



the **PALLOTTINE MAGAZINE**

NIGERIA

CARITAS CHRISTI URGET NOS I 21ST EDITION 2026

COVER STORY:

“JAPA” Ambition and Home Responsibility: Towards the 2027 Election



Exclusive Interviews with



**Your Grace, Most Rev.
Lucius Iwejuru Ugorji**
Archbishop of Owerri Archdiocese



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**Chief Sir Ikenna Okafor
(Ide Akwaeze)**
A Papal Knight of St. Sylvester, Sports
Philanthropist and Humanitarian



Dr. Chibueze Ofobuike
Mayor, Aguata Local Government Area
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By Rev. Fr. Dr. Joseph Ugo Umeseagu, SAC



At first Ikemefuna was very much afraid. Once or twice he tried to run away, but he did not know where to go. In the end, he thought of his mother and his three-year-old sister and sister-in-law. Nwoye's mother was very fond of him and treated him as one of her own children. But she said to him: "When shall I go home?" Chima Akiche, through his eyes (Ikemefuna, 2008), p.22

Why was it that despite the benevolence of Nwoye's mother towards him, at that Ikemefuna said was, "When shall I go home?" Why was he not so happy? Was it because

into a high level of fear, insecurity, and a loss of focus. He was left with a heavy burden to carry. He was not free to go home. He was not free to go home. He was not free to go home.

The boy, Ikemefuna, was the dismissed lad who was sacrificed to the village of Umuofia. In the end, he was taken away from his homeland. Ikemefuna was a messenger to Umuofia as a return to appease the people of Umuofia for the killing of one of their sons. His father was involved in the crime, but Ikemefuna knew nothing about it.

"Like Ikemefuna, we have people who look up to us as leaders and we even call some 'father', but they will not listen to us. They will not listen to us. They will not listen to us."

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AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

WITH THE ARCHBISHOP LUCIUS IWEJURU UGORJI



PALLOTTINE MAGAZINE: Monsignor, as the Archbishop of Owerri, the Metropolitan of Eastern Ecclesiastical Province and the immediate past President of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria, what burdens about Nigeria weigh most heavily on your heart today?

ARCHBISHOP: When I look at Nigeria today, my heart is heavy. Very heavy. We are a nation of extraordinary gifts. A rich soil, abundant minerals, a young and energetic population, a deep and resilient faith. And yet we are squandering all of it. We are squandering all of it. We are squandering all of it.

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An Interview with our Provincial, Rev. Fr. Markus Hau, SAC.



Pallottine Magazine: Good evening, Father, and thank you for granting us this interview. We are the editorial crew of Pallottine Magazine. I am Darlington Ezike, the Production Manager, and with me is Darlus Minsuwa, the Editor-in-Chief of Pallottine Magazine.

Provincial: I am Father Markus Hau, the Provincial Rector of the Heart of Jesus Province. I was born in 1974 in the Rheinland, which is in the western part of Germany, and completed my standard education program there. I initially began studying civil law before deciding to join the Pallottines. At that time, the diocese or perhaps the

monastery close to my hometown. I visited quite often and had to choose between the Benedictines and the Pallottines. But I ultimately joined the Pallottines. Why? Because when I met the monks in the novitiate at that time, it was a large group. I felt that I could live among these people. I had a very good feeling about joining them and I joined them in 1995 and followed the standard path of novitiate and theological studies. In 2002, I made my final consecration, and in 2004, I was ordained a priest. I studied in Rome at the Gregorian University. After my studies, I worked in youth center which still exists but in a different location. Afterward, I began my pastoral year and served as an assistant priest in Friedberg. In the southern Germany, and afterwards served for three years in Vallendar. Then in 2007, I became a parish priest in Friedberg after my years as an assistant priest. I served as a parish priest until 2017. Following that, I was the Mission Secretary for five years, and after the election, I became the Provincial Rector. So, that is the summary of my entire curriculum vitae.

Pallottine Magazine: Thank you, Father, for that detailed answer. Father, how have you experienced Nigeria so far?

Provincial: I have been visiting Nigeria for about nine years now. I first arrived for Christmas in 2017. What I see today shows significant progress; the entire country is growing. When I first came in 2017, things were much simpler, but today the world is reflected

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The Pallottine MAGAZINE Interview With Chief Sir Ikenna Okafor (Ide Akwaeze)



Pallottine Magazine: Good afternoon, Sir. We are members of the editorial crew of Pallottine Magazine. We belong to the Society of the Catholic Apostles, popularly known as the Pallottine Fathers and Brothers. Right here are Rev. Fr. Dr. Joseph Umeseagu, SAC, the Rector of our theology community house and our moderator, Darlus Minsuwa, our Editor-in-Chief, Innocent Okoro, our cameraman, and Darlington Ezike, the production manager. We thank you sincerely for granting us the privilege of this interview. To begin, would you mind introducing your life and our readers?

Chief Sir Ikenna Okafor: I will provide a brief introduction. My name is Ikenna Okafor. I am a father, a husband, a Papal Knight of Saint Peter, a traditional chief of many kingdoms,

an employer of labor, a sports philanthropist, and a humanitarian. I am a father of five children, Sophie, Stephanie, Susan, Isena, and Oghenigbo. I am from Akwaeze in Anambra State, and currently doing business in Nigeria.

Pallottine Magazine: Thank you, Sir. You established Kweke Global Leasing Limited, an oil and gas engineering company incorporated in 2002 and commenced business in 2006. During the inauguration of its head office in Port Harcourt in 2024, you reportedly stated that you started it "with no capital, no brother, no sister, but with a clear vision" - and it has grown to become a world-class company. How did you achieve such a great success in Nigerian context?

Chief Sir Ikenna Okafor: There is no shortcut to success. In all honesty, I don't think we have achieved success yet, but we have been on the right track towards our destination. Success is a continuous process, like a pilgrimage that requires constant effort. It is like a recurring decimal. We have achieved our current growth by leveraging on integrity and delivering on the promises we make to our clients. But business growth comes from people doing exactly what they say they will do. The greatest factor that has helped us survive in the very muddy waters of Nigerian business environment is honesty and delivery in our transactions. The second one is that we position ourselves as the best price alternative. We are interested in delivering long-term business relationships rather than one-off transactions. We ensure that our clients have a positive experience with us.

Pallottine Magazine: Thank you, Sir. At the same time, you are also a traditional chief of many kingdoms, a Papal Knight of Saint Peter, a husband, a father, a sports philanthropist, and a humanitarian. How do you balance all these roles?

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JAPA: Ambition, Responsibility, And The Soul Of A Nation Towards The 2027 Election

By Fr. Vincent Elocukwu Obi, SAC

Hochschule für Musik und Tanz, Cologne, Germany



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO "JAPA"? In the Yoruba language, Japa means to flee or escape swiftly, often with urgency. Yet, in contemporary Nigerian usage, the word has evolved to signify a dual meaning. It has become a cultural expression heard in Afrobeat lyrics, Nollywood scripts, street slang, university session vivas, elections often

despite these institutional struggles, social resilience remains. Nigeria's greatest strengths, and its informal networks continue to support individuals where formal systems fall short. These social structures help sustain everyday life even in difficult circumstances. Yet, the disconnect between political

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Interview With Dr. Chibueze Ofoibu

Mayor, Agwa Local Government Area (AGWA) candidates, House of Representatives (Agwa Federal Constituency)



Pallottine Magazine: Thank you, Sir, for granting us the opportunity to interview you. Congratulations for emerging as the flag bearer of your pallottine party in the forthcoming federal house of representatives election. We are the editorial crew of Pallottine Magazine. Please, could you introduce yourself to us and our readers?

Dr. Chibueze Ofoibu: Thank you very much. My name is Dr. Chibueze Ofoibu. I am the Mayor of Agwa Local Government Area, one of the 21 Local Government Areas in Anambra State. I have been serving as the Mayor since 2024. Prior to that, I served as the Transition Committee Chairman from August 2022 until September 2024. (Agwa) has served two years as Transition Committee Chairman and two years as Mayor. My tenure will come to an end in September 2026. Incidentally, I am also the candidate of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) for the forthcoming General Election scheduled for January 16, 2027. My aspiration is to represent the good people of Agwa Federal Constituency in the House of Representatives. Thank you.

Pallottine Magazine: Thank you very much. Dr. Ofoibu, you served as the Chairman of Agwa Local Government Area, could you highlight some of your major achievements that you believe have earned the confidence of the people and prepared you to represent them at the federal level?

Dr. Chibueze Ofoibu: First, I consider the opportunity to serve as Mayor a great privilege. When I assumed office in August 2022, I was, and I believe still am, the youngest person to serve in that capacity. I have great responsibility, especially considering public perceptions about my age and experience. However, I embraced it as a challenge. Before my appointment as Mayor, I was a private practitioner. I had a strong responsibility to look to study the people are capable of delivering quality leadership when assumed office. I took time to young the opportunities and challenges across the horizon.

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Nigeria stands today at a difficult but decisive moment in her history. The frustrations in the land are real. The hunger is real. The insecurity is real. The disappointment many citizens feel after the last general election is real. Yet, amid these realities, one dangerous spirit continues to spread among young Nigerians: the spirit of “japa at all costs.” For many youths, leaving the country has become not merely an option but an ambition, a dream, and even a measure of success. Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Europe have become modern promised lands in the imagination of many Nigerians.

While migration itself is not evil, the mass abandonment of our homeland raises a painful question: who will remain to rebuild Nigeria?

The disappointment from the last election deepened the hopelessness of many citizens. Millions voted with high expectations, hoping for a new Nigeria built on competence, transparency, and accountability. Instead, many

Nigerians were greeted with controversies, allegations of irregularities, voter intimidation, suppression, and widespread vote buying. Democracy was bruised when the value of the ballot was reduced to bags of rice, cash transfers, and political bullying. The poor were manipulated by hunger, while thugs and political merchants hijacked the voices of ordinary citizens.

Another wound that continues to divide Nigeria is tribalism. During the last election, ethnic sentiments overshadowed national unity. Nigerians who should see themselves first as citizens of one nation became prisoners of tribal camps. Political discourse degenerated into insults and suspicion among ethnic groups. Yet, no nation can rise when tribe becomes greater than truth and ethnicity becomes more important than competence. The Igbo say, “*Igwe bu ike*” (strength lies in unity). A divided Nigeria cannot progress.

Furthermore, many citizens feel betrayed by unfulfilled

promises. Among the strongest campaign assurances was the promise of improved and stable electricity. Nigerians were made to believe that constant power supply would become a reality. Yet businesses continue to collapse under the burden of fuel costs and generator dependence. Students still read in darkness. Hospitals, artisans, and small-scale industries continue to suffer. Electricity remains a symbol of broken promises and failed governance.

Insecurity also remains one of the greatest tragedies confronting the nation. From kidnappings and banditry to terrorism and violent attacks, Nigerians live daily with fear and uncertainty. Farmers can no longer safely go to their farms.

Travelers fear the highways. Communities mourn innocent lives lost to violence. A nation where citizens do not feel secure cannot inspire patriotism among its youth.

The recent interview granted by the President's aide to Al Jazeera further sparked national conversations about governance, accountability, and the image of Nigeria before the international community. Many Nigerians expected more sincerity and clarity regarding the realities on ground. Public communication must not dismiss the pains of citizens. Leadership requires empathy, honesty, and responsiveness to the cries of the people. Equally troubling is the rise of political arrogance represented in movements and slogans that glorify power without responsibility. The so-called 'City Boys' mentality has, in the eyes of many citizens, become symbolic of entitlement, political patronage, and insensitivity to the suffering masses. Governance must never become a celebration of privilege while citizens struggle for survival.

However, despite all these disappointments, abandoning Nigeria entirely cannot be the only answer. Home responsibility demands that citizens participate actively in rebuilding the nation. Nation-building is not the work of politicians alone; it is the duty of every Nigerian. The teacher, trader, farmer, priest, student, journalist, artisan, and civil

servant all have roles to play. Corruption cannot end if citizens continue to celebrate dishonest wealth. Electoral malpractice cannot stop if people willingly sell their votes. Bad leadership persists when good people remain silent.

The spirit of home responsibility calls Nigerians to patriotism, sacrifice, and civic courage. Rather than merely cursing the darkness, citizens must become candles of transformation within their communities. As another Igbo proverb reminds us, "*Obu onye bi n'ulo mara ebe mmiri si bata*" (it is the person living in the house that knows where the rain enters from). Nigerians understand Nigeria's problems better than foreigners do; therefore, Nigerians must rise to solve them.

Towards the 2027 election, there must be a collective commitment to electoral reform. The electoral process must inspire confidence among citizens. Technology should be transparent and reliable. Votes must count. Political violence and intimidation must end. Security agencies must remain neutral. Independent institutions must be truly independent. Democracy loses meaning when elections are manipulated.

The 2027 election should not merely be another political contest; it must become a moral turning point for Nigeria. Nigerians must move beyond tribal sentiments and religious

divisions. Leadership should be based on competence, integrity, vision, and capacity. Citizens must ask difficult questions and demand accountability, not empty slogans.

Young Nigerians especially must resist hopelessness. The future of Nigeria cannot be outsourced to foreign nations. While many may legitimately seek opportunities abroad, the complete abandonment of national responsibility will only worsen the country's condition. A nation develops when her citizens invest their talents, ideas, and sacrifices into her growth.

In conclusion, Nigeria may be wounded, but she is not finished. The temptation to flee is understandable, but rebuilding remains necessary. The journey toward a better Nigeria will require courage, unity, sacrifice, and responsible leadership. As the Igbo wisely say, "*Aka aja aja na-ebute onu mmanụ mmanụ*" (hard work brings prosperity). If Nigerians reject vote buying, tribal politics, political intimidation, and irresponsible leadership, the nation can still rise again.

'When Shall I Go Home?': Nigerians' Lingering cry

■ Rev. Fr. Dr. Josephat Ugo Umeoguego, SAC



"At first Ikemefuna was very much afraid. Once or twice he tried to run away, but he did not know where to begin. He thought of his mother and his three-year-old sister and wept bitterly. Nwoye's mother was very kind to him and treated him as one of her own children. But all he said was: 'When shall I go home?'" (Chinua Achebe, Things Fall Apart (Heinemann, 2008), pg.22

Why was it that despite the benevolence of Nwoye's mother towards him, all that Ikemefuna said was: "When shall I go home?" Why was he not at peace? It was because he was disconnected from home, from his family. The disconnection plunged him

into a high level of fear, insecurity, and a loss of focus. He wept bitterly and intensely longed to go home.

The solution to his problem was not foreign benevolence, but a reconnection to his family, a reconnection to his home. This reconnection does not rule out the importance of foreign benevolence; it rather indicates that connection to one's family and home is a more fundamental need than foreign aid.

The boy, Ikemefuna, was "the doomed lad who was sacrificed to the village of Umuofia... to avoid war and bloodshed" (Achebe, 7). He was taken away from his homeland, Mbaino, to Umuofia as a ransom to appease the people of Umuofia for the killing of one of their daughters by some men from Mbaino. His father was involved in the crime, but Ikemefuna knew nothing about it.

"All he knew was that a few men had arrived at their house, conversing with his father in low tones, and at the end he

had been taken out and handed over to a stranger. His mother had wept bitterly, but he had been too surprised to weep. And so the stranger had brought him... a long, long way from home, through lonely forest paths" (Achebe, 12).

Even the benevolence Ikemefuna enjoyed in the house of Okonkwo in Umuofia later turned malevolent. When he found himself in danger of death, he ran for protection to Okonkwo, calling him "My father." But, unfortunately, he met his tragic end at his hands: Okonkwo killed him with a machet.

Some people interpret Ikemefuna as a metaphor for Nigerian youths who suffer for the guilt of their elders. Collins Uma makes such an interpretation in an article published on May 2, 2013, in the *Daily Post* ahead of the 2015 election, where he writes concerning Nigerian youths:

"Like Ikemefuna, we have people we look up to as 'elders' and we even call some 'father,' but they will not hesitate to



truncate our existence just to score cheap political goals or prove a point to their fellows."

"Like Ikemefuna, we work hard to contribute our quota to the development of the society we have found ourselves in, but there is always a 'Nwoye' being groomed to take over leadership regardless of his qualification for that role, or the lack of it."

"Like Ikemefuna, we are in limbo, a midway state, and we belong to neither here nor there."

"We have not helped ourselves, though, the Nigerian youth. We have not articulated what it is we actually want. Like Ikemefuna, we just sit and await the decisions of the elders."

Unfortunately, today Nigerian youths are still suffering like Ikemefuna, but not only the youths. Pensioners are seen on the streets of the country protesting from time to time. They too are alienated from the commonwealth of their homeland, as well as others.

Achebe published *Things Fall Apart* in 1958 when he was 28. Most of the people steering the affairs of the country at that time, like Yakubu Gowon and Odumegwu Ojukwu, were youths. It is an indication that while writing the novel, Achebe might not have pictured only the youths of his time as the marginalized. A good number of them were indeed at the helm of affairs.

The major problem facing the

country at that time was colonialism. Most probably, in the mind of Achebe, Ikemefuna was a metaphor for the colonized people estranged from their homeland. Yes, it was two years before 1960, the year of Nigerian independence.

Today, Nigerians are no longer estranged by colonial masters, but by their fellow Nigerians in power. So, instead of being a metaphor limited to the marginalized Nigerian youths, Ikemefuna represents all suffering Nigerians alienated from their motherland, irrespective of their age, gender, tribe, ethnicity, race, and religion. They make up the greater population of the country. Ironically, they are in the country but feel far away from it because the resources that belong to all are pocketed by a few. Like Ikemefuna, they lament, "When shall I go home?"

