwavering belief in the truth. You are not to lie to your colleagues. I counsel that you should not do things that require excuses or stories that touch later. The day you lose the light, you stop being a lighthouse.

The twelfth rule.

A student leader is a hard worker. I am sure long meetings were detestable to my colleagues on the team. I have been accustomed to the pangs of long grueling meetings. Some of our meetings lasted about ten hours; mine -sometimes while attending to other issues whether it concerns me or not- lasts the entire day. You still have to read your books, after all the word "student" comes first in "student leader". The Union house is a place for a long intense leadership retreat that must shape your life eternally. If you miss the process, you will have no such opportunities. One of my colleagues on the committee told me "thank you" for the training, they have become rugged men. I knew that I drove them hard; it is the demand, a fact of life. No assignment must evade you. I counsel scrupulous attention to every detail. To do so, I had to sleep on the office table. I wish that table is kept in the museum. It has served beyond the purpose of a table.

Power is not an end in itself. You are not meant to deploy your power for personal ends. There is no place for retribution in the student body. Not all your friends will support you. You need all the help you can get. I learned from Cas, a former student leader the rule of fellowship. He probably learnt that from Dale Carnegie that it is profitable to try and change your enemies to your friends. Your success as a young leader is not meant to shame your opposition. Oppositions are to be treated with tolerance. We live in a wonderful country. So wonderful, you are unable to answer the question on how we have survived thus far. Everyone wants to oppress the next vulnerable person. You suddenly realize the possibility of it being a biological factor but then you remember it is peculiar to the third world. Any buffoon may want to explain away the existence of such tendency in developed countries, but I can guess what the choice would be between living here or there. You transcend that culture. Once I learned of a professor who was appointed the transport committee chairman of the University. He immediately ordered the carving of a wooden structure to indicate his new "office" and placed in the parking lot of his faculty. The professor is, obviously, ignorant of how diminutive it is to be in that position in relation to his sacred title. You see, we are a wonderful people. Mr. President, I caution that you should be modest. There is no culture in the world where modesty is rewarded with attention and -if you are lucky- respect.

Epilogue

Please disabuse your mind of the illusion of a twenty-first century union. I have listened to different foolish talks about that thing. It smacks of irresponsibility. Most of its proponents in the past are now sad, unhappy or bad examples of public morals. They lack the basic modicum of principles. Dear president, the idea of a twenty-first century union simply asks of you the essentials which if removed reduce you to a piece of monstrosity with no thought within. They advise you against conscience and lie against reality. In their minds, they wished they had your office for satanic gains. They ask you to disregard the yearnings of your colleagues because they have no answers to them; they are too lazy to think. They are mostly guilty of influence peddling and abusive use of office. The concept is not conceptual. It is because modernity is associated with the twenty-first century that they adopted the tag. Yet, they understand nothing about the twenty-first century, modernity or student leadership. That's why they propose to you: 'why can't we just talk to this people and let's get on with the day's job? /We can achieve more when we leave our biases out of this negotiation'. Don't be stupid. What they are telling you is that you should leave your primary responsibilities for other pursuits that assault the collectively known stances of the student body. Your Union is your bias; being told to leave it is absurd to say the least. 'Let us leave our sentiments for neutral discussion' invariably means: 'leave your sentiments, accept mine and agree with me'.

The Students Union -regardless of its shape, form, condition- should not let down its defense.

In spite of the character which the idea of a twenty-first century union has forged, there are some who bother less about the thinning out of the social war it is locked in. My argument is, nevertheless, in tandem with reality. The scope of irresponsible behavior has remained; the imposition of payment of undeliverable service and academic materials like the student handbook that has not been distributed for years despite payment, the continuous suspension of students and workers who exercise their basic rights to ask questions, imposition of stringent rules, primitive show of power -even by lecturers in administrative work and -for instance, you can find under the hot sun a long queue in front of a presently gossiping porter or hall warden who is simply feeling powerful to have control over a squatting crowd. There are many sick people in this world, Mr. President.

