How to be a Nigerian Scholar in the West

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January 26, 2021



While any legitimate criticisms of a decrepit system cannot be equated with an outright dismissal of it, there is something to be said to the Nigerian abroad whose narratives about colleagues at home are couched mainly in typecasting rhetoric. Neither a gesture at academic populism nor a hint of empty nationalism, this, here, is my suggestion to you, the Nigerian academic who, due to your Western location, routinely dismiss colleagues in the homeland and thrash people on the continent. As a matter of first importance, you must always have solutions for the local contexts you are no longer embedded in.

In your brilliant theses and polemics, take only one side of an argument and marshal it as the premise for your sound logic. Simply argue that all Nigerian professors based at home are inept and crude. Never mind that your grouse is with only a few who have counterparts in your region of the world. Silence anyone on your Facebook timeline that has a different explanation from your hallowed theories on Twitter. You are the only voice of reason; they, the voice of superstition, and all things inchoate and unsophisticated.

Go ahead, mansplain too. How can some woman in Africa dare challenge your lofty ideas? Remind the bloody feminist you are not her husband. Your faux Soyinkasqueness must not be insulted. You are "in the abroad " and your views must be seen by these irrational colleagues you have left in the dark as the absolute and irrefutable truths. After all, their research is a mere survival response to a parlous postcolonial state you are so generous to theorize in your peer-reviewed essays.

And do not forget, yours is the finest example of scholarship and your prestigious location is the desired Mecca those at home dream only about. As a matter of fact, avoid any scholarly conversation with a Nigerian professor who is so unfortunate to have never seen an airport before. Why argue with a schmuck? They will call you out for arrogance.

How unfair to rightly diagnose your humble heart. Oga, they are not worth your time. You have 24 hours in a day. They have 42. You need to move on to your next research. The Nobel Prize is calling. And when next you meet a colleague from home at a conference in Chicago, make sure you keep a safe distance. They may beg to share a hotel room with you or look to you to pay for dinner. Remember, they still think you pick money on the streets of Syracuse.

Are you on the same panel? Great. It's time again to take that usual mental note about the lack of theoretical rigour in their analyses. Smile and pat your messianic ego on the shoulder. Your next monograph will deliver them from mental blockage. Forget that there are scholars in your own location who are also mediocre and uninterested in research. Focus only on your African comrades and amplify their in-born mental laziness in your social media posts and on your listserves. To hell with intellectual humility; those guys are the scum of the earth.

And when next you visit an archive or library at home, be sure to complain about the kickbacks you were made to pay. Be careful to frame the narrative well: some guy did not see the value of your world-acclaimed research and asked you to give a bribe. Your poor saintly soul had no choice. And how dare you acknowledge the local knowledge producers you interacted with during your last field trip? Of course, you have to remember they are never experts. Only mere informants who ask for money before presenting any useful data. The rule of thumb is never to forget too there are no sound thinkers at home. How can there be? They are all consumers of knowledge who depend on your libraries in London.

And don't ever make the mistake of citing a Nigerian professor who works and teaches in Nigeria. If you do, make sure it is an act of mercy from you, most noble Oga. They will thank you too: their promotion to full professorship depends on it. If, in your almighty benevolence, you ever decide to co-author a work with a colleague at home, be sure they do the dirty jobs. Thus says Oga from his location in exile! And it shall come to pass in Africa, that forsaken country whose research you are making visible in your pan-African generosity.

If anything goes wrong in the research process, make sure you excoriate the colleague at home. He is too busy with administrative work and services that distract him from the merits of your joint project. Blame him. He is always to be blamed. Your tenure is at stake.

While at all of these, make sure your elitist bubble does not burst. We need you and your Afropolitan mulishness to justify an initial gra-gra. And we will love you for it.

A holy zeal for your father's country has consumed you and nothing can be done to check a slanted outburst.

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