Even the few privileged ones sucking alone the flowing milk and honey of the Promised Land are also far away from home. A mother who prepares a meal meant for her family but eats it alone, how can she feel at home when other family members are dying of hunger? A genuine homeliness abounds in a country only when communal and equitable sharing of the nation's resources prevails. Both the oppressed and the oppressor are indeed in need of liberation. On the lips of both is always the lament: "When shall I go home?"

The 2027 election is a time for suffering Nigerians "to go home." An election is an important path through which citizens go home and take possession of their heritage. They tread the path by registering and securing their voter's cards; by coming out en masse to vote for the right persons, avoiding vote-buying; and by preventing manipulations of election results and all other forms of election malpractice.

It is not enough to vote; it is very important to protect the votes. The agents of different political parties especially should avoid every form of bribery and be on alert to protect the election result sheets from all forms of manipulation, from polling units to collation centers, till the final announcement of results.

If the citizens play their role well, homeliness is the fruit when good leaders emerge. However, if the people remain asleep, strangers will emerge as their leaders at midnight and lead them through "a long, long way from home, through lonely forest paths." The result will be another round of the lament: "When shall I go home?"

Nigerians have indeed lamented enough at the hands of bad leaders. Enough is enough! Let everyone wake up now to do the right thing. Nigerians can change the narrative this time.

AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

WITH

THE ARCHBISHOP LUCIUS IWEJURU UGORJI
ARCHBISHOP OF OWERRI ARCHDIOCESE



PALLOTTINE MAGAZINE: *Mmesomachi, as the Archbishop of Owerri, the Metropolitan of Owerri Ecclesiastical Province and the immediate past President of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria, what burdens about Nigeria weigh most heavily on your heart today?*

ARCHBISHOP: When I look at Nigeria today, my heart is heavy. Very heavy! We are a nation of extraordinary gifts. A rich soil, abundant minerals, a young and energetic population, a deep and resilient faith. And yet we are squandering all of it. Nigeria continues to bleed. Endlessly!

One of the things that keeps me awake at night is the insecurity that has gripped this land. We continue to hear sad tales of senseless

massacres, mass burials, endless tears and grief. Many towns and villages across our nation have become communities of fear, flight, and funerals. Our fellow citizens are being daily kidnapped, extorted, dehumanized, killed, or forced to flee their ancestral homes and abandoning their sources of livelihood. Even men of God are not spared. I ask: how much longer will we live like this?

Then there is the question of poverty and here I must speak plainly. One hundred and twenty-nine million Nigerians are now living in multidimensional poverty. Food inflation has made it nearly impossible for ordinary families to afford three meals a day. The 2024 Global Report on Food Crisis listed Nigeria as second in the world for acute food insecurity, with twenty-four million people in that category. Second in the world! In a country with the land, the rain, and the labour to feed itself and its neighbours.

I have faulted the government's approach of importing food to crash prices. That intervention undermines our local farmers and weakens national food security in the long run. What we need are direct subsidies to farmers, investment in agriculture, and policies that make it possible for Nigerians to grow and eat their own food.

But what breaks my heart most deeply, and I say this as a shepherd, is what is happening to our young people. Youth unemployment in Nigeria stands at fifty-three percent. Fifty-three percent! That is not a statistic. That is a catastrophe. Many of our youths are deeply wounded and degraded by unemployment and poverty, which make them feel rejected by the very society into which they were born. Is it any wonder that we see the rise in kidnapping, armed robbery, cyber fraud, drug abuse,

and even ritual killings? The desperation of millions of jobless young Nigerians is directly fueling these crimes. This is a ticking time bomb, and we must defuse it urgently.

And then there is the crisis of our democracy which I fear we are not taking seriously enough. When voter turnout falls from sixty-nine percent in 2003 to twenty-three percent in 2023, and then to just seven percent in the recent Federal Capital Territory elections, that is not apathy. That is a people who have lost faith. Lost faith in the process, lost faith in their leaders, lost faith that their vote changes anything! Electoral integrity is not a procedural matter; it is a moral matter. Without credible elections and ethical leadership, we cannot build the Nigeria our people deserve.

Nigeria is richly endowed. But we are marked by pervasive poverty, inequality, and injustice. That contradiction is not God's design. It is a human failure and it demands a human response. I pray we find the courage to rise to that responsibility before it is too late.

PALLOTTINE MAGAZINE: *You have reportedly raised alarm against the problem of brain drain, the migration of Nigeria's "best and brightest." In what ways can the Church in Nigeria help in addressing the problem?*

ARCHBISHOP: You are right, and I want to be direct about it. It is unfortunate that after spending huge sums of money to train our medical personnel and other professionals, we sadly end up losing them through brain drain. Our professionals are abandoning their own sick people and migrating to the United States, Europe, and other foreign lands to take care of other people's sick, and of course, for better remuneration. This is a painful irony that no patriotic Nigerian should accept with equanimity. I have raised the alarm about the possibility of the *Japa Syndrome* crippling the very existence of this country and its citizens if nothing urgent is done to stem this ugly tide. And I stand by that warning.

We, in the Church, are not simply spectators calling on government to act while we watch from the sidelines. We have our own responsibilities, and we intend to fulfil them. The first and most foundational thing the Church can do is address

the root causes through education and not just any education, but education that is fit for purpose. The Bishops of the Owerri Ecclesiastical Province have proposed the reforming of Nigeria's current education system into one that equips youth with skills needed for contemporary, market-driven economies. Our young people are leaving not only because of poverty but because they feel that Nigeria offers them no pathway to a dignified future. The Church's extensive network of schools from primary level right through to tertiary must become instruments of genuine empowerment, not merely certification.

In the Archdiocese of Owerri, we are doing precisely this. We have plans to establish a university. This is not a distant dream; it is a concrete institutional response to brain drain. If we can train our health professionals at home, in world-class Church institutions, and offer them competitive and dignified conditions of service, we give them a reason to stay and serve their own people.

Secondly, the Church must deepen the formation of conscience particularly around patriotism and the ethic of service. We should continue to empower our people through civic education and the Church's social teaching.

Furthermore, the Church must use its moral voice to hold government accountable for the conditions that drive emigration. The rising insecurity and worsening economic situation in the country are what are resulting in migration and brain drain. Professionals and skilled labourers are leaving in thousands annually in search of safety, security, job opportunities, and a better standard of living. An extensive brain drain continues in this way in our nation, precisely where manpower is needed to revamp the ailing economy and foster national development. We will not stop saying this until it is heard and acted upon.

We have appealed to government to initiate sound economic policies that can revive our ailing economy, foster growth, and improve the ease of doing business. A peaceful and secure environment will encourage investments and the movement of goods and services across regions. There is also the need to fight nepotism and corruption to enthrone the reign of competence and meritocracy. People do not leave countries where merit is rewarded and where they

feel safe.

PALLOTTINE MAGAZINE: *What practical steps should government take immediately to reduce the desperation driving japa syndrome?*

ARCHBISHOP: Firstly, people do not flee a country that is working. They leave because they have exhausted hope at home. Palliatives and temporary relief programs are not enough. We need sustainable solutions that address the root causes of economic hardship. To do achieve this we must first fight corruption without compromise. The most fundamental way the government can warm up to the people is by addressing the root causes of poverty and oppression, including harsh economic policies and corruption. Nigeria's financial burdens could be significantly eased if politicians return stolen funds held abroad. The money to transform this country exists; it has simply been looted.

Secondly, we must cut the cost of governance. As the government demands additional sacrifice from the struggling masses, one would expect to see a drastic cut in the cost of running the government at all levels. On the contrary, it is worrisome to watch top government functionaries living by the sweat, toil, and tears of the poor, spending huge public funds on ostentatious and luxurious lifestyles, seemingly incapable of feeling compassion at the outcry of the poor. Resources consumed by an extravagant government must be redirected to job creation and public services.

Again, the government must invest in agriculture. Rather than importing food to crash prices, government should encourage farmers by giving them subsidies, as is done in most countries, to enable them purchase fertilizers and equipment at lower costs. If they produce at a low cost, they will also sell at a low cost.

Another important step in curbing the mass migration of citizens is to restore standards in our health institutions. Our crumbling health institutions have caused the mass exodus of medical professionals. Billions of naira are spent by our leaders on medical tourism abroad, whereas millions of Nigerians languish from treatable ailments due to the miserable state of

our hospitals. A government that flies abroad for treatment, while public hospitals rot, has no moral standing to ask its citizens to stay. Our hospitals and schools have to be rebuilt and to the best standards.

Furthermore, the government has to enthrone meritocracy. There is a need to fight nepotism and corruption to enthrone the reign of competence and meritocracy. Young Nigerians leave not only because of poverty, but because they know that hard work is no guarantee of opportunity. When connections and ethnicity open doors instead of merit, they seek doors elsewhere.

Over and above all, the government must restore security. Government must go beyond reactive interventions to invest in modern technological equipment for surveillance, and strengthen the intelligence capacities of security agents to enable them act proactively. No business will invest and no professional will stay in a land where they fear for their life daily. Until the lives and property of citizens are guaranteed, it will be impossible to curb the mass migration of citizens.

PALLOTTINE MAGAZINE: *Your Grace, with the 2027 general elections approaching, what concrete role can the Church play in curbing electoral malpractices?*

ARCHBISHOP: Let me begin with the diagnosis, because we cannot prescribe a remedy without facing the truth honestly. Electoral malpractices in Nigeria range from the inclusion of fictitious names in the voters' register, vote-buying, and artificial scarcity of electoral materials, to the use of thugs and intimidation, disenfranchisement, and falsification of results, all of which shortchange the will of the electorate. Bad governance begins with rigging elections, and our nation is now faced with the culture of severe rigging in virtually all our elections.

There is something even more insidious at work: the deliberate weaponization of poverty. When a citizen is hungry enough, a bag of rice or a few thousand naira can purchase their conscience on election day. We must resist the temptation of allowing moneybags and godfathers to buy their way into public offices. This is not simply a political failing it is a moral emergency. And wherever there is a moral emergency, the Church must respond.

So to answer your question:

The first and most irreplaceable contribution is the formation of conscience. We are bound by conscience to shun financial inducement and to vote only for people of unquestionable integrity with proven records of competence, capacity, and commitment. No one should vote out of clannish, ethnic, or religious considerations or for perceived personal gains. We must say this from every pulpit, in every parish, at every Mass as 2027 approaches.

The second is civic and political education. Only when the people are enlightened to take cognizance of their duties to the nation and their rights in it can they escape the servitude of political manipulation and ignorance in their electoral habits. Our parishes, Catholic schools, lay associations, and Justice, Development and Peace Commissions must all become active platforms for civic education ahead of 2027.

Again, the Church has continued to advocate for legislative reform. I have urged the National Assembly to ensure the Electoral Act mandates real-time transmission of election results from the BVAS at polling units to the INEC Result Viewing portal, preventing human tampering. We do not want a repeat of the anomalies of 2023 in whatever form in 2027.

In addition, we must go beyond preaching and deploy our people as election observers on the ground. When people of conscience are present and watching, it raises the cost of impunity.

Finally, we must fight voter apathy. If the downward trend in voter participation continues, it will inflict a disastrous blow to democracy in Nigeria. I appeal to all citizens of voting age to get registered and be prepared to exercise their civic duty. Let us resolve to be part of a new beginning because only the best should govern our dear country.

The government, the Church, the education sector, the media, and all citizens have their roles to play. The Church is already playing her own role.

PALLOTTINE MAGAZINE: *What advice do you have for young people who are weighed down by*

unemployment and the unfavorable economic climate in Nigeria, and have consequently lost hope in the country?

ARCHBISHOP: To our young people, I say first: I see you, and I hear you. Your pain is not a private failure; it is a public wound, and it weighs heavily on the hearts of your shepherds. It is heartbreaking to see our young people lose hope in their country. Many have turned to crime out of desperation, while others risk their lives on dangerous migration routes in search of a better future. Your frustration is legitimate. But I must speak to you honestly, as a shepherd who loves you.

Many are seeking extraordinary spiritual powers, for instant, prosperity without working for it. This is the path I beg you not to take, not merely because the law may catch you, but because it will destroy your dignity from the inside. Your dignity is the one thing no economic hardship can take from you, unless you surrender it yourself.

Be practical. Gone are the days when certificates were all you needed. Now, if you want to be globally relevant, you must add skills to your certificates. Embrace vocational training, learn a trade, develop a competency the market needs. The Church is investing in institutions and skills programs precisely because a young person equipped with genuine skills need not beg, need not steal, and need not abandon their homeland.

One of the great tragedies of our country today is that lies, falsehood, fraud, and dishonesty have almost become a way of life. Change this narrative by making Nigerians realize that trustworthiness, honesty, service, and accountability are possible, that only integrity and righteousness can uplift our nation. Be the generation that refuses to accept moral collapse as normal.

And do not give up on Nigeria. Every young Nigerian who abandons this country takes with them a piece of its future. We must always stand up against bad governance and insist on transparency; but that fight needs you in it, not absent from it. Nigeria needs you skilled, principled, and determined to build what your leaders have failed to give you. That Nigeria is still possible. And you are the ones who will make it so.

Leaving the country

Vs Fixing The Country:

A Moral Question for Nigerian Youths

By Sunday Ananti, SAC



THE DILEMMA OF FLIGHT OR FIGHT

Where does one draw the line between patriotism and survival? At what point does blind patriotism become a threat to personal survival? The dilemma posed by these questions stares every well-meaning Nigerian youth daily in the face: flight or fight? “Japa”, as we know it, is not just a trend; at least I have never viewed it as one. However, now more than ever, it has become more or less the only hope of the average Nigerian youth. It has become a viable weapon in the fight for self-preservation, a fight to

carve out a niche for oneself in a world full of possibilities, and Nigeria does not seem at the moment like an arable land for the growth and development of the plethora of talents we have, as well as birthing into reality the dreams and aspirations of a lot of Nigerian youth.

DEFINING THE JAPA PHENOMENON

Within the context of this article, “Japa” refers to the massive emigration of Nigerians, predominantly youths, to other countries in an effort to better their lives. It refers to the mass emigration of Nigerians, especially youths and skilled professionals, seeking better opportunities abroad due to economic hardship, insecurity, and poor governance. This movement, largely driven by economic hardship and a lack of economic opportunities, has left a lot of youths desperate for a better life in foreign lands.

The NOI Polls 2023 report found that 50 percent of Nigerians believe those living abroad enjoy better living conditions, while 54 percent think they have greater

opportunities compared to Nigerians at home. Also, a considerable proportion, over 51 percent, are confident that Nigerians living in foreign countries are better off financially. From the foregoing arises the moral question: when one leaves the country in search of a better life, is he running away from his national and patriotic responsibilities, or does self-preservation take the upper hand and therefore come first? For a lot of Nigerians, this is not a moral question; it is more about survival.

THE COST OF STAYING TO FIX HOME

However, Nigeria is the only country we have and can truly call home and feel as such. The sort of turnaround change urgently needed in the country right now requires citizens who are honest, objective, and committed to nation-building. Many Nigerians have proven in the very recent past that for the right amount, they can be bought, making it difficult for honesty and objectivity to play their role in the advancement of the nation. The first step, in my opinion, to actively bring about a radical shift in the politics of today is not just

about staying behind, but everyone must make the effort to conquer greed, to refuse to put a price tag on the future of the coming generations.

Will this be easy? Absolutely not, especially with the ever-rising cost of living; poverty has been proven to be an effective tool in keeping the masses incapable of demanding real and lasting change. Staying and fixing the country, as opposed to leaving it, comes with a heavy price and sometimes sadly, the loss of one's life. The last election bears witness to this, where many Nigerians sustained serious injuries and, in some cases, loss of life simply because they wanted to contribute their quota by coming out to vote and demanding that their votes count. It is not easy to stay and fight a broken system because the change can feel and may indeed be slow and sometimes even invisible.

SURVIVAL, REMITTANCES, AND THE DIASPORA REALITY

On the other end of the spectrum is the fight for survival, "*Japa*," which is also a reality that cannot simply be overlooked regardless of the moral question surrounding it. People have the right to seek better lives and enjoy environments with better living conditions. Public office holders have the responsibility of creating opportunities, especially for the teeming number of youths who leave every year in search of greener pastures, inevitably leading to

brain drain, a situation we cannot afford at this time. *Japa* is a step in the direction of breaking free of a system which offers no hope to ordinary Nigerians and is not exclusively an act of betrayal or running away from responsibility.

Besides, diaspora remittances also contribute positively to the economy of the country. According to The Nation of July 26, 2025, the President himself expressed excitement at diaspora remittances reaching a record-breaking \$20.93 billion in 2024, highlighting that this substantial influx of funds highlights the crucial role Nigerians abroad play in supporting the nation's economy. But then again, not everyone who travels abroad becomes successful. Leaving the country and family behind comes with its own emotional and cultural burden; over time, families become displaced and can hardly see each other regularly.

SHIFTING THE MORAL BURDEN

Fixing the country as a moral duty, I think, requires deeper thought. Can individuals really be held morally responsible for fixing a problem they did not create? It does not seem fair to lay this moral burden on a young Nigerian who is simply trying to survive. Is it justified to demand commitment and responsibility from people in a country where the ordinary, basic system does not work?

