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TRIBALISM AND NEPOTISM, A GARGANTUAN NIGERIAN PROBLEM.

As people, we naturally identify with cultures, values and practices that surround us. In the process of socialization, society rubs off its views, perceptions, perspectives and standards on individuals. Our thoughts, words, attitudes and mannerisms are influenced by what we see and hear all around us.

However, as we grow older and acquire education; formally and informally, it becomes each individual’s responsibility to **“think.”** As basic as this may sound, I have come to realize that not many engage in this practice. For you see, the act of thinking is not very easy or comfortable after all. Besides, there are many who do not want others to think but simply to accept their positions, statements and actions without asking questions hook, line and sinker! So in fact many have neither been taught nor encouraged to think.

The `practices of nepotism, tribalism and others like racism, discrimination, exclusion and marginalization are not peculiar to a particular people or region. They are widespread and found everywhere. That is why in many countries and cultures, there are systems, laws, checks and balances to ensure that these practices are reduced to the barest minimum and even punished when necessary and Nigeria is no exception.

Nigeria is the most populous black nation in the world, is a very diverse, multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious, nation with over 500 ethnic groups, the three major ethnic groups being Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa. These ethic groups since the dawn of time have been competing for superiority and dominance over the other as each of these ethnic groups always want to be in top positions in government so as to help and improve their peoples standard of living.

However, we must realise that if we must exist and thrive as one nation and one people, it cannot be to the detriment or disadvantage of any group — irrespective of size or geography.

Unfortunately, we seem to be making very little effort in this regard. **Rather, we allow,** yes allow**, the political class and elites to take advantage of our differences to further deepen and emphasize our differences rather that unite us and celebrate our diversity.** We are told to vote and support based on religion and ethnicity while we throw merit, competence and ability to deliver in the trash. Our religious and traditional rulers openly endorse and support only members of a certain tribe or religion, and turn a blind eye when others are being abused, excluded and even killed.

There is certainly nothing wrong in belonging to or identifying with a certain tribe, religion, ethnicity or culture. But, where is the place for our common humanity? Where is the place for tolerance, peace and love?

Since the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern protectorates, Nigeria much like other developing and developed counties have in one way or the other encountered this social ill which eats into all walks of life. Take for instance in America, their own form of tribalism and nepotism is seen as racism as the Whites being the majority of the American populace suppress and oppress Blacks, Latino’s, Asians and all other races that fall under the minority population in America. This is a systemic form of control inbuilt in the American system in order for the whites to remain in control of the economy and the larger society.

Since Nigeria got her independence in 1960, the country has fallen victim to the aforementioned societal ill ; Tribalism and Nepotism which most Nigerians in reality now regard as a societal norm but in actuality shouldn’t be that way. This societal problem has been embedded in the very roots of the Nigerian system as well as the Nigerian professional culture.

In the history of Nigerian politics, the Northern part of the country comprising of the Hausa’s, Fulani”s, etc have been more successful than other regions in terms of holding the highest political offices in the land. Most Nigerian presidents since her independence have been from the Northern region showing further proof of their dominance in the politics of the nation. Since the Northerners have been so successful in capturing political power, they often times than not find themselves in situations where they would prefer to employ someone they know or someone who belongs to their own ethnicity to the detriment of someone who is best suited and qualified to handle a job.

Tribalism as perceived by some Nigerians (especially those who experienced the Civil War) is grossly exaggerated. They despise, criticize, and plot the downfall of others just because they do not belong to the same region as them hence breeding hatred amongst each other. This is a major reason that has brought about disunity and stunted growth and development of the country as a whole.

Meanwhile, the younger generations watch the actions of their parents towards others belonging to different ethnic groups and emulate them. Despite all this, some do not emulate their parents, instead they have grown and developed a more mature approach towards dealing with other people that do not belong to their own ethnic group. The younger generations have reached a stage of maturity their parents have failed to attain mainly due to negligence, hatred and some other reasons which they feel is justifiable.

Nepotism and tribalism cannot simply be wished away. They cannot even be cured through laws and policies alone. ****We need to teach and encourage people to think for themselves.**** Let us ask why we must sacrifice our collective and national interests simply for the sake of supporting our kinsmen and women who continue to keep our people in poverty, unemployment and illiteracy. Let us ask why decades of supporting only “our own” has not yielded any positive results. Let us ask why the region that has produced the greatest number of Heads of States also has the highest rates of poverty, malnutrition and out-of-school children.

The effects of tribalism is overwhelmingly a silent killer as it eats deep into the fortress of the nations wealth and value so we must do all within our power through proper education and leadership by example, we must show how to look beyond a person’s name, skin tone, tribal marks and length of clothing to the contents and intents of the heart and head. The Nigeria that will work and thrive is the Nigeria that works for all — each and every one of us. It is the Nigeria where every Nigerian can dream and achieve their dreams without nepotism, tribalism, discrimination and the likes.