Twenty-first century union has to be interested in projects, social security... The Union can and -sometimes- must have other responsibilities. Yes. There are fees to be paid. Indigent students who are truly indigent, reconnecting with the world through international student exchange, establishing a program for the country's out-of-school children. I personally planned all of that and I planned a drone research project. Need I say I was the person who reminded the administration of an early preparation for the seventieth anniversary of the school. The fact is there are no ambitious projects that are capable of displacing the basic functions of the Union.

The Union house was built in 1971 by students. In 1981, the campus transport committee was founded -by students- after staging several protests demanding - from the administration - that cabs must be used on the campus. In the 1980s, the Union house compound was extended to include an Olympic-standard swimming pool -not by the administration but- by student leaders. M.K.O. Abiola was a major donor. In 1990 the shopping complex, right opposite Sultan Bello Hall was built by students -on the foundation stone there is inscribed the information about the building. If you are a student of history, you will realize that the major riots on the campuses happened during that time. I don't want those riots back but I don't condemn them either.

I have seen the administration shoot down projects simply because the Dean of Students Affairs demanded that an apology be written on Facebook by the Union president but he refused. That president was an adherent to the warped philosophy of twenty-first century union which will do whatever it takes to evade tackling real issues. But that is not the end to the demand of those who do not want the Union to succeed. If the Vice Chancellor should demand for your fingernails and you offer it as a token of appeasement for your time, he will not stop until he has taken your elbow. I agree that things should change except that age-long rejection of overbearing behaviors should be neglected while tacitly tolerating it. That is not change, it is called decay.

As I close this letter, please be reminded that you have a place in the world. Odesola, a former student leader in a visionary statement said; "what happens here changes the world". I hope it does. You are to pursue a place in the world for the Students Union and the University of Ibadan. A student leader is not allowed to fail in her duties or his duties, but you can make your mistakes. Leadership business is not a tea party, is serious but flexible. Therefore, do not allow too much seriousness to get into your account. You are not his holiness the Pope, you are not a saint. You are human, therefore be human and learn through the process. Don't launch a rocket into space or build a nuclear plant. Don't change the world; you are not a super hero.

I can't blame myself for trying to reverse the problems of the past. If anyone tries ardently to blame me for anything at all, ask them for a trace. Some have blamed me for being the fighter that I am. The point they ignore, out of willful ignorance, is the reality that we -young people- have a country that needs more fighters, for reducing corruption is a war that must be won regardless of the failed attempts. A modern Nigeria is a future that you and I cannot fail to achieve. Old recycled people should not dictate the pace. If other people's lives are being destroyed right before your eyes and you refuse to do anything, you are not a gentleman. I blame those whose fluttering tongues veer back and forth. They lack the basic understanding of duty. I had to take time to explain to them the preamble of the Constitution with its accompanying prescription for the direction of the Union. I pity the hopelessly naive who love to disappoint sensibility by ignoring obvious facts. I blame the labor unions which refused to act accordingly in spite of eliciting cooperation from us, thereby complicating the matter. The attack on the Union has continued to this day.

There was a planned student exchange program with two UK universities by the diaspora network of the alumni association. My fear was that if the kids from Queen Mary had come, the state of social cohesion within the academia will be a shocking rude embarrassment to them

and for us. They will wonder how such incompetence found its way into the twenty-first century. But they probably won't come. Thanks to his Excellency indefatigable muscular lord of this fiefdom who deliberately jeopardized the plan.

Dear Successor, history has no conclusion. We struggled against colonialism but life is not working as we thought it will be. Evil still came home to roost. Evil -having metamorphosed into a rigid system- will fight on and good, its opposite, will continue to struggle against it. Make no mistake, evil men can win -or be defeated. The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is our surrender.

In solidarity,

Ojo, Aderemi

About the author

Ojo, Aderemi was President of the University of Ibadan Students Union in 2017. His articles appear on Internet media spaces and his website platinumderemi.com which, presently, is under reconstruction. He is a teacher and speaker with special interest in developmental history, free speech, representative democracy and the rise of autocracy. While speaking at Nigerian Internet Forum in Lagos in 2019, he was quoted as saying "a young educated mind, armed with the internet is a threat to tyranny". He lives in Ibadan where he writes and is involved in community organizing and SDG advocacy.

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