The problem with laying so

much emphasis on this is the danger of shifting responsibilities from institutions to individuals. Staying and leaving are not permanent identities. People leave, contribute from abroad, and come back. The real issue is a structural one and not one's personal choice, and as a matter of fact, we should be more concerned that people feel they "must" leave and not simply that they leave.

CONCLUSION: A CALL FOR GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

I will end by emphasizing that as a matter of urgency we are in need of systemic change, from top to bottom. While we all have different roles to play in nation-building through honesty in our different capacities, commitment, and a radical change of mentality, I strongly believe that the government of the day has a more important role to play and as such should be held accountable.

While everyone has a right to their choice, we have to remember that Nigeria is the only country we have, and only through determination can we rescue it. Staying behind and trying to fix the country or leaving it in pursuit of a better life is a personal choice. You decide!

Japa: Ambition, Responsibility, And The Soul Of A Nation Towards The 2027 Election

By Fr. Vincent Elochukwu Obi, SAC
Hochschule für Musik und Tanz, Cologne, Germany



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO "JAPA"?

In the Yoruba language, *jápá* means to flee or escape swiftly, often with urgency. Yet in contemporary Nigerian usage, the word has evolved far beyond its literal meaning. It has become a cultural expression heard in Afrobeats lyrics, Nollywood scripts, street slang, university corridors, and WhatsApp conversations. When someone says, "I don *japa*," it no longer refers simply to departure. It signals aspiration, survival, frustration, and sometimes silent protest.

The word now captures a generational mood. For many Nigerians, especially the youth, it expresses the desire to seek dignity, opportunity, and stability beyond national borders. At the same time, it raises deeper

questions about responsibility to the homeland and the conditions that push citizens to leave. *Japa* is therefore not merely a migration trend; it is a reflection of national realities and collective aspirations.

NIGERIA AT A POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CROSSROADS

Nigeria today stands at a complicated intersection of promise and frustration. The nation possesses extraordinary human capital, vibrant culture, and immense natural resources. Yet these strengths coexist with persistent governance challenges, insecurity, economic instability, and fragile public institutions. Political philosopher Achille Mbembe observes that many postcolonial states oscillate between promise and paralysis; a structural tension that shapes governance in several African countries (Mbembe, 2001, pp. 8–12). Nigeria illustrates this tension vividly. Elections often promise renewal and reform, but citizens frequently experience continuity of hardship.

Despite these institutional struggles, social resilience remains one of Nigeria's greatest strengths. Extended families, religious communities, town unions, and informal networks continue to support individuals where formal systems fall short. These social structures help sustain everyday life even in difficult circumstances. Yet the disconnect between political

leadership and the lived experiences of citizens has widened. Economic pressures, insecurity, and uncertainty about the future have deepened public frustration. Within this context, the rise of the *Japa* phenomenon can be understood not simply as personal ambition but also as a response to structural limitations at home.

YOUTH MIGRATION AND THE SEARCH FOR OPPORTUNITY

Nigeria's youth population is both its greatest asset and its most pressing challenge. Each year, thousands of graduates leave universities and polytechnics with academic qualifications but face



Japa is not cowardice. It is not betrayal. It is ambition responding to circumstance. It is resilience confronting structural difficulty. It is love expressed through remittance and sacrifice.

limited employment opportunities. Unemployment and underemployment remain persistent concerns, creating a sense of stagnation among many young people.

Beyond the problem of employment lies another challenge: a crisis of orientation. Many young Nigerians lack access to mentorship, structured professional pathways, and effective civic education that could help them navigate career development within the country. In such an environment, migration becomes a rational strategy rather than a reckless decision. The search for “greener pastures” reflects more than economic ambition; it expresses the desire for dignity, stability, and professional fulfillment. Migration, however, is not a new phenomenon. Throughout history, individuals and communities have moved across regions in search of opportunity.

Biblical narratives offer early examples of such movement. Abraham left his homeland in pursuit of divine promise, while Joseph's migration eventually sustained his family during famine. In a similar way, many Nigerians who migrate today remain deeply connected to their families and communities. Remittances from the Nigerian diaspora support households, fund education, and contribute to local economies. According to migration scholar Saskia Sassen, global migration networks reshape economies, social structures, and identities across borders (Sassen, 1998, pp. 88–92). In this sense, migration creates transnational relationships that extend beyond national boundaries. Thus, *Japa* represents both resilience and responsibility. Those who leave often do so not to abandon their homeland but to support it in new

ways.

MIGRATION REALITIES AND THE GLOBAL DEBATE

The imagined prosperity of life abroad often encounters more complex realities. Migrants frequently face language barriers, difficulties with professional credential recognition, cultural adaptation, and sometimes discrimination. The process of building a stable life in a new country can be demanding and unpredictable.

Germany, for example, illustrates the global complexity of contemporary migration debates. On one hand, demographic decline and labor shortages have led to policy reforms such as the Skilled Immigration Act, designed to attract qualified workers from abroad. On the other hand, public discourse, particularly among populist movements, often raises concerns about cultural integration and social cohesion.

Philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah describes cosmopolitanism as the recognition that individuals share moral obligations across national boundaries (Appiah, 2006, pp. xv–xviii). Yet despite the ideals of global citizenship, nationalism remains a powerful force in modern politics.

Migration therefore occupies a complicated space between opportunity and uncertainty. Nigerians abroad are widely recognized for their resilience and adaptability. Many migrants juggle demanding work schedules, language classes, and family responsibilities while continuing to support relatives at home. The migrant experience is therefore rarely simple. It involves sacrifice, perseverance, and the constant negotiation of identity between homeland and host society.

FAMILIES, GLOBALIZATION, AND THE MEANING OF HOMELAND

Beyond economics and politics, migration carries profound emotional consequences. Behind every airport farewell lies a quiet cost: parents growing older without their children nearby, weddings attended through video calls, and family milestones experienced from a distance. The Nigerian family structure emphasizes relational closeness and communal life. Financial support from abroad may strengthen households economically, but physical absence inevitably reshapes emotional dynamics. Pride and longing often coexist within migrant families.

In a globalized world, the meaning of homeland itself is evolving. Political scientist Benedict Anderson famously described nations as “imagined communities,” formed through shared narratives rather than physical proximity alone (Anderson, 2006, pp. 6–7).

Today, digital communication allows migrants to remain connected to their homeland through video calls, social media, and diaspora networks. Remittances travel instantly across borders. Migration therefore becomes less a final departure and more a transnational existence. *Japa*, in this sense, does not erase national belonging. Instead, it expands the meaning of Nigeria beyond geographic boundaries.

JAPA AND NIGERIA'S POLITICAL FUTURE: IMPLICATIONS TOWARD 2027

As Nigeria approaches the 2027 elections, the *Japa* phenomenon raises important political questions about governance, development, and national identity. Large-scale migration of

educated young people can significantly affect a country's economic and institutional capacity. The departure of skilled professionals, often described as brain drain, may weaken key sectors such as healthcare, education, and technology. At the same time, diaspora communities increasingly influence political and economic life within their countries of origin. Through remittances, investment, advocacy, and knowledge transfer, migrants can play important roles in shaping national development.

Political economist Paul Collier argues that diaspora communities often contribute to development by facilitating financial flows, transferring skills, and encouraging institutional reform (Collier, 2013, pp. 173–178). For Nigeria, this suggests that migration does not necessarily represent permanent loss but may also create new transnational opportunities.

Nevertheless, the political implications of widespread migration remain significant. If large numbers of educated citizens feel compelled to leave, it signals deeper structural problems within governance, economic planning, and social trust. For political leaders, the question is urgent: why are so many young Nigerians seeking opportunity abroad? What policy reforms could transform ambition into opportunity within Nigeria itself?

Addressing unemployment, strengthening institutions, improving security, and restoring confidence in public leadership will be essential steps. Without meaningful reform, migration may continue to function as a form of silent protest against domestic conditions. For citizens and the diaspora, another important question emerges: can migration coexist with national responsibility? Diaspora engagement, through investment, innovation, and civic participation, may provide a bridge

between global opportunity and national renewal.

CONCLUSION: THE NECESSARY BALANCE

Japa is not cowardice. It is not betrayal. It is ambition responding to circumstance. It is resilience confronting structural difficulty. It is love expressed through remittance and sacrifice. Yet it also signals unfinished national work. A healthy nation does not force its brightest minds to choose between dignity and departure. At the same time, a globalized world cannot and should not imprison ambition within borders. Movement, exchange, and global collaboration are natural features of modern society.

The challenge before Nigeria as it approaches 2027 is therefore not to condemn *Japa* but to transform its meaning. Migration should not be driven by desperation but by choice. It should represent opportunity, exchange, and partnership rather than escape.

If responsible governance meets the energy and ambition of Nigeria's youth, and if diaspora engagement connects with

meaningful domestic reform, then the movement of Nigerians across the world may ultimately strengthen rather than weaken the nation. For in the end, *Japa* asks a deeper question, one that goes beyond migration itself: Are we fleeing from Nigeria, or are we still carrying Nigeria with us? And perhaps the answer to that question will shape the country's future.

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An Interview

with our Provincial, Rev. Fr. Markus Hau, SAC

The Provincial Heart of Jesus Province Austria – Germany.



Pallottine Magazine: *Good evening, Father, and thank you for granting us this interview. We are the editorial crew of Pallottine Magazine. I am Darlington Ezike, the Production Manager, and with me is Darius Mmuokwe, the Editor-in-Chief of Pallottine Magazine.*

Provincial: I am Father Markus Hau, the Provincial Rector of the Heart of Jesus Province. I was born in 1974 in the Rhineland, which is in the western part of Germany, and I completed my standard education program there. I initially began studying civil law before deciding to join the Pallottines. At first, I considered the diocese or perhaps the Benedictines, as there was a Benedictine

monastery close to my hometown. I visited quite often and had to choose between the Benedictines and the Pallottines, but I ultimately joined the Pallottines. Why? Because when I met the novices in the novitiate at that time, it was a large group. I felt that I could live among these people; I had a very good feeling about joining them and I joined them in 1995 and followed the standard path of novitiate and theological studies. In 2002, I made my final consecration, and in 2004, I was ordained a priest. I studied in Rome at the Gregorian University. After my studies, I worked in youth center which still exists but in a different location. Afterward, I began my pastoral year and served as an assistant priest in Friedberg, in the southern Germany, and afterwards served for three years in Vallendar. Then in 2007, I became a parish priest in Freidberg after my years as an assistant priest. I served as a parish priest until 2017. Following that, I was the Mission Secretary for five years, and after the election, I became the Provincial Rector. So, that is the summary of my entire curriculum vitae.

Pallottine Magazine: *Thank you, Father, for that detailed answer. Father, how have you experienced Nigeria so far?*

Provincial: I have been visiting Nigeria for about nine years now. I first arrived for Christmas in 2017. What I see today shows significant progress; the entire country is growing. When I first came in 2017, things were much simpler, but today the world is reflected in everything here. I would say Nigeria, to me, is

a country experiencing wonderful development. My experience when I arrive is always interesting; everything in Nigeria is crowded. You will find noise everywhere; there is normally not easy to find a silent place. People are everywhere, young people and children alike. I like Nigeria, and what truly stands out to me are the confreres. My impression of Nigeria is that it is vibrant, warm, powerful, and developing well.

Pallottine Magazine: *The topic of this magazine is the japa syndrome in Nigeria. Japa is a slang term used to express the common tendency of Nigerians to travel abroad that is; to run away, to escape, to migrate, or to jump out of the country. How do you perceive the current wave of japa among Nigerians?*

Provincial: To be honest, I noticed it much more when I first began visiting before COVID-19. People frequently asked me for invitation letters to Germany because they wanted to leave. People would ask me to send them invitation letters once they realized that I was from Germany. It was very strong in those first years. It has reduced recently, but I know there is still a longing to leave the country. This is not unique to Nigeria; it is the same in some other countries, and we are very aware of this in Europe. We have dealt with the question of migration for a long time. In a way, I can understand the reason for the migration. When you have a highly populated country like Nigeria with over 200 million people, the pressure to survive is immense. I can understand the dream of leaving the country for a perceived paradise elsewhere, though it is often just a dream. The reality is that it is NORMALLY not easy to leave or to settle in a different country, but I do understand the motivation.

Pallottine Magazine: *I understand that you truly sense this tendency, especially among the youth. When you hear young people say that "there is no future in Nigeria," what goes through your mind?*



Provincial: I feel pity first, and then, I think that there is a need to do something for the future of young people. I recall a very touching experience somewhere around. We visited a family, and the man explained their situation to me. He showed me how several generations were all living on the same compound belonging to the grandfather. I saw many young people and realized that none of them had any formal training or a profession. One youngster had the idea of using motorcycle for carrying people. With all sense of pity, I asked if he could earn money from doing that, in fact, no reasonable amount of money can come through that. That was so touching for me because I felt the strong desire for these young people to have a formal training for a better future. And, from that experience, I can understand why they have fears and feel they have no future. Generally, Nigerians are well-educated and capable of moving forward.

Pallottine Magazine: *From your perspective as someone from abroad with a holistic view, what do you think are the consequences of this japa syndrome for Nigeria?*

Provincial: It is dangerous if the educated elite and young professionals leave the country. If the doctors, scientists, and teachers leave, it becomes an exodus. I use the biblical term, it is a 'bad exodus' because it withdraws strength from the country. There is a difference between this exodus and a healthy exchange, such as sending people to

Europe for official studies with the intent that they return after studies. But when you say *japa* you mean running away. I feel that the country is losing its best people.

Pallottine Magazine: *Father, do you believe a country can develop sustainably if many of these young professionals relocate abroad?*

Provincial: It is truly terrible if all the educated people leave. However, I also see good examples here. For instance, I met a doctor here in Nigeria who was educated and worked in Great Britain, but he and his wife (also a medical doctor) decided to return to Nigeria to contribute to their country. So, it can be beneficial to leave for a period of time in order to gain experience and then return. But there is a danger if only the elite are leaving. Nigerians have a strong commitment to their soil, their people, and their inheritance. I believe many will eventually bring something back to the country.

Pallottine Magazine: *Germany experienced instability and destruction during the World Wars, but it was rebuilt by Germans who chose to stay. Do you agree? If so, how did they rebuild the country?*

Provincial: That is an interesting question. It was the generation of my grandparents who did that. I grew up with stories of the Second World War; the country was destroyed, and people had nothing to eat. Germany was responsible for the war and there were many victims. When people returned after the war, they had only one dream: to start life again. They had an enormous will to work. My generation, born in 1974, we had some benefits from their work because we stand on their shoulders. My grandparents' generation would never throw away food because it was so precious. The hard times shaped a generation and gave them the power to rebuild. Of course, this was also possible due to support from America during the Cold War.

At that time, Germany was divided, and the eastern part was occupied by the Russians. I grew up in the western part under American influence. They brought democracy, financial aid, and supported our economy. However, the Germans rebuilt the economy very quickly; by 1955, only ten years after being destroyed, Germany became the largest economy in Europe. I am proud of my grandparents' generation because their hard work formed the foundation of what we have today.

Pallottine Magazine: *What lessons from Germany's post-war experience are relevant to Nigeria today as it faces instability and economic hardship?*

Provincial: That is a complicated question because the situations are not easily compared. Nigeria faces many political, religious, and economic conflicts. What I learned from German history is that our problems began when the wrong party was elected. People voted for the fascists, and this allowed Hitler's dictatorship to emerge. Hitler's ideology was based on the idea that one nation or race is better than others. He divided people into groups. This ideology acted like a poison that destroyed the society very quickly. It started with the 'poison' of superiority. This is our unique history and our burden of guilt, which is why we still try to support victims of that era. The lesson is to never believe in a policy that brings one nation, race, or religion against another. Do not follow voices that advocate against working together. I admire Nigeria because it is a large country with many cultures, languages, and tribes. It is not easy to find unity, but I wish for Nigeria to find a way for the North, South, West, and East to live together. With that unity, you can build a strong nation and economy. The keys for Germany were democracy and an economy that allowed all people to have an education and a comfortable life. For Nigeria, the keys are unity and democracy.

Pallottine Magazine: *Thank you for your sincere explanation. I have learned that any policy suggesting one group is better than another should be avoided because it spreads like poison.*

Provincial: Exactly. Why would one be better? You find good people in Nigeria and Germany alike. You find good people in both the North and the South. The goal is to unify together.

Pallottine Magazine: *How do you suggest that young Nigerians balance their personal ambition to leave the country with their responsibility to contribute to the development of their homeland?*

Provincial: I would advise young Nigerians to examine their vision of life abroad carefully. Sometimes people only know it from movies or magazines, which show a beautiful, colorful world. Ask yourself: what does it truly mean to leave your culture, food, and language? Many leave without knowing how complicated and costly it is to live in Europe. I know many Nigerians in Germany who struggle. Check the reality of what is currently in your country. I know there is immense pressure and competition for jobs here, even for the well-educated. The church should also help to establish structures to support young people. My vision is for the Pallottines to provide a foundation perhaps through micro-credits so that people can start businesses and move forward here.

Pallottine Magazine: *As Nigeria approaches the 2027 elections, do you think political participation is more transformative than migration?*

Provincial: I believe in democracy. It requires engaging people, though I know that the experience of the last election was disappointing for many. Democracy is the key to a good country, so please engage in the process and the parties you believe in. If you

are Nigerian, I encourage you to be committed to your people and family and try to build something. As St. Vincent Pallotti said, it is not easy to do this alone. Collaboration is not just a religious term; it is a term for democracy.

Pallottine Magazine: *How can religious leaders help in nation-building?*

Provincial: Religion is very strong in Nigeria. Religious leaders have a great responsibility not to lead the faithful into extremes against one another. They must start a dialogue. I saw in India that everything starts with having dialogue. Christian leaders must talk with Muslims, other Christian denominations, and different groups. Dialogue is the key to avoiding civil war and ensuring that people are not marginalized.

Pallottine Magazine: *Father, what is the situation of Africans living in Germany?*

Provincial: It varies. Some are well-educated Nigerians or other Africans who come officially to study or work as priests; they are in a good situation. Then there are those who come illegally, often surviving harsh journeys across the sea. They arrive without a real chance; often they do not know the language, and are lost in the system. It is very hard for them to survive or integrate. Sometimes this creates fear among Germans when they see such groups of young men. These migrants are trying to survive; they are suffering due to the circumstances in their home countries. So, while we have a well-integrated group of Africans, we also have many others who are struggling without chances.

Pallottine Magazine: *With this question we come to the end of this interview. Thank you so much for your time, Father.*

Provincial: Thank you. These were very good questions (smiling)

A Reflection On *Japa* And Civic Responsibility

By Rev. Fr. Dr. Chidiebere Obiodu

INTRODUCTION

Humans naturally desire a better life and the security that comes with it. *Japa* is a slang term in the Yoruba language that means to flee, run away, or escape from a challenging situation. In contemporary use, it refers to emigrating from Nigeria to a foreign country in search of better economic opportunities, improved living conditions, and career growth.

Civic responsibility refers to the duties and obligations that citizens must uphold to maintain a functioning community, promote the common good and social well-being, and, in a democratic society, to uphold democratic values. This includes voting and staying informed about public issues. Civic responsibility is a legal obligation under the Nigerian Constitution (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, section 2(24)). It is a moral obligation because Jesus himself paid civil taxes (Matthew 22:21, cf. Romans 13:1-7), and the Church also encourages all to be obedient to civil authorities (Gaudium et Spes, 43). Beyond civic responsibility lies active

citizenship, which is the voluntary, proactive engagement of individuals to improve society, beyond basic civic obligations.

The question is whether or not *japa* undermines civic responsibility.

JAPA AND THE MIGRATION QUESTION

Migration is not a new phenomenon. History is replete with waves of mass migration, beginning with the Abrahamic migration to Canaan (Gen 12:1-5), and with many Europeans migrating to the Americas, Australasia, and Southern Africa. Reasons for migration include seeking better economic opportunities and fleeing war, insecurity, and various forms of persecution.

However, today, people migrate not only because of unemployment or underemployment, insecurity, or persecution in their home country, but also when they are comfortable. They migrate because they want access to better infrastructure and healthcare. People migrate to work for a multinational company that requires them to relocate to another country. People migrate to provide



better opportunities for their children, especially access to better education. People migrate to acquire foreign nationalities that aid global travel and facilitate their work and employability. People also relocate to earn more as inflation eats up their savings, even when they are gainfully employed and already earn high wages in their country. People also migrate to low-tax countries to avoid high taxes in their home countries. Migration is simply a human desire for a higher quality of life and guarantees of a better future for oneself and one's family. It is worth noting that Nigerians migrate for all of these reasons at various times.

J A P A A N D C I V I C RESPONSIBILITY

When one emigrates from one's country, it ordinarily decreases direct involvement in civic responsibilities in one's country of origin. The reason is not for lack of interest but the reality that physical absence on the ground affects the extent of one's involvement. Moreover, as one is in another country, one is also occupied with civic responsibilities there.

Does fleeing Nigeria then mean fleeing from civic responsibility as a Nigerian? Nigerians migrate not necessarily because they do not love Nigeria, but because of necessity and personal interests. Hence, since every citizen has an obligation to perform their civic functions, migrants do not necessarily migrate to abandon their civic responsibilities to Nigeria.

People in the diaspora have always been integrated into the affairs of their homeland. Most Nigerians in the diaspora are increasingly integrated into Nigerian socioeconomic, cultural, religious, and political affairs. Diaspora remittances, which run into the billions annually, have funded education, healthcare, housing, consumption, and development across Nigerian families and communities. Records show that diaspora total direct remittances reached \$23 billion in 2025, constituting about 5 to 6% of Nigeria's GDP, often outpacing foreign direct investment (FDI), and serving as a crucial

source of foreign exchange stability. Moreover, social media and information and communications technology have further integrated Nigerians at home and those in the diaspora.

With this huge influence and connection, the diaspora have also been exercising their civic responsibilities and, in certain ways, have been active citizens in the drive for good governance in Nigeria. Political discourse on the situation in Nigeria on social media is often dominated by those who have migrated. The diaspora and diaspora-supported groups constitute the largest voices of opposition online, thereby influencing the government's decisions for the better.

Although Nigerians in the diaspora cannot vote because the infrastructure and legal framework for voting abroad have not been put in place, many still fly back to the country to vote during elections. One recalls that during the 2023 General Elections, the World Bank Director, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, flew back from Switzerland to vote in Abia State, and even testified publicly about hiccups with election materials. Ngozi herself had earlier served twice as the Minister of Finance. Together with others, such as former Minister of Finance, Kemi Adeosun, they are among those who resided abroad and had to return to Nigeria to accept a political office. This turns the brain drain into a

brain gain.

Hence, the role of the diaspora shows that *japa* does not automatically mean abandoning one's civic responsibility to Nigeria. No doubt some flee and switch off from Nigeria. Yet, *japa* has actually helped sustain opposition and strengthen good governance. Counter-intuitively, support from the diaspora can make people docile to government rascality, often resulting in fiscal mismanagement, contempt of court, and the undermining of democratic institutions. This happens because when people are not hungry, and their needs are met by family and friends abroad, they succumb to this rascality. When one is hungry and angry, they become more actively involved in demanding good governance.

CONCLUSION

Japa could be good or bad, but ultimately, it does not necessarily undermine civic responsibility in Nigeria. On the other hand, it does not automatically reinforce or support civic responsibilities. It all depends on the individual, the circumstances that led to their departure from Nigeria, their family situation, and the civic responsibility considered.

Japa or Stay?

Youth Migration and the Soul of Nigeria's 2027 Elections

Uzodimma Obinna Christopher, SAC



In the quiet corners of Owerri and the bustling terminals of Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, the conversation is often the same. It is a dialogue between two timelines: the life we are living at twenty-five, and the life we hope to still have at forty. "Japa"—a Yoruba word for fleeing—has become the unspoken career path for Nigeria's young graduates. But as we approach the 2027 elections, a haunting question looms among those who remain: If everyone with a degree and a dream leaves, who will be left to demand that the lights stay on?

The Specific Gravity of Leaving

It is difficult to blame any young Nigerian for seeking a shore where a master's degree does not guarantee a taxi-driving future, where being twenty-three does not make you a suspect of 'Yahoo' business. To stay often feels like an act of defiance against a system that seems designed to break you precisely during your most productive years. Yet we must ask: Is our departure an escape, or a premature surrender of the generation that should be coming into its own?

The philosopher Achille Mbembe reminds us that African history has always been one of mobility, but he warns against futures where we become "market actors" without a home. For many young people, *Japa* is fueled by specific, recent wounds—the EndSARS protests of 2020, the currency collapse of 2023, the job market that asks for five years of experience from twenty-two-year-olds. The frustration is not abstract; it is lived in the body daily.

Peter Obi has noted that "we cannot continue to migrate to other people's countries while ours is being destroyed." But for the young Nigerian, the question remains: When does one stop building, and start surviving? The 2027 elections represent a referendum on whether the youth will have any soil left to stand on.

The "We" of a Depleted Generation

African philosophy speaks of Ubuntu—I am because we are. But what happens when the "we" is hollowed out? When your university roommate is in Toronto, your coding partner in Berlin, your sister who should

be starting her medical residency is instead cleaning hospital floors in London? The Ghanaian thinker Kwasi Wiredu argued that our morality is defined by duty to communal well-being. If the communal "we" of Nigerian youth is scattered across time zones, the "I" of those who remain—and those who left—eventually loses its reference point.

The 2027 elections offer a chance to move from brain drain to brain gain. But this only happens if young people refuse the role assigned to them: either as passive victims left behind, or as silent money-making machines abroad. "The refusal to take sides on great moral issues is itself a decision," wrote Fulton Sheen. For the youth, neutrality is not innocence; it is a choice to inherit the ruins.

The Weight of Distance, The Burden of Presence

Nigeria survives on lifelines sent from its young diaspora: funds that pay school fees for siblings still at home, that keep parents' shops open, that cover medical bills for ageing parents. But money cannot vote. It cannot protest. It

cannot build the local government councils where young people should be learning governance.

Those who left in the 2020-2024 wave are different from the established diaspora of the 1980s and 90s. They carry fresh memory: the taste of pepper soup at campus gates, the smell of dust of Monday morning football, the specific humiliation of a failed ATM on a Friday night, the sound of their own voices chanting at Lekki Toll Gate. This is not nostalgia. It is unfinished business.

Venerable Fulton Sheen wrote that "true freedom is not the right to do what we want but the power to do what we ought." For the young Nigerian abroad, "what we ought" may mean becoming the informed voice that calls home weekly not just to send money but to ask: Did you collect your PVC? Who is running for councilor in our ward? For the young Nigerian staying, it means recognizing that civic duty is not a transaction. It is recognising that #10,000 is not worth 4 years of unbearable hardship.

Cardinal Francis Arinze, speaking to young Catholics, often asks: "What is God calling you to do for the community?" The answer cannot be "wait until conditions improve." Distance does not grant dispensation from duty; neither does youth grant immunity from responsibility.

The 2027 Moment

With the electronic transmission of results and diaspora voting rights gaining legislative momentum, 2027 could be the first election where the "Global Nigerian", specifically the young professional who left during this exodus—truly speaks. Not through remittances alone, but through coordinated advocacy, through funding transparency initiatives, through refusing to let family members vote blindly.

Kwasi Wiredu might suggest that the duty to communal well-being is not geographical; it is ontological. We are Nigerian youth because of the community that formed us; we

owe that community a future where *Japa* is a choice among many, not the only rational option.

Staying is hard. Leaving is hard. But the hardest path is to watch from the sidelines as the future of 200 million people is decided by those who never had to choose between dignity and departure.

2027 is coming. Will our generation be spectators of its own decline, or architects of its resurrection?

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The Pallottine

MAGAZINE

INTERVIEW

With Chief Sir Ikenna Okafor (Ide Akwaeze)

A Papal Knight of St. Sylvester, Sports Philanthropist and Humanitarian



Pallottine Magazine: Good afternoon, Sir. We are members of the editorial crew of Pallottine Magazine. We belong to the Society of the Catholic Apostolate, popularly known as the Pallottine Fathers and Brothers. Right here are Rev. Fr. Dr. Josephat Umeogogo, SAC, the Rector of our theology community house and our moderator; Darius Mmuokwe, our Editor-in-Chief; Innocent Okoro, our cameraman; and Darlington Ezike, the production manager. We thank you sincerely for granting us the privilege of this interview. To begin, would you mind introducing yourself to us and our readers?

Chief Sir Ikenna Okafor: I will provide a brief introduction. My name is Ikenna Okafor. I am a father, a husband, a Papal Knight of Saint Sylvester, a traditional chief of many kingdoms,

an employer of labor, a sports philanthropist, and a humanitarian. I am a father of five children, Sophie, Stephanie, Susan, Ikenna and Ogechukwu. I am from Akwaeze in Anambra State, and currently doing business all over Nigeria.

Pallottine Magazine: Thank you, Sir. You established Keves Global Leasing Limited, an oil and gas engineering company incorporated in 2003 and commenced business in 2005. During the inauguration of its head office in Port Harcourt in 2024, you reportedly stated that you started it "with no capital, no brother, no sister, but with a clear vision;" and it has grown to become a world-class company. How did you achieve such a great success in Nigerian context?

Chief Sir Ikenna Okafor: There is no shortcut to success. In all honesty, I don't think we have achieved success yet; but I know we are on the right track towards our destination. Success is a continuous process, like a pilgrimage that requires constant effort. It is like a recurring decimal. We have achieved our current growth by leveraging on integrity and delivering on the promises we make to our clients. Real business growth comes from people doing exactly what they say they will do. The greatest factor that has helped us survive in the very muddy waters of Nigerian business environment is honesty and delivery in our transactions. The second one is that we position ourselves as the best price alternative. We are interested in establishing long-term business relationships rather than one-off transactions. We ensure that our clients have a positive experience with us.

Pallottine Magazine: Thank you, Sir. At the same launching ceremony of the head office, you



affirmed with certainty that the company will last beyond three generations, why are you confident about the future of your investments in Nigeria when so many people are losing hope in the country and relocating abroad?

Chief Sir Ikenna Okafor: When there is a clear plan, process, and procedure, it is very difficult for things to fail. It is just like the Catholic Church which has a way the Holy Mass is celebrated, whether in English or in Latin or in Igbo or in Spanish. Even if you do not understand the language, you will know when it is time for the introductory rite, the readings and the Eucharist. We will last for generations because we document our methods. There is a Keves Global Leasing Limited way of doing things that is not dependent on specific individuals. We constantly ask: Is it fair to the individual, the society, and the government? Does it protect our reputation? We also focus on organic growth. We do not simply bring outsiders to top positions; we ensure people rise through the ranks to understand our values of patience and perseverance. So, even if I am not here tomorrow, another person will occupy the seat and still do things in a similar way.

Pallottine Magazine: *You won the Humanitarian Service Icon of the Year 2023 award from the Sun Newspaper Publishers, a sign of a global recognition of the positive impacts you are making in the society through your philanthropy. What motivates your generosity?*

Chief Sir Ikenna Okafor: We are merely conveyors of goodness. Whatever we possess in this life does not truly belong to us. We were sent with a message, and we must choose whether to be like Archangel Michael or like Lucifer. To accept to serve or to disobey. For me, I chose to serve. Wherever I find myself, I share what I have with

those around me, regardless of their race or gender. Whatever I have is the result of the grace of God rather than my own making, and I believe that the grace will keep multiplying. That is why whatever I want to do, I do it well knowing that I am not alone, God is with me.

Pallottine Magazine: *While growing up, did you dream of becoming the successful businessman and philanthropist that you are today? Has that dream remained with you since your childhood?*

Chief Sir Ikenna Okafor: I have told you earlier that I am not yet successful, success is a work in progress. We have not achieved success but we find fulfillment in doing what we are supposed to do, which is to serve God and humanity wherever we are. According to Colossians 3:23, "whatever you do, do it wholeheartedly working for the Lord and not for humans." You cannot declare yourself the winner of a 100-meter race at the 40-meter mark; you must wait until the end. The best time to measure success is at the end of a person's life. History is written not by the person in question but by the onlookers who see the person's struggles and can testify at the end that the person has run a good race.

Pallottine Magazine: *Would you mind sharing some of the challenges you encountered while doing business in Nigeria and how you navigated through them?*

Chief Sir Ikenna Okafor: The biggest problem for any business in Nigeria is policy inconsistency. The second major issue is the inability to receive justice timely. A business disagreement that should be resolved quickly can take years in Nigerian courts, which often forces people to settle privately to avoid further loss. The third challenge is the prevalence of dishonest individuals. I am very cautious of anyone who uses religion as their first line of greeting in a business matter. I have been defrauded in the past by individuals who spoke excessively about their faith during business discussions. To survive in Nigeria, you must be patient and persevere. Suffering can be a form of purification that provides a person with the experience and knowledge necessary to become better.

Pallottine Magazine: *Were there mentors, role models, or spiritual influences that shaped your path?*

Chief Sir Ikenna Okafor: I am a Catholic and a Mariologist. I love the teachings of Saint Josemaría Escrivá which have shaped my thinking and influenced my life. Growing up in Nnewi, I was surrounded by many mentors who made money through hard work, like Ikemba Nnewi, Ekenedirichukwu, Izuchukwu, Ibeto and Innoson. They are ordinary people who made a difference through hard work. So I knew that being successful is not a rocket science. It has a formula of trying to do what is right consistently. You only fail when you stop trying. Once you don't stop trying you would be on track to success.

Pallottine Magazine: *Many young people are currently struggling in Nigeria and feeling stuck, what would you say to them from your life experience, to help them be on track to success despite the problems we face in the country?*

Chief Sir Ikenna Okafor: Each person is unique and called differently. It is always important to identify your unique passion and stay the course. Do not compare your life to others or, as the saying goes, "look at other people's frying pans". The youth should not be deceived by the curated images on social media. Patience is losing its value; people now want immediate results and use Artificial Intelligence (AI) to avoid the stress of thinking. You must exercise your brain. Once you find your specific gift, it will give you peace of mind, *Gaudium et Pax* (joy and peace).

Pallottine Magazine: *In your opinion, what fuels the wave of japa syndrome in Nigeria today and what do you think could be the solution?*

Chief Sir Ikenna Okafor: Japa syndrome is happening because the government has refused to provide leadership for all of us. The government officials are politicking only about themselves. When young people see that they have nothing doing in the country they go elsewhere where they can do better. However, as those who relocate abroad begin to occupy positions in their host countries, they do face rejection. Moreover, those trying to japa should realize that if they spend half of the time for doing what they want to do abroad here in Nigeria they will succeed. To make money here in Nigeria when you have all parameters right is easier. Many relocate abroad to do menial jobs and may be earning \$1,000 which may appear so big in the

eyes of Nigerians. But, when you do Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) you may find out that, given our communal way of living, a person who earns N200,000 in Nigeria may lead a better life than someone earning \$1,000 abroad, where there is no free lunch and no communal support. However, it is not a bad thing for people to japa. People need to travel to gain experiences and come back. It is a natural occurrence. Nigeria's situation is not very conducive now, but the system will eventually stabilize.

Pallottine Magazine: *What prospects do you see for the upcoming 2027 general elections, and what advice do you have for Nigerians?*

Chief Sir Ikenna Okafor: Because of policy inconsistencies, it is difficult to predict what will happen. It is too early to make a guess. But what I would tell you as any pilot would tell the passengers is: Tighten your seatbelts; the road ahead is very long.

Pallottine Magazine: *As a man of vision who has contributed positively to nation building from private sector, are you interested in entering political sector to steer the affairs of the country in the right direction from a political leadership position?*

Chief Sir Ikenna Okafor: I do not belong to any political party yet, but I am interested in what happens in governance. When I meet my friends in politics I normally advise them to do what is right. As at now, April 2026, I have not signed up for any political party. I may do that tomorrow, I don't know. We are interested in making sure that our service is better, by playing our roles, getting involved in education, providing scholarships and medical assistance to people, making sure we do our best; all gear towards people being happy. Whether it is coming from government or private sector, service to humanity is very dear to me.

Pallottine Magazine: *Thank you once again for your time and insights; and for the opportunity to be here with you.*

Chief Sir Ikenna Okafor: You are welcome. It is my pleasure.



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THE UNION OF CATHOLIC APOSTOLATE (UAC)



The Union of Catholic Apostolate (UAC) is the foundation of an Italian priest called, Vincent Pallotti in 1835. According to Fr Pallotti, this was an inspiration received from God after a holy Mass celebration of 9th January 1835. Due to the worsening crisis of faith of that time, God mandated him to work for the faith revival of Catholics, to rekindle their life of charity, and to renew the dynamic power of all Christ faithful in the Church. These were to be achieved, he emphasized, by bringing together all the members of Church in an active participate in the apostolic life and mission of the Church.

According to Vincent Pallotti, all the baptized Catholics, whether priests or religious, lay men and women, all have equal standing and dignity to participate actively and effectively in the apostolic mission and life of the Church; though according to their different states and limits. In other words, Pallotti's principal target for founding the UAC was to gather together, priests, religious and laypeople of all class to engage together in the work of the apostolate, missionary and charitable activities.

Hence, it is about forming and equipping the Christian faithful to become effective and active apostles in whatever state they find themselves within the structure of the Church. St Vincent Pallotti teaches then that 'we are all called to be Apostles.' Consequently, the

members of the Union are formed and enabled to become in the best of their ability and capacity, active apostles who will always render active and effective services to the Church.

Since its inception, the UAC has spread to different parts of the Pallottine world. Here in Nigeria, with the coming of the Pallottine Priest and Brothers over 20 years now, the UAC has been established wherever the Pallottines exercise their ministry such as in Onitsha Archdiocese and environs, Awka Diocese and environs, Ekwuluobia Diocese and environs, Aguleri Diocese and environs, Owerri Archdiocese and environs, Abakiliki Diocese and environs, and Nsukka Diocese and environs.

In the above places, we have and continues to carried out various forms of apostolates according to the mind of our founder; and we look forward to welcoming more members and collaborators in this field of apostolate for St Vincent Pallotti said that: "... all, important people and simple people, whether rich or poor, priests and lay people, alone or in community, old and young, men and women, the sick and healthy, in any position of life assigned to them by God in his mercy, will be able to find some way of participating in the apostolic mission of Jesus Christ with the merits due to them."

Rev. Fr Elui Chukwuma Jude SAC

(Director of the Pallottine Preparatory Formation, Owerri)

Economic Hardship and the Push Factor: 'Japa' Ambition and Responsibilities toward the 2027 Election

By Ezenwatu Philip Chukwuma, M.ss.cc



INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Nigeria has witnessed a surge in emigration popularly described as “*Japa*,” a Yoruba term meaning “to flee” or “to escape.” What was once a colloquial expression has evolved into a powerful social and political theme, capturing the aspirations of thousands of Nigerians seeking better economic opportunities, security, and stability abroad. At the center of this phenomenon lies a fundamental driver in migration theory: the push factor. Economic hardship, manifested in unemployment, inflation, currency instability, and declining public services, has intensified the desire to leave. As the nation approaches the 2027 general election, the “*Japa*” ambition is no longer a private decision confined to households; it has become a public discourse shaping political expectations, civic engagement, and leadership accountability. This essay examines economic hardship as a push factor behind the *Japa* wave and explores the responsibilities of citizens and political actors in transforming migration anxiety into constructive engagement toward 2027.

UNDERSTANDING ECONOMIC HARDSHIP AS A PUSH FACTOR

Migration scholars distinguish between “push” and “pull” factors. Push factors are adverse conditions in a country of origin that compel people to leave, while pull factors are attractive conditions in destination countries. In Nigeria's case, economic hardship has become a dominant push factor influencing emigration decisions. High unemployment and underemployment remain persistent challenges. Even among graduates, many face limited job prospects, delayed salaries, and precarious working conditions.

Small and medium enterprises struggle with high operating costs due to energy instability, exchange rate volatility, and limited access to credit. Inflation erodes purchasing power, making basic necessities increasingly unaffordable for ordinary citizens. Beyond macroeconomic indicators, economic hardship is experienced at the micro level. Families find it difficult to meet educational expenses,

healthcare costs, and housing needs. The frustration of working without financial progress creates a sense of stagnation. For many, *Japa* appears not merely as an ambition but as a survival strategy: a rational response to structural economic constraints.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF “JAPA” AMBITION

The *Japa* movement is not driven solely by material deprivation; it is also fueled by perceptions of limited future prospects. Economic hardship, when prolonged, generates a psychological climate of uncertainty and hopelessness. Young professionals often compare their earnings and quality of life with peers abroad through social media and digital networks. The perceived gap between effort and reward intensifies dissatisfaction.

Furthermore, when institutions fail to provide social mobility, meritocracy, or transparent governance, economic hardship becomes intertwined with political disillusionment. The ambition to leave is, therefore, both economic and symbolic: it reflects a search for dignity, stability, and fairness. The dream of relocating to countries with stronger currencies, reliable infrastructure, and predictable policy environments represents an aspiration for order and opportunity.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL LEADERS

The responsibility of addressing economic hardship primarily rests with political leadership. Toward 2027, policymakers must adopt pragmatic and evidence-based approaches to economic reform. This includes stabilizing the currency, improving the power supply, fostering an enabling environment for businesses, and investing in infrastructure.

Additionally, strengthening institutions is crucial. Transparent fiscal management, anti-corruption measures, and regulatory consistency can restore investor confidence and reduce economic uncertainty. When citizens perceive fairness and accountability in governance, the psychological push to migrate may diminish. Social protection programs also play a role. Targeted support for vulnerable populations, skill acquisition initiatives, and youth employment schemes

can mitigate the immediate effects of economic hardship.

CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

While leadership bears significant responsibility, citizens also have roles to play. The *Japa* ambition, though understandable, should not entirely replace civic engagement. Young people, in particular, constitute a demographic majority and possess the capacity to influence political outcomes. Participation in voter registration, informed political discourse, and peaceful advocacy are practical ways to shape the future.

Economic hardship should motivate, not paralyze, civic involvement. Constructive engagement through entrepreneurship, innovation, and community development can contribute to economic resilience. Moreover, Nigerians in the diaspora can remain connected to national development. Remittances, investment initiatives, and knowledge transfer can offset some effects of the brain drain. Thus, *Japa* does not have to signify abandonment; it can evolve into transnational engagement that supports domestic growth.

BALANCING MIGRATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Migration is a legitimate human right and often brings personal and professional advancement. The objective should not be to stigmatize *Japa* but to address the conditions that make it seem indispensable. A balanced perspective acknowledges that while individuals may seek better opportunities abroad, national development requires internal reform and collective commitment.

Reducing economic hardship requires long-term structural transformation. Diversifying the economy beyond oil dependency, promoting technology-driven industries, strengthening agricultural value chains, and improving education systems are essential strategies. Sustainable development can transform push factors into retention factors, making Nigeria a place where citizens choose to stay.

TOWARD 2027: FROM FRUSTRATION TO REFORM

The 2027 election represents a pivotal moment. Economic hardship and the *Japa* phenomenon must be framed not merely as crises but as catalysts for reform. Political debates should prioritize economic strategy, institutional integrity, and youth empowerment.

For voters, the election offers an opportunity to evaluate candidates based on competence, policy clarity, and track record. For aspirants, it demands a shift from personality-driven campaigns to issue-

based platforms. The credibility of Nigeria's democracy will depend on whether economic grievances translate into constructive political participation. Ultimately, the challenge lies in transforming the energy behind *Japa* into a broader national conversation about opportunity, governance, and shared responsibility.

CONCLUSION

Economic hardship remains a powerful push factor driving the *Japa* ambition in Nigeria. Persistent unemployment, inflation, and institutional weaknesses have compelled many citizens to seek stability abroad. While migration is a rational response to economic adversity, its widespread normalization signals deeper structural challenges.

As the 2027 election approaches, both leaders and citizens face critical responsibilities. Political actors must prioritize credible economic reforms and institutional accountability, while citizens must engage actively in the democratic process. The future of Nigeria depends not only on who chooses to leave but also on who chooses to stay, participate, and reform. The *Japa* ambition, therefore, should not merely represent an escape from hardship; it should inspire a renewed commitment to building a nation where opportunity is accessible, governance is accountable, and economic dignity is attainable at home.





Staying To Build, Leaving To Survive: Nigeria's Great Moral Debate

By Francis Michael

THE CROSSROADS OF A GENERATION

Every generation is confronted with questions that test its values, priorities, and sense of responsibility. For many Nigerians today, one of the most urgent questions is whether to remain in the country and help rebuild it or to leave in search of better opportunities abroad. This dilemma has become more than a personal choice; it is now a national conversation touching homes, schools, workplaces, churches, and the hearts of young people.

The popular term *Japa* captures the growing desire to migrate, but behind the word lies a deeper reality of hardship, frustration, and fading trust in institutions. At the same time, many still believe that Nigeria can only improve if citizens stay back to contribute their talents and energies. As the nation approaches the 2027 election, the debate between staying to build and leaving to survive has become both moral and political. It raises serious questions about hope, patriotism, leadership, and the future of the country.

Nigeria today stands at a difficult crossroads. Across homes, campuses, offices, and marketplaces, one pressing question dominates public conversation: should one remain in the country and contribute to its rebuilding, or leave in search of safety, dignity, and opportunity elsewhere? What once seemed like a private life decision has now become a national concern. It is no longer merely about migration; it is about citizenship, responsibility, and hope.

THE LANGUAGE OF ESCAPE AND SURVIVAL

The popular expression *Japa* has become the language of this aspiration to leave. Yet beneath the humour and slang lies a painful reality. Many Nigerians are burdened by unemployment, insecurity, inflation, poor infrastructure, corruption, and a declining confidence in public institutions. For countless young people, professionals, and families, leaving is not viewed as a luxury but as a necessity. It appears to be the quickest route to survival.

At the same time, another argument persists. Some believe that Nigeria cannot improve if all those with talent, education, and energy continue to depart. They

insist that every nation rises through the sacrifice and commitment of citizens who choose to remain and build. Thus, Nigeria finds itself caught between two powerful instincts: self-preservation and national responsibility.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONFLICT OF CHOICES

To discuss this issue honestly, we must avoid harsh judgments. Those who leave are not necessarily selfish, and those who stay are not automatically heroic. A doctor who migrates because hospitals lack equipment may simply be seeking the means to practise effectively. A graduate who leaves because merit is repeatedly crushed by corruption may only be searching for fairness. A parent who relocates for the sake of children may be acting out of love and duty.

Likewise, many Nigerians abroad continue to support the country in meaningful ways. Through remittances, investments, business partnerships, professional expertise, and advocacy, they remain connected to home. Their physical absence does not always mean emotional abandonment.

Yet it is equally true that no nation can prosper when its most capable citizens continually depart. When teachers, engineers, doctors, entrepreneurs, and innovators leave in large numbers, the country suffers a dangerous loss of skill and leadership. Institutions become weaker, public services decline, and the burden on those who remain becomes heavier. A nation cannot permanently export its brightest minds and expect steady progress.

This is why the debate is so profound. Leaving may protect the individual, but staying may preserve the nation. Leaving may save a family from hardship, but staying may help create a future where fewer families feel compelled to flee. Leaving may solve immediate problems, but staying may confront the causes of those problems.

THE POLITICAL AND MORAL IMPLICATIONS OF 2027

As Nigeria moves toward the 2027 general election, this debate takes on greater urgency. Many citizens desire to leave because they no longer trust that leadership can improve their circumstances. Years of broken promises, corruption, poor governance, and political selfishness have weakened public faith. For some, airports now seem

more credible than ballot boxes.

But if elections continue to be determined by ethnicity, religion, vote-buying, and empty slogans, then the desire to leave will only grow stronger. People naturally seek escape when they lose hope in reform. The quality of leadership a nation chooses directly shapes the willingness of its people to remain and invest their future at home.

The responsibility, however, does not rest on politicians alone. Citizens also carry a sacred civic duty. The 2027 election must become an opportunity for moral renewal. Nigerians must resist manipulation and choose competence, integrity, vision, and accountability. A vote is more than a political act; it is a statement about the future one desires.

Young people especially stand at the centre of this moment. They are the group most eager to migrate, yet they are also the group most capable of transforming the nation. Their frustration is understandable, but frustration must not become permanent withdrawal. If the youth surrender politics entirely to the corrupt, they strengthen the very forces driving them away.

At the same time, patriotism must never be demanded only from suffering citizens while leaders evade responsibility. Love of country must be mutual. Government must create conditions in which honest labour is rewarded, security is protected, justice is upheld, and dreams can flourish. Citizens deserve a nation worthy of their loyalty.

GEOGRAPHY VERSUS CHARACTER

Perhaps the deepest lesson of this debate is that staying and leaving are not always opposites. One may remain in Nigeria and still abandon the nation through corruption, apathy, and selfishness. One may live abroad and still build the nation through service, investment, prayer, advocacy, and genuine concern. Geography alone does not determine patriotism; character does.

The real question, therefore, is not simply where Nigerians live, but how Nigerians live. Do they use their talents only for private gain, or also for the common good? Do they choose comfort without conscience, or success with responsibility? Do they complain endlessly, or contribute meaningfully?

Nigeria does not need citizens trapped by guilt, nor a generation convinced that hope exists only elsewhere. It needs men and women, at home and abroad, who understand that nations are renewed when personal ambition is joined to public duty.

To stay and build is noble when inspired by courage. To leave and survive is understandable when driven by

necessity. But in either case, one obligation remains: never to abandon the task of rebuilding the common home.

Nigeria's future will not be decided only by those who depart or those who remain. It will be decided by those who still care enough to act.

CONCLUSION: BALANCING AMBITION AND RENEWAL

The debate between staying to build and leaving to survive reflects the pain, hopes, and moral struggles of many Nigerians. While migration may provide immediate opportunities and relief, no nation can flourish when responsibility is neglected, and hope is constantly exported. At the same time, citizens who remain deserve leadership that is honest, competent, and committed to the common good.

As Nigeria approaches the 2027 election, this moment calls for renewed civic responsibility and collective conscience. Whether at home or abroad, every Nigerian has a role to play in shaping a better future through integrity, service, and wise choices. In the end, patriotism is measured not merely by where one lives, but by how one contributes. Nigeria will rise when ambition is balanced with responsibility, and when citizens choose not only personal survival, but national renewal.

The graphic features the Emerging Africa Group logo at the top right, which consists of a stylized sun with a map of Africa in the center, above the text "EMERGING AFRICA". Below the logo is a large orange rectangle. To the left of the orange rectangle is a dark blue rectangle with the text "Emerging Africa Group" in white. Below this is a black rectangle with the text "About Us" and a description of the group. To the right of the orange rectangle is a white rectangle with the text "Wealth Creation Starts Here" and a grid of icons representing various services: Financial Advisory, Infrastructure Finance, Asset Management, Mergers and Acquisitions, Microfinance Banking, Investors, Family Office, and Private. At the bottom left is a black rectangle with the text "Contact us: info@emergingafricagroup.com www.emergingafricagroup.com".

Interview

With Dr. Chibueze Ofobuike

Mayor, Aguata L.G.A APGA candidate,
House of Representatives (Aguata Federal
Constituency)



Pallottine Magazine: *Thank you Sir for granting us the opportunity to interview you. Congratulations for emerging as the flag bearer of your political party in the forthcoming federal house of representatives election. We are the editorial crew of Pallottine Magazine. Please, could you introduce yourself to us and our readers?*

Dr. Chibueze Ofobuike: Thank you very much. My name is Dr. Chibueze Ofobuike. I am the Mayor of Aguata Local Government Area, one of the 21 Local Government Areas in Anambra State. I have been serving as the Mayor since 2024. Prior to that, I served as the Transition Committee Chairman from August 2022 until September 2024. Altogether, I have served two years as Transition Committee Chairman and two years as Mayor. My tenure will come to an end in September 2026. Incidentally, I am also the candidate of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) for the forthcoming General Election scheduled for January 16, 2027. My aspiration is to represent the good people of Aguata Federal Constituency in the House of Representatives. Thank you.

Pallottine Magazine: *Thank you very much, Sir. Having served as the Chairman of Aguata Local Government Area, could you highlight some of your major achievements that you believe have earned the confidence of the people and prepared you to represent them at the federal level?*

Dr. Chibueze Ofobuike: First, I consider the opportunity to serve as Mayor a rare privilege. When I assumed office in August 2022, I was, and I believe I still am, the youngest person to serve in that capacity. It was a great responsibility, especially considering public perceptions about my age and experience. However, I embraced it as a challenge. I believe my emergence was by divine providence, and I felt a strong responsibility to prove that young people are capable of delivering quality leadership. When I assumed office, my team and I took time to study the opportunities, challenges and prospects across the fourteen

communities that make up Aguata Local Government Area. We identified a significant gap in the delivery of quality governance at the grassroots level and set out to demonstrate that the local government system can still function effectively.

After carefully assessing the needs of our people, we established our priorities through what we call the Greater Aguata Agenda. This development philosophy is built on the belief that Aguata is already great, but through our collective efforts, we can make it even greater. The Greater Aguata Agenda focuses on six key areas: education, healthcare, agriculture, youth development, sports development, and public infrastructure. These six pillars have guided our style of governance and our interventions across the Local Government Area. By the grace of God, we have recorded significant achievements in all these sectors. In education, for example, we have constructed and renovated schools and established community libraries.

We are proud to be the first Local Government Area in Anambra State to build two modern community libraries in different communities one in Nkpologwu and the other in Igboekwu. These facilities are equipped with solar power, books, computers and internet connectivity, providing students with a modern learning environment. In addition, we have constructed markets in



Aguluezechukwu, Achina and Ikenga, including a modern sanitary-compliant abattoir in Achina. These projects have strengthened the local economy and restored confidence in grassroots governance. We have also upgraded several primary healthcare centres to improve access to quality healthcare services.

One of our flagship educational programmes is the PUSH Initiative, which focuses on supporting pupils in public primary schools. Although education is free in Anambra State, we discovered that many pupils come from financially disadvantaged backgrounds. To encourage school attendance, the Local Government provides free school uniforms, school bags, shoes and other learning materials. The initiative is called PUSH, reflecting our determination to "push" every child toward quality education. Another landmark programme is the Aguata Best Student Challenge, an annual academic competition for senior secondary school students. The competition seeks to identify, celebrate and reward academic excellence while inspiring other students to strive for greater achievement.

Each participating secondary school nominates two students. The competition begins with a general knowledge examination involving over two hundred students. Those who qualify proceed to a creative writing stage, after which the finalists participate in an oral presentation. The overall best-performing student is crowned the Aguata Best Student for that year and receives prizes including scholarships, laptop computers and other educational support. One of the most remarkable aspects of the Aguata Best Student Challenge is the educational exposure we provide for the finalists. Every student who reaches the final stage is rewarded with an educational excursion outside their immediate environment.

When we launched the programme in 2023, we took the ten finalists to Lagos. During the visit, they toured the headquarters of Microsoft, Google and Moniepoint, where they interacted with leading innovators and entrepreneurs. They also had enriching sessions with the

Consuls-General of Germany and Australia in Lagos. In 2024, we took fifteen outstanding finalists on a one-week educational tour of Accra, Ghana. During the trip, they visited the University of Ghana, the Tema Port and several other institutions of academic and economic importance. The objective was to broaden their perspectives and expose them to opportunities beyond their immediate environment.

Many of these students had never travelled by air before. For some, it was their first experience of entering an airport and boarding an aircraft. More importantly, we continue to monitor their academic progress after the competition. Several of them, whose parents could not afford university education, have received support that has enabled them to continue their studies. We are confident that these young people have a bright future ahead of them. In 2025, we took another fifteen finalists to Cape Town, South Africa, for a week-long educational tour. I accompanied them throughout the trip, as I do on all our educational excursions. It was an unforgettable experience that exposed the students to new ideas, cultures and educational opportunities.

This year, our original plan was to take fifteen to twenty finalists to London. Unfortunately, our visa applications, including mine, were unsuccessful. Rather than cancel the programme, we made alternative arrangements to take the students to Kigali, Rwanda. They are scheduled to travel on 5 July and return on 12 July, where they will participate in an African Innovation Boot Camp alongside about 300 students from different parts of the world. This reflects our unwavering commitment to investing in education despite unforeseen challenges. Another initiative we are proud of is the Aguata Leaders' Training Tour. Every year, we organise an intensive leadership development programme for the senior prefects of secondary schools across Aguata Local Government Area.

The objective is simple: if a school identifies a student as its senior prefect, that student already possesses leadership potential. Our responsibility as a Local Government is to nurture and develop those qualities from an early stage. Previous editions of the programme have been held in Port Harcourt, while this year's participants about forty-five senior prefects will travel to Abuja for leadership training and exposure.

I would not want to bore you with an exhaustive list of our educational interventions. Suffice it to say that education remains one of our highest priorities because we believe it is the surest investment in the future of our young people. Beyond these programmes, we have awarded scholarships to outstanding students and implemented numerous initiatives in healthcare and agriculture. In agriculture, we have distributed farming inputs and provided capacity-

building opportunities for young farmers. About a month ago, we sponsored twenty young farmers from across Aguata to undergo specialised agricultural training at the Songhai Centre in Porto-Novo, Benin Republic. I personally accompanied them on the trip. Upon their return, each participant received a grant of one million naira to support the expansion of their agricultural enterprises.

We have also made significant investments in sports development. We are proud to be the first Local Government Area to establish and sustain a functional football academy, known as the Aguata Football Academy. In addition, we have constructed a stadium and a mini stadium in Umuchu, while another mini stadium is currently under construction in Oraeri. These projects are aimed at promoting grassroots sports and nurturing young talents. Our youth development initiatives include business empowerment programmes, entrepreneurship support and several opportunities designed to equip young people with the skills and resources they need to become self-reliant. In the area of public infrastructure, we have provided pipe-borne water to communities such as Nkpologwu, Amesi and Umuchu, where access to potable water had been a major challenge. We have also installed streetlights across several communities to improve security and enhance the quality of life.

Furthermore, we have undertaken major erosion-control projects. One such intervention is at Nkono, Ekwulobia, where severe erosion threatened several homes. We are also executing another major erosion-control project in Achina, which includes the construction of a mini bridge. In fact, after this interview, I intend to visit the site to inspect the progress of the work. My team and I are guided by the belief that "Nothing is impossible." We invest enormous time, energy and resources to ensure that every project entrusted to us is successfully completed.

Before I conclude, I would like to acknowledge the invaluable support we receive from individuals and organisations who share our vision for a greater Aguata. Many people often ask how we are able to execute these ambitious programmes. For example, the educational trip to Kigali alone costs well over fifty million naira, covering airfare, accommodation, programme fees and other logistics. Such an undertaking would be extremely difficult for the Local Government to finance alone.

The success of these initiatives has been made possible through partnerships with public-spirited individuals, community leaders and benefactors who believe in our vision. This collaborative approach embodies the spirit of the Greater Aguata Agenda. While we believe Aguata is already a great Local Government Area, we also believe that it can become

even greater when government and citizens work together. For many of these educational tours, we simply reached out to distinguished sons and daughters of the various communities. Every community in Aguata is blessed with accomplished individuals who are willing to contribute to the development of their homeland. Some sponsored air tickets, others supported different aspects of the programmes. Through such partnerships, we have been able to achieve results that would otherwise have been impossible. I therefore wish to express my profound appreciation to all our partners, benefactors and stakeholders. Despite prevailing economic challenges, they continue to invest their resources in initiatives that improve the lives of our people. Their unwavering support has played a vital role in the success of the Greater Aguata Agenda, and for that, we remain sincerely grateful.

Pallottine Magazine: *Thank you so much, Sir. Those are indeed remarkable and impactful initiatives. With the 2027 general elections approaching, what responsibilities do you think citizens especially young people have in participating actively in Nigeria's democratic process, particularly at a time when many are seeking greener pastures abroad through the Japa phenomenon?*

Dr. Chibueze Ofobuikwe: What we popularly refer to as the Japa phenomenon is a reality that requires thoughtful attention. In my opinion, the most effective way to address it is through purposeful leadership. Good leadership creates opportunities for people, especially young people. When individuals have sustainable means of livelihood and confidence in their future, the desire to leave the country in search of greener pastures is greatly reduced. After all, if the pasture is already green at home, what else are you looking for elsewhere? This places a great responsibility on government, particularly at the federal level, while the state governments also have an important role to play. They must create employment opportunities, stimulate economic growth and implement policies that inspire hope among young people. If people have decent jobs, feel secure and believe that their future is promising, many will choose to remain and contribute to the development of their country. Therefore, I wish to call on my fellow political leaders to reflect seriously on the challenges confronting our nation and work together to provide lasting solutions. Sadly, some young people who travel abroad with unrealistic expectations become frustrated when reality differs from what they anticipated. In some cases, this disappointment leads a few into criminal activities because they are unwilling to return home empty-handed. This underscores the need not only for better governance but also for proper guidance and realistic expectations before making such life-changing decisions.

Pallottine Magazine: *Thank you very much, Sir. From all*

you have shared, it is evident that Aguata is richly blessed, particularly in terms of human resources. As you seek to represent Aguata Federal Constituency in the House of Representatives, what will be your major priorities if elected?

Dr. Chibueze Ofobuike: First, it is important to understand the primary responsibility of a legislator. The principal duties of a legislator are law-making and oversight. However, I intend to go beyond merely occupying a legislative seat. My desire is to contribute meaningfully to making laws that will positively shape the future of Nigeria and improve the lives of our people. I strongly believe that my experience at the grassroots level has equipped me with a deep understanding of the challenges facing our communities. Having served for four years in local government, I understand these realities because I have lived and worked closely with the people. This experience will enable me to participate effectively in formulating laws and policies that can transform lives, particularly those of young people. My academic background also provides an added advantage. I studied Political Science and hold a PhD in the discipline. This has given me both the theoretical knowledge and practical understanding of Nigeria's historical, political and developmental challenges. Beyond legislation, I am committed to attracting meaningful projects and development programmes to Aguata Federal Constituency. Effective representation also involves building partnerships with government agencies, development partners and international organisations to secure projects that directly benefit the people. I believe I am well positioned to achieve this because of the exposure I have gained through public service. I currently serve as the Chairman representing the twenty one mayors of Anambra state in Abuja under the Association of Local Governments of Nigeria (ALGON). This responsibility has provided me with valuable opportunities to engage with federal institutions and international development partners.

Over the years, I have worked with organisations such as UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Health Organization (WHO), and many others. These relationships have broadened my experience and strengthened my capacity to attract development opportunities to my constituency. My aspiration is not merely to occupy a seat in the House of Representatives but to become an effective and result-oriented legislator. My personal goal is to be recognised among the most outstanding members of the House within my first year in office through quality representation, impactful legislation and visible constituency development.

Pallottine Magazine: *Finally, Sir, what message would you like to leave for Nigerian youths, especially those who are contemplating relocating abroad in search of*

greener pastures?

Dr. Chibueze Ofobuike: My message is twofold. First, I reiterate my appeal to government at all levels. We must create jobs, strengthen security and build an environment where young people can pursue their dreams with confidence. Many young Nigerians leave the country because they believe their future is uncertain. If government provides security, economic opportunities and hope, the pressure to emigrate will reduce significantly. Secondly, I would like to speak directly to young people. Many are eager to succeed quickly and often believe that success abroad comes easily. Unfortunately, this perception is not always accurate. Some are misled into believing that wealth is readily available overseas without appreciating the sacrifices, discipline and challenges involved. This is why proper orientation and sensitisation are essential. Before making such an important decision, take time to conduct thorough research. Ask questions, seek reliable information and understand the realities of the country you intend to relocate to. Above all, know yourself. As the philosopher Socrates famously said, "man know thyself." Every individual has unique strengths, values and personality traits. Some people naturally thrive in environments that emphasise community and close social relationships, while others adapt more easily to highly individualistic societies. Our communal culture remains one of Nigeria's greatest strengths. The sense of togetherness, family and shared responsibility that we enjoy is something many societies do not experience in the same way.

Speaking from personal experience, when I completed my studies, I knew the kind of career I wanted. Although there was pressure to pursue opportunities solely for financial gain, I deliberately chose a path that would allow me to impact lives especially those of young people while also giving me the freedom to contribute meaningfully to society. Therefore, my advice is simple: if you intend to relocate abroad, make an informed decision. Research thoroughly, seek wise counsel and ensure that the destination you choose aligns with your aspirations, personality and long-term goals. Whether you choose to remain in Nigeria or pursue opportunities abroad, success ultimately depends on preparation, hard work and a clear understanding of who you are.

Pallottine Magazine: *Thank you very much, Sir, for granting us this interview and for sharing your insights with us. We sincerely appreciate your time and wish you success in your future endeavours.*

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Don't Wait for the **Right Moment**: Create It

by Ilobinso Augustine, SAC

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In Nigeria, a nation abundant in culture and resources yet beset by formidable challenges, the political landscape often appears stagnant, fraught with corruption, inefficiency, and a glaring absence of accountability. Many citizens feel disenfranchised and disillusioned, biding their time for "the right moment" to instigate change. However, the adage "Don't wait for the right moment. Create it" reverberates with profound significance in this context. It underscores the imperative that individuals can take initiative and assume responsibility for engendering change in a system that frequently seems unresponsive.

The Myth of Perfect Timing in Nigerian Politics

Within the Nigerian milieu, the notion of perfect timing resonates deeply. Many citizens harbor the belief that the political landscape will only transform when certain leaders vacate their positions or when a "savior" emerges.

This mentality is exemplified by the pervasive apathy among the youth. Feeling that their voices hold little weight, they often withdraw from political discourse, resulting in a generational disconnect from governance. Yet history has demonstrated that significant movements frequently arise from ordinary citizens. The #EndSARS movement, which spotlighted police brutality and demanded reforms, illustrated how social media and grassroots endeavors could galvanize a generation against systemic injustices. This initiative was conceived in frustration and a

recognition that passively awaiting governmental reform was insufficient.

Taking Action: The Role of Individuals in Political Change

Creating change within Nigerian politics commences with individual action. Every citizen possesses the potential to influence their community, and collective efforts can precipitate systemic transformation. Rather than awaiting governmental solutions, individuals can engage in myriad ways:

- 1. Voter Registration and Participation:** One of the most consequential actions citizens can undertake is to register to vote and actively participate in elections. By making informed choices, citizens can supplant ineffective leaders with those committed to genuine reform.
- 2. Community Engagement:** Involvement in local governance and community development can lay the groundwork for broader political change. Individuals can participate in local councils, community boards, or advocacy groups focused on pressing issues such as education, healthcare, or infrastructure.
- 3. Raising Awareness:** Utilizing social media platforms to elevate awareness about political issues can mobilize public



sentiment, using these platforms to disseminate information, heighten awareness, and rally support for various causes.

- 4. Grassroots Movements:** Individuals can band together to establish advocacy groups centered on specific causes such as anti-corruption, women's rights, or environmental sustainability.

Embracing Change: The Role of Activism in Nigeria

Transformation within Nigerian politics often springs from collective activism, yet this necessitates courage and commitment from individuals. Engaging in activism may initially appear daunting, but history has shown that these endeavors can yield meaningful reforms.

For instance, the struggle against electoral malpractices and the demand for transparency can commence with individual actions. Citizens can document electoral processes, report irregularities, and hold officials accountable. They can also collaborate with organizations that monitor elections to advocate for transparency.

Moreover, movements advocating for gender equality, anti-corruption,

and social justice have vividly illustrated the potency of collective action. The numerous protests led by women in Nigeria, addressing issues ranging from gender-based violence to political representation, have been instrumental in raising awareness and prompting legislative reforms.

Mindset: The Power of Positive Thinking in Political Activism

For change to take root in Nigeria, citizens must cultivate a proactive mindset. This entails transcending cynicism in favor of a belief in the potential for transformation. Embracing hope and resilience is vital for engaging with challenging political realities.

The narratives of individuals who have instigated impactful changes in their communities or ascended to leadership roles can serve as powerful sources of inspiration. Figures such as Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, the former finance minister and current Director-General of the World Trade Organization, exemplify how dedication and expertise can catalyze substantial shifts. Her journey underscores the importance of individuals believing in their capacity to effect change—even within a challenging political landscape.

Overcoming Fear and Self-Doubt: Taking the Leap

One of the most formidable barriers to political engagement in Nigeria is fear and self-doubt. Many citizens may feel that their actions will be inconsequential or that the political system is too oppressive to navigate.

Individuals can confront these fears by educating themselves about their rights and understanding the political process. Moreover, sharing personal narratives of successful involvement in political initiatives can encourage others to step beyond their comfort zones.

The Ripple Effect of Individual Actions

When individuals take ownership of

their ability to create moments, they pave the way for collective action. Change does not occur in isolation; it is often the result of interconnected efforts. The ripple effect generated by one person's commitment can inspire an entire community to engage actively. When young people engage in civic activities, they can inspire their peers to follow suit, fostering a culture of participation. The collective strength of engaged citizens is far more formidable than the mere sum of its parts, culminating in an empowered populace that demands accountability and change.

Real-Life Examples of Political Action in Nigeria

Numerous individuals have emerged as catalysts for change within Nigeria's political landscape, demonstrating actionable steps toward more equitable governance:

1. **Aisha Yesufu:** A prominent activist renowned for her pivotal role in the #EndSARS movement, Aisha has harnessed her platform to advocate for police reform and social justice. Her unwavering commitment to justice has galvanized countless Nigerians, particularly youths, to engage politically and demand reforms.
2. **Julius O. Afolabi:** An exemplar of grassroots activism, Julius founded a nonprofit organization concentrating on education and civic engagement in rural areas.
3. **The Bring Back Our Girls Movement:** Following the abduction of 276 schoolgirls from Chibok, this movement emerged as a grassroots effort, amplifying the plight of the girls and advocating for their safe return.

Practical Strategies for Individuals to Create Change

1. **Educate Yourself and Others:** Remain informed about political issues and

disseminate knowledge among your peers.

2. **Join or Form Advocacy Groups:** Seek out like-minded individuals to engage in activism.
3. **Engage with Legislative Processes:** Attend town hall meetings, public forums, or community rallies to vocalize concerns and participate in discussions.
4. **Utilize Social Media for Awareness:** Leverage digital platforms to share insights, mobilize support, and raise awareness of political issues.
5. **Promote Youth Engagement:** Encourage young people to immerse themselves in the political process.
6. **Practice Resilience:** Acknowledge that change requires time and often encounters setbacks.

Conclusion: Empower Yourself to Create Change

The clarion call to action in Nigeria is unequivocal: seize the moment and create change within the political landscape. While the challenges may appear daunting, every individual harbors the potential to contribute to a transformative movement. Waiting for optimal circumstances may lead to continued disenfranchisement and squandered opportunities.

By taking action, engaging civically, and adopting a proactive mindset, citizens can reshape their political milieu. Remember that the power to forge the future resides within each person. Now is the time to act, voice your concerns, and work collectively toward a Nigeria that embodies the dreams and aspirations of its people. Creating change transcends mere political action; it is a civic responsibility, an opportunity, and ultimately, a manifestation of hope for a brighter future.



Japaism:

A Road Towards The Degradation Of Cultural, Social, And Economic Values. Its Implications On 2027 General Elections.

By Enendu Vitus Nzubechukwu, SAC



In recent years, Nigeria, a country of many nations, has been challenged by a huge problem called *JAPA*, a kankerworm that has gradually developed a taproot in the stability of the country's cultural, social, and economic values. This trend is majorly found amongst the working-class citizens who seek to run away from the country for greener pastures, as a stranger in another man's country. This has created mixed reactions from citizens as many see it as an amazing opportunity for financial liberation for themselves and their various families.

Statistically, in 2020, the Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics recorded that 53.4% of young people were unemployed, a high rate that has contributed to the desire to seek better opportunities abroad. Between 2000 and 2024, the number of Nigerian students abroad significantly increased to over 85,000 from different countries, such as the United States of America, China, Canada, the United Kingdom and so on. These are driven by factors like limited opportunities at home and a desire for quality education and quality standard of living. However, while some view remittances as beneficial, *Japaism* primarily erodes the nation's core values through brain drain and demographic shifts.

Cultural Erosion

Japaism disrupts Nigeria's rich cultural heritage by fragmenting communities and weakening traditional practices. The exodus of young professionals severs inter-generational knowledge transfer, diminishing

communal festivals, languages, and customs that define Nigerian identity. Families left behind lose cultural anchors as children grow without parental guidance on values like communalism and respect for elders, fostering a generational disconnect. Over time, this leads to diluted cultural pride, with diaspora influences prioritizing individualism over the collective Nigerian ethos.

Social Breakdown

Social fabrics unravel as *Japaism* splits families, causing emotional voids and rising instability. Extended family networks, vital for child-rearing and support in Nigerian society, weaken when parents or siblings emigrate, leaving vulnerable groups like the elderly and youth without care. Psychological impacts include increased depression and identity crises among stay-behinds, while communities face labour shortages in essential services like healthcare, for example, in 2019 according to the Nigerian Medical Association, Nigeria recorded that approximately

21,000 Nigerian doctors were practicing in the United States, with an additional 30,000 spread across the rest of the world. A staggering 88% of Nigerian doctors expressed their intention to leave the country, with 91% at the junior level, 89% at the mid-level, and 73% at the senior level seeking opportunities abroad. The main factors of this brain drain include poor salaries, inadequate working conditions, insecurity, and limited career progression. These factors foster societal apathy, with remaining youth viewing emigration as the sole path to success, eroding social cohesion.

Economic Decline

Economically, *Japaism* accelerates brain drain, depleting Nigeria of talent needed for growth. Over 3.6 million emigrated between 2022 and 2023, including doctors, engineers, and tech experts, causing skill shortages, higher labour costs, and stalled innovation. Sectors like healthcare and technology suffer productivity drops, reducing GDP contributions and tax revenues from high earners. Remittances provide short-term relief but fail to offset long-term losses from uninvested human capital, perpetuating poverty cycles.

Its implications for the 2027 General Elections

The last 2023 General Election recorded a large number of voters and votes since the history of elections in Nigeria. This historic development was geared towards the betterment

of Nigeria by Nigerians. Many saw it as a renewed hope for the people and devoted themselves to making sure that their votes were counted and their favoured candidates won. However, these expectations did not yield much fruit and it became a controversial scenario for the citizens. Moreso, many Nigerians in diaspora who returned to exercise their franchise were left in dismay.

Here are the issues, the upcoming 2027 election could generate a low turnout because of Nigerians in diaspora who have disconnected themselves from the reality of the country, which has increased rapidly

especially due to the issue of governance. They tend to align themselves with the governance of the foreign land where they reside. This high rate of disinterestedness could lead to a high rate of political apathy. However, there is still a lingering question: Does "*Japaing*" or leaving the country erode one from facing the reality in one's own motherland? An adage says, "he who fights and runs away will leave to fight another day", which implies that running away is not going to solve the issue rather facing it bravely will go a long way to reduce the worst scenario that it can lead to.



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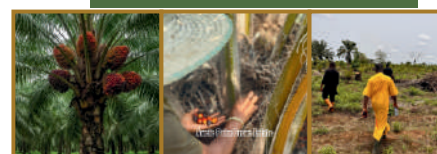
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Does Nigeria's Democratic Future Get Weaker Due To Emigration?

By Aji Law



Introduction

The phenomenon of emigration has become a double-edged sword for countries facing economic and sociopolitical difficulties in the modern world. The massive migration of Nigerians, especially of the educated and professional class, raises serious concerns about the long-term viability of the country's democracy. Nigeria is widely known for its dynamic culture and enormous potential. Consequently, one must consider whether migration undermines Nigeria's democratic objectives as citizens travel elsewhere in search of better possibilities.

The Catalyst of the Exodus

Driven by a pressing desire for better living conditions, superior employment opportunities, and increased security, emigration from Nigeria has increased dramatically in recent years. This movement has been sparked by widespread, systemic problems such as economic instability, corruption, and poor governance (Adepoju, 2010, p. 45). This "brain drain," defined as the exodus of highly qualified professionals, carries profound consequences for democratic institutions.

Ezeani (2016, p. 78) asserts that the state's capacity to provide efficient governance and uphold accountability is seriously threatened by this loss of human capital. In addition to their specialized talents, educated citizens who depart in large numbers also carry away the potential for civic involvement and collective action, both of which are crucial for fostering a vibrant democracy. This raises deep concerns regarding the long-term effects of this migration

on Nigeria's political environment, which is already beset by complex structural problems.

The Widening Governance Deficit

Nigeria's political climate has long been challenging, characterized by issues such as rampant corruption, electoral malpractice, and a pervasive lack of confidence in public institutions. A disillusioned public that frequently feels disconnected from its government is the direct result of these ongoing issues. This gap between the government and its residents is made worse by the exodus of critical intellectuals and engaged citizens, as Ogunyemi (2022, p. 112) points out. Instead of attempting internal reform, those who opt to emigrate frequently do so to escape institutional flaws.

Their absence leaves a critical gap that authoritarian inclinations could exploit, further undermining democratic standards. Ultimately, a lessened presence of an informed and involved populace may result in weakened democratic processes and an eroded structure for accountable and transparent governance.

Furthermore, emigration has far-reaching effects on Nigeria's sociopolitical structure in addition to individual goals. There are significant worries about the future of civic engagement in the nation due to the migration of young people, particularly those who possess the greatest capacity to effect change. A strong democracy depends heavily on its citizens' active participation, as Adepoju (2010, p. 47) highlights.

However, the disengagement that accompanies emigration encourages indifference toward

civic responsibilities and local governance, further solidifying an unbreakable cycle of disillusionment. Young people, who are frequently viewed as the natural leaders of social change, are increasingly choosing to look for opportunities elsewhere rather than participate in the domestic fight for reform.

The Psychological and Social Toll

The psychological effects of emigration on the individuals who stay in Nigeria must also be taken into account. Successful emigrants' stories frequently emphasize their accomplishments overseas, presenting an idealized picture that may make those who decide to remain feel inadequately equipped or valued (Ogunyemi, 2022, p. 115). Citizens who feel stuck in a system they believe is failing them may experience a weakened sense of personal agency and responsibility as a result of this dynamic. Consequently, this psychological load may produce a climate in which people feel helpless to bring about change, thereby undermining the fundamental component of democratic engagement.

Moreover, *Japa*, the popular slang name for emigration, has an equally profound effect on community and family systems. As they deal with the loss of loved ones who have relocated for opportunities elsewhere, families left behind frequently experience severe emotional difficulty. Community ties and social cohesiveness, which are essential for group activity and civic engagement, may be badly damaged as a result of this fragmentation. The common experiences and group challenges that frequently inspire communities to take democratic action are diminished as families spread across diverse national boundaries.

Socioeconomic Ramifications

It is also impossible to ignore this migration trend's socioeconomic ramifications. There are crippling shortages in vital industries like healthcare, education, and technology as talented workers depart Nigeria for better opportunities. The healthcare industry has been particularly severely impacted, with many nurses and doctors leaving the country in search of better pay and superior working conditions

overseas. In addition to lowering public confidence in governmental institutions that are unable to adequately support and fund these crucial sectors, this exodus jeopardizes the quality of services that ordinary citizens can access (Ezeani, 2016, p. 82).

Conclusion

In conclusion, emigration presents serious obstacles to Nigeria's democratic future, even though it may offer instant relief to individuals looking for better opportunities. The brain drain exacerbates already-existing political cynicism while depleting the vital human capital necessary for civic involvement and effective governance.

It is crucial that both citizens and policymakers consider the long-term ramifications of migration as Nigeria continues to navigate its complicated sociopolitical environment, viewing it not just as a means of escape but as a pivotal element influencing the country's democratic course. The decisions taken today will have an impact on future generations, determining not only individual fates but also Nigeria's overall future as it works to fulfill its highest democratic aspirations.

The image displays the branding and service offerings of Emerging Africa Group. At the top left is a solid orange square. To its right is the company logo, which features a stylized sun or starburst icon above the text "EMERGING AFRICA". Below the logo is a large orange rectangle containing the text "Emerging Africa Group" in white. To the right of this rectangle is a vertical list of services, each with an icon and a label: "Financial Advisory", "Infrastructure Finance", "Asset Management", "Mergers and Acquisitions", "Microfinance Banking", "Trusts", "Family Office", and "Fiscal". Below the services list is a small icon of a smartphone with the text "Emerging Wealth App". At the bottom left, there is a section titled "About Us" with a brief description of the group as an investment and financial services provider, followed by "Terms and Conditions Apply" and a contact information box with the website "emergingafricagroup.com". At the bottom right, there is a "Contact us" section with the email "info@emergingafricagroup.com" and the website "www.emergingafricagroup.com".

Hope, Exit or Reforms: Youths' choices before the 2027 Election in Nigeria

By Donaldmary Aondover Ume, SAC



INTRODUCTION

As Nigeria approaches the 2027 general elections, young people, who constitute the majority of the population, face a defining political and socio-economic dilemma: to sustain hope within existing democratic structures, to exit through migration and political disengagement, or to pursue systemic reforms. This article examines the structural drivers shaping these choices, including unemployment, governance deficits, civic repression, and digital mobilization. Drawing on political economy and youth civic engagement frameworks, I argue that Nigerian youths' responses to the 2027 elections will reflect both structural constraints and evolving forms of agency. The article concludes that while exit remains a rational short-term strategy for many, sustained reform-oriented engagement offers the most transformative long-term pathway.

NIGERIA'S 2027 ELECTION

Nigeria's demographic profile positions youth at the center of its political future. With a median age under 20, the country's electoral landscape is numerically dominated by young voters. The 2023 elections demonstrated heightened youth participation, particularly under the influence of social media activism and urban political movements. However, persistent economic hardship, insecurity, and perceived electoral irregularities have intensified debates about whether democratic participation yields meaningful change. Therefore, ahead of the 2027 election, three broad pathways emerge:

Hope: Hope in this context is to be understood

as a continued belief in democratic processes and incremental change.

Exit: Exit is physical migration, which in Nigerian slang is known as the “*Japa*” phenomenon, or withdrawal from political participation.

Reforms: Reforms are organized civic actions aimed at the structural transformation of governance institutions.

Albert Hirschman's Exit, Voice, and Loyalty model provides a conceptual lens for understanding youth responses. “Exit” reflects withdrawal from an unsatisfactory system, while “voice” represents efforts to improve it through protest or political participation. In the Nigerian context, “hope” may be understood as loyalty to democratic institutions despite systemic weaknesses, while “reforms” represent a collective voice seeking structural change.

Furthermore, political opportunity theory suggests that youth engagement depends on the perceived openness of political institutions, while economic marginalization often correlates with apathy or emigration. Youth unemployment and underemployment remain high. Inflation, currency instability, and rising living costs erode confidence in governance. For many educated youths, migration to countries such as Canada, the United Kingdom, and Germany represents economic rationality rather than political abandonment.

In Nigeria, there is a higher level of distrust in governance and institutional trust. Concerns about electoral transparency, corruption, and security undermine trust. Reports from the 2023 elections shaped youth perceptions of institutional weakness. Where trust declines,

political disengagement increases. Social media platforms have redefined political activism. Movements like End SARS illustrate youth capacity for a coordinated voice. Digital spaces create new arenas for political expression but also expose activists to state surveillance.

THE WAY FORWARD

Hope in Democratic Consolidation

Some youths remain committed to electoral participation, party engagement, and civic education. Their optimism is anchored in a generational shift in political consciousness, which is driving increasing voter registration among young citizens and the emergence of youth-centered political campaigns. Hope, however, requires credible electoral reforms, transparency from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), and responsive governance.

Exit: Migration and Political Apathy

The “Japa” wave signifies both an economic strategy and political protest. Exit may take two forms, namely physical exit and psychological exit. Physical exit involves migration to more stable economies, while psychological exit results in total disengagement from civic life and elections. While migration may yield remittances beneficial to Nigeria's economy, it risks a severe brain drain and reduced civic accountability.

Reform: Structural and Institutional Transformation

Reform-oriented youths advocate for electoral transparency, digital accountability, and constitutional amendments enhancing decentralization. This pathway demands collective coalition-building beyond social media activism toward sustained institutional participation.

The categories of hope, exit, and reform are not mutually exclusive. A Nigerian youth may prepare for migration while supporting reform movements or voting optimistically in 2027. The 2027 election will therefore reflect layered motivations rather than uniform generational behavior.

Youth political behavior in the 2027 election could fundamentally influence voter turnout rates, the

emergence of issue-based campaigns, increased scrutiny of electoral management, and the expansion of diaspora political influence. If reforms gain momentum, the 2027 elections may serve as a critical juncture in democratic consolidation. Conversely, widespread exit or apathy could entrench elite dominance.

The choices facing Nigerian youths before 2027 (hope, exit, or reform) are shaped by structural constraints and evolving political agency. Exit provides immediate relief but may weaken long-term democratic development. Hope sustains participation but requires institutional responsiveness. Reform offers the most transformative pathway but demands sustained collective action.

Ultimately, the trajectory of Nigeria's democracy will depend not only on youth participation but also on the state's willingness to respond to youthful aspirations for accountability, economic opportunity, and inclusive governance.



“JAPA” AMBITION AND RESPONSIBILITY:

REFLECTIONS AS NIGERIA MOVES TOWARDS 2027

By **Florence Amarachi**



INTRODUCTION

In today's Nigeria, *Japa* is no longer whispered. It is spoken openly in buses, in school hostels, at family gatherings, and even in churches. Young people talk about Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Australia not as dreams of adventure, but as destinations of relief. For many Nigerians, especially the youth, *Japa* represents an escape from a system that feels tired, unresponsive, and unfair.

This desire to leave did not happen overnight. It grew quietly from years of disappointment: from the graduate who sends out

countless job applications without response, to the civil servant whose salary disappears before the middle of the month; from the business owner crushed by inflation and unstable policies, to the student unsure if school will close again due to strikes or insecurity. These experiences have shaped a generation that is constantly asking, “What am I still doing here?”

As the country moves gradually towards the 2027 general elections, this question has become more than personal. It has become political.

WHY EVERYONE WANTS TO LEAVE

To understand the *Japa* ambition, one must first understand daily life in Nigeria. Prices rise without warning, electricity remains unreliable, healthcare is expensive and uncertain, and security concerns linger in many regions. The promise that education once held has weakened. Hard work no longer guarantees progress.

In this reality, leaving the country feels practical, not unpatriotic. People want

systems that work, they want to be rewarded fairly for effort, and they want to plan their lives without constant fear of sudden policy changes or economic shocks.

When a society cannot provide these basics, it should not be surprised when its citizens look elsewhere. However, while *Japa* offers individual hope, it raises serious collective questions.

POLITICAL APATHY AS A SIDE EFFECT

One of the less discussed consequences of the *Japa* mindset is political withdrawal. Many Nigerians, especially young people, have emotionally checked out of national affairs. Statements like “politics doesn't concern me anymore” or “I won't even be here by 2027” have become common.

This attitude is understandable but dangerous. Democracy depends on participation. When citizens withdraw, leadership becomes a contest among a few interest groups rather than a reflection of the people's will. Silence creates space for poor governance to



Japa is a response to hardship, not a crime. But ambition must be balanced with responsibility. Nations are not rebuilt by indifference, and progress does not happen when everyone looks away.

repeat itself. When the most educated, outspoken, and energetic citizens disengage, the system loses pressure to improve.

Elections are not only about voting day. They involve discussions, advocacy, community influence, and accountability. When people stop caring, bad leadership becomes easier to recycle.

THE ILLUSION OF COMPLETE ESCAPE

Many who plan to *japa* believe that leaving Nigeria means leaving its problems behind. But Nigeria has a way of following its people. Parents remain at home. Siblings depend on remittances. Property, investments, and emotional ties stay rooted in the country.

Even abroad, Nigerians still react to news from home. Exchange rates affect money sent back, policies affect

families, and passports carry identity. The idea that one can completely disconnect is often an illusion. This is why responsibility matters.

RESPONSIBILITY DOES NOT MEAN STAYING BACK

It is important to be clear: responsibility does not mean everyone must remain in Nigeria. Survival is personal, and no one should be shamed for seeking a better life. What responsibility demands is engagement before disengagement.

This means registering to vote, asking questions, supporting credible leadership, refusing to sell votes, and encouraging political awareness within communities. These actions do not require permanent residence; they require concern.

As 2027 approaches, Nigerians face a critical moment. The choices made or avoided will shape the country for years. Choosing silence because of personal exit plans leaves the future in the hands of those who benefit from the current failures.

LEADERSHIP AND COLLECTIVE FAILURE

Nigeria's leadership problem is often blamed entirely on politicians. While leaders must be held accountable, society must also reflect honestly. Bad leadership survives where expectations are low and resistance is weak. It thrives where citizens no longer believe change is possible.

The *Japa* culture, when combined with political apathy, quietly strengthens the very systems people are trying to escape. When those who could challenge the status quo withdraw, the status quo remains comfortable.

HOLDING HOPE AND REALITY TOGETHER

It is possible to be tired of Nigeria and still care deeply about it. It is possible to prepare travel documents and still stand in line to vote. Hope does not always mean optimism; sometimes it simply means refusing to give up completely.

The 2027 election will not magically fix Nigeria. But it represents another opportunity to choose better, to demand more, and to remind leaders that citizens are watching.

CONCLUSION

Japa is a response to hardship, not a crime. But ambition must be balanced with responsibility. Nations are not rebuilt by indifference, and progress does not happen when everyone looks away.

As Nigeria moves towards 2027, the challenge before citizens, especially the youth, is simple but heavy: Will we abandon the space entirely, or will we participate long enough to try to change it?

Leaving may offer personal relief, but engagement offers collective possibility. And sometimes, the future of a country depends on those who refuse to go silent even when

BAD

FOLLOWERSHIP:

Another Virulent Injury to Democracy in Nigeria



Fr. John Okeke, SAC

Introduction

Since the amendment of the Nigerian Constitution in the year 1999, Nigeria's political leaders have turned political followership into a weapon of political corruption. This political class and elite deviously weaponize poverty, ethnic divides, religious bigotry, and ignorance to perpetrate their dubious motives and political manipulations.

Bad followership stokes bad leadership. This article seeks to succinctly discuss bad followership as a political enabler of bad leadership in Nigeria. It will expose some visible followership groups in Nigeria and point out different ways through which good and quality followership could enhance good governance in Nigeria, especially with the 2027 General Election in view.

“

“Get your PVC, vote, and defend your vote” should be the watchword for the season. Any Nigerian adult or youth without a PVC is a terrorist.

Bad Followership

Bad followership simply refers to the continuous failure to actively, critically, and responsibly support or hold leadership accountable. It is the inability of 200 million Nigerians to decisively engage the three arms of government in matters of election, insecurity, accountability, and the Rule of Law.

A country that rewards tribal loyalty over competence, emotional attachment over accountability, and entitlement over public service will definitely produce leaders who reflect those distortions.

Followership Models in Nigeria

From the 2023 general election, different models or groups of followers were carefully observed:

Emotional and Passive Followers: This group consists of poor, ignorant followers who put their hope in the 5k and 10 cups of rice shared during election periods.

Transactional and Conformist Followers: This group comprises all government appointees (ministers, SAs, PAs), the judiciary, the legislative arms of government, and public servants whose hopes depend on the meager salaries received monthly. Here, politics is purely transactional.

Alienated or Indifferent Followers: This group has the capacity for independent thinking but applies it negatively. They think they have been politically marginalized and excluded. The majority of this group do not have a PVC,

exhibiting high political apathy.

Religious or Fanatical Followers: They act as bystanders until others get to work. Most religious people are in this group, which spiritualizes the electoral season with false prophecies, thereby confusing a huge number of gullible followers.

Some Consequences of Bad Followership

The first effect of bad followership is the seasonal weaponization of hunger and poverty by the same corrupt and incompetent political elites.

The second effect is deep-seated tribal, religious, and ethnic sycophancy.

The third effect is increased voter apathy due to election rigging and compromised legal procedures.

The fourth effect is the high rate of emigration ("Japa" syndrome) driven by widespread insecurity.

Enablers of Good and Quality Followership

The first factor for quality followership is the active participation of youth and political activists in politics. The second enabler is a political revolution conducted according to the law, which includes peaceful protests and political strikes.

"Get your PVC, vote, and defend your vote" should be the watchword for the season. Any Nigerian adult or youth

without a PVC is a terrorist.

Conclusion

This article has discovered that Nigeria's calamity is not only that it has suffered bad leadership. Its deeper tragedy is that it has often created the conditions in which bad leadership can thrive with impunity. Until citizens stop trading their voices for temporary favors, democracy will remain shallow.

Most Nigerians no longer demand development; they demand access. They do not ask whether schools are functioning, whether manifestos are met, whether hospitals are equipped, whether roads are maintained, or whether communities are safe. They ask instead:

- What have I personally received?
- Has the leader settled my people?
- Has he defended our group?
- Has he given us money?

This is not citizenship. It is a national disaster.



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If '*japa*' is the Answer, What was the Question?

Rethinking National Responsibility Before 2027.

BY DIKE, JAMES CHUKWUEBUKA, SMMM.



Introduction:

In Nigeria today, one word, "*Japa*," summarizes many dreams, frustrations, and plans alike. To '*Japa*' means to leave the country in search of greener pastures anywhere that seems better than "here," such as Canada, the UK, the US, Europe, and the like. For many Nigerians, '*Japa*' has become a life goal, a survival strategy, and even a badge of success, as most parents pray for it, friends celebrate it, and social media glorifies it.

But a serious question must be

asked as Nigeria moves closer to the 2027 general elections: If '*Japa*' is the answer, what exactly was the question? Is it simply about escaping hardship, or have Nigerians quietly lost faith in the idea of national responsibility? In view of the above, this research examines the causes of the '*Japa*' phenomenon and offers constructive solutions that balance personal ambition with collective responsibility.

'*Japa*' as a Cry for Survival, Not Just Success:

For many Nigerians, '*Japa*' is not about luxury; it is about survival. Rising unemployment, poor wages, insecurity, unstable electricity, and inflation have made everyday life extremely difficult. Graduates roam the streets with certificates but no jobs. Skilled professionals work hard but earn too little to meet basic needs.

In such conditions, leaving the country appears reasonable. However, when escape becomes the only dream, it signals a deeper national

problem. '*Japa*' is not merely a desire to travel; it is a loud cry that the system has failed its people. When citizens no longer believe that effort will be rewarded at home, migration becomes the logical option. The danger is that this mindset slowly kills hope in participation and reform.

The Cost of '*Japa*' to National Development:

While individuals may benefit from '*Japa*,' the nation often pays a heavy price. Nigeria loses doctors, nurses, teachers, engineers, and entrepreneurs, individuals trained with national resources. This brain drain weakens institutions and slows development. Hospitals lack specialists, universities struggle with quality teaching, and industries suffer from skill shortages.

Beyond economics, there is also a political cost. Many who plan to '*Japa*' withdraw emotionally and politically from Nigeria. They stop following policies, avoid voting, and believe elections do not

concern them. Democracy suffers when the most educated and energetic citizens disengage. A nation cannot move forward when its best minds are preparing to leave rather than stay and shape the future.

'Japa' Culture and the Crisis of Civic Responsibility:

One silent effect of 'Japa' culture is the erosion of civic duty. Voting, community service, advocacy, and holding leaders accountable are often seen as useless. The popular mindset is: "Why stress myself? I am leaving soon." This attitude weakens collective action and gives bad leadership more space to thrive.

National responsibility does not end because the environment is hostile. History shows that nations improve when citizens choose engagement over abandonment. While 'Japa' may solve individual problems, it creates national problems. If everyone leaves, who will vote, protest injustice, build institutions, and demand good governance?

Why 2027 Matters More Than Ever:

The 2027 elections represent more than a political event; they represent a critical moment of revolutionary choice where participation can either revive or finally cripple national hope. If the 'Japa' generation fully withdraws, leadership will remain in the hands of a few, and poor governance will continue.

But if Nigerians combine ambition with responsibility by voting, organizing, monitoring elections, and demanding accountability, positive change becomes possible. The future of Nigeria cannot be decided only by those who refuse to leave or those who benefit from the system.

Turning from Escape to Engagement: Towards Constructive Solutions:

'Japa' should not be demonized, but it must be balanced with responsibility through the following solutions. For a start, the government must address root causes: job creation, security, education reform, and fair wages. Citizens cannot be blamed for leaving a system that ignores their needs. Secondly, young Nigerians must reclaim civic power. Voting, policy discussion, and community involvement are not useless; they are slow, yet effective tools for change.

Again, the diaspora should remain engaged. Leaving Nigeria does not cancel citizenship. Nigerians abroad can influence policies, support credible candidates, invest responsibly, and shape national conversations. Moreover, socio-cultural and economic institutions must be strengthened, not personalized. Strong systems reduce the urge to escape because they guarantee fairness and opportunity. Finally, national reorientation is needed. Success should not be measured only by departure

but also by contribution. Staying to build should be respected as much as leaving to survive.

Conclusion:

'Japa' did not appear out of nowhere. It is a response to years of frustration, neglect, and broken promises. But while it answers personal questions of survival, it leaves unanswered the larger question of national responsibility. Nigeria cannot be abandoned into progress.

As 2027 approaches, Nigerians must rethink the balance between ambition and duty. Leaving may offer relief, but engagement offers repair. The real solution is not choosing between 'Japa' and patriotism, but understanding that true progress demands both personal advancement and collective responsibility. If 'Japa' is the answer, then perhaps the real question is whether we still believe Nigeria is worth fixing.

Behold our
PHILOSOPHY GRADUANDS ↓↓↓



Behold our
THEOLOGY GRADUANDS ↓↓↓



Public Opinion on Japa Syndrome

Question: The forthcoming 2027 election offers Nigerians, especially the youth, another opportunity to elect good leaders who will address the problems that fuel *japa* syndrome in Nigeria. What is your opinion on this?



1. The country is not getting any better. The system has betrayed the youths. Entrepreneurship that was being hyped has also been stifled and discouraged with irrational policies making life difficult for young and low capital entrepreneurs. So people are forced to go where their little skill is appreciated and rewarded.

The youths are the largest part of the country's population and undisputably would have more influence in the election of a better candidate that will bring change and lead the country to greener pasture if only we have a working and reliable system. Unfortunately, the system is corrupt and the election is most likely to be rigged and the voices of the faithful youths would still not be heard. Hence, nothing encourages them to keep on fighting for a better country. The old cargos still want to be in charge embezzling funds and filling their grave stomachs and endless generations. So you don't blame the youth when they want to *japa* even though it has its disadvantages on the upcoming election and the well-being of the country in general. A country with an active youth is headed towards perdition.

May God help us.

Fr. Innocent Uchenna Nwaosuagwu SAC (Pallottine priest)



2. Within the most fundamental aspect of man's natural inclinations, his desire to assert comfort ranks supreme. This is true when we examine the foundations of man's effort at life. The end that can mutually justify the means of man's activities is his desire to be happy, and this happiness he sorts by trying to acquire what makes him comfortable. This is true to man's nature.

Very unfortunately, the reality of our existence in Nigeria makes this endeavor an *iter impossibile*, an impossible course. Man being man, the difficulty orchestrated by delinquent leadership in our country by no means remove this natural quest of man's desire for comfort, and since our immediate society cannot permit that, it becomes a prerequisite that movements be made for the achievement of this comfort, hence the *JAPA* syndrome among our youths.

An effort to address this issue and to resolve the many challenges that comes with it should first and foremost be an attempt at leadership, which the youth themselves must rise up to, being first and foremost the agents of whatever change they desire. If this is not achieved, any other effort tends towards futility!

OKAFOR MICHAEL OLISAEMEKE (Onitsha Archdiocesan seminarian, Tansi seminary).



3. Netwon's 3rd law of motion states that for every action, there's an equal and opposite reaction. We don't expect people who can japa to remain in this chaotic state we call a nation- a country where one's safety is not guaranteed and justice sounds like a fairytale.

CHUKWUDIRE CHIAMAKA (Teacher, Winners Chapel Church)



4. Nigeria is in a state of who knows what next.... Everyone operating on the state of uncertainty and fear of becoming the next victim what would have been a period of convergence for the youths to come out in their masses and take what belongs to them now turns out to be a period where families are sending most of their loved ones abroad.... Anyone who loves you now advises you to *Japa* lol

But however, until we confront our fears we shall continue to be prey in the hands of a bad government. As for me, if I'm given the opportunity, before the Election Day, I'll already be in the United States pretending I've always understood how snow works.

OBI VALENTINE CHIJOKE (C.E.O SOR GROUP OF COMPANIES)



5. I don't think election is directly responsible for the *Japa* syndrome in Nigerian youths. One may say that since election is related to government which for Nigeria is unapologetically a fiasco, this could be an indirect cause.

With the situation of things, the 2027 election will either make things better or mar things completely with regard to this issue. Thus If the elections are properly done and good leaders are given the opportunity to govern, i believe the tendency to run out in search of greener pastures will reduce.

OLOFU VINCENT ONYILO, SAC (Pallottine Seminarian, Pope John Paul II major seminary)



6. Nigeria is suffocating economically, and security wise, and an average youth in Nigeria can not achieve half of his full potentials as a result of this factors, so, people should look for a better life elsewhere.

Secondly election cannot not be credible, free and fair representing Nigerians' choice, so, staying and voting may not make any difference.

OMAH PAUL CHINAECHEREM (Abakaliki Diocesan seminarian, Seat of Wisdom Seminary)



7. The core issue lies with the current administration. There is a sense that the government of the day is disconnected from the needs of the masses. Many feel it is better to be governed by a foreign power in a different geographical location, provided their lives are secure, the economy is stable, and their fundamental rights are upheld.

In the current climate, it feels as though the shepherds are eating the sheep. Just like the lost sheep in the Gospel, the youth are choosing to '*Japa*' to survive. Any incoming presidency will face the monumental task of reorienting this mentality.

It will require immense political, judicial, and legislative energy to prove to the younger generation that the opportunities they seek abroad can actually be found at home."

Fr. IZUCHUKWU COLLINS CHUKWUDI, SAC (Assistant Parish Priest, At Michael's Igboukwu)



8. Every election, youths in Nigeria continue to face a recycling of leaders who have continued to show incompetency in handling the affairs of the state. Hence the Japa syndrome continue to be as a result of a failed system, situations of unemployment, insecurity and poor governance.

Leaders are evaluated not on the lip service they pay to their campaign promises but by a pragmatic approach to them

ENEMMUO KIZITO CHIDUBEM, SAC (Pallottine seminarian, PJPS)



9. As long as Nigerian institutions remain irredeemable and mere tools in the hands of corrupt Nigerian politicians leaving average Nigerians hopeless, Nigerian youths will continue to seek for greener pastures outside Nigeria.

NWACHUKWU CHRISTOPHER C. (COO, Global Analytics Consulting Limited.)



10. Japa syndrome is not merely a migration pattern anymore, but it has turned into a political statement. Relocation is no longer a personal aspiration of many Nigerians, particularly the young professionals, but a vote of distrust in the economy, security, governance and future prospects in the country. As the International Organization for Migration claims, the growing migration of young people in Nigeria is closely linked to the lack of stability in the economy, unemployment, and decreased trust in the local prospects. Likewise, the Migration Policy Institute found that there are a significant number of educated Nigerians who leave the country in search of better living standards, security, and professional opportunities elsewhere.

ONYEBUCHI CALLISTUS CHUKWUDI (Research Analyst at Prime Frontier Group)



11. Many young people leave Nigeria in search of greener pastures due to high unemployment rates, insecurity, poor healthcare and limited opportunities. Nigeria can learn valuable lessons from Canada by investing in job creation, supporting small businesses, improving healthcare, education and basic amenities as well as strengthening security and fighting corruption. If Nigerians vote wisely in 2027 and refuse to be influenced by money, capable and competent leaders can be elected thereby leading to positive change and gradually reducing the Japa syndrome.

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