

Covenant University

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CONVOCATION KEYNOTE ADDRESS

A GENERATION THAT TURNS THE POINT

By

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Immediate Past Vice-President, (Africa),
The World Bank

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About Keynote Speaker

Obiageli "Oby" Ezekwesili, a Nigerian national, was appointed Vice President for the World Bank's Africa Region in 2007. She oversees more than 1600 staff and is responsible for the delivery of projects and economic and sectoral work in 47 Sub-Saharan countries. Over the last five years, under her leadership, the Bank committed \$40 billion in new project lending in Africa in grant.

The knowledge services to countries in Africa were through over 400 economic and analytical studies including Technical Assistance (TAs).

Oby joined the Bank from her most position as Minister of Education in the Government of Nigeria, where she led a comprehensive reform program within the education sector including restructuring and refocusing the ministry for the attainment of Education for All (EfA) targets and Millennium Development Goals. She also introduced the Public-Private Partnership models for education service delivery; revamped the Federal Inspectorate Service as an improved quality assurance mechanism and introduced transparency and accountability mechanisms for better governance of the budget. Ms. Ezekwesili led the establishment of the Innovation & Vocational Enterprise Institutions initiatives which focuses on the development of skills for economic competitiveness and--in conjunction with the Nigerian Stock Exchange-- launched the "Adopt-A-School" program, an initiative that fosters philanthropy by corporations; community groups and individuals.

Ms Ezekwesili began her career with Deloitte & Touche where she worked as an auditor, management and financial services consultant. She then served as a founding Director of Transparency International (TI) and as TI's Director for Africa from 1994 to 1999. Between 2000 and 2002, she worked with Professor Jeffrey Sachs as Director of the Harvard-Nigeria Economic Strategy program, during which time she was also

appointed as an aide to President Obasanjo. In 2003, she was designated Senior Special Assistant to the President of Nigeria on Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence. As Minister of Solid Minerals from 2005 to 2006, Ms. Ezekwesili oversaw the passage of the Minerals and Mining Act, the establishment of the Nigerian Mining Cadastre Office and the opening of the sector to private participation. Ms. Ezekwesili also served as the Chairperson of the Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative from 2004 and led the voluntary sign-on of Nigeria to the EITI Principles as well as the first ever process, financial and physical audit of Nigeria's oil and gas sector.

Under her leadership, the World Bank's Africa team employed innovation, knowledge, partnership and financial services to strengthen results across Africa and to improve the prospects for Africa's economic performance. Her close attention to the needs of our clients, engagement with African leadership and with regional institutions -- such as the African Union, EAC and ECOWAS -- as well as with the UN and other partners, has been instrumental to the Bank's enhanced effectiveness across Africa. The new Bank strategy for Africa and its implementation plan, both developed under her leadership, offer a strong legacy.

Ms. Ezekwesili is a Chartered Accountant and holds a Masters in International Law & Diplomacy from the University of Lagos, a Masters in Public Policy & Administration from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, and a Bachelors degree from the University of Nigeria. In 2006, Mrs Ezekwesili was given the national award of Commander of the Order of the Federal Republic (CFR). She is married to Pastor Chinedu Ezekwesili and has three sons.

Mrs Ezekwesili completed a successful and widely celebrated five year leadership of the World Bank's activities in Africa in early May of 2012.

COVENANT UNIVERSITY

ANTHEM

We're a Covenant Generation	Covenant generation arise
Pursuing excellence	Light and knowledge to shine
Redeemed to reign	Glorious foundation stone
Learning to lead	Leadership skills to show
We are bound by an oath	Departing from knowledge
Obeying rules to rule	To empowerment Legalism
Making Kings of youth	To realism
Flying high on covenant wings	Wisdom's call for change
Wisdom's call for change	Inspired, on fire
Inspired on fire	With Courage Marching on in
With courage Marching on in	grace
in grace	God's own arrow
God's own arrow	Shot for glory.
Shot for glory.	



Our Vision

To be a leading World-Class University, committed to raising a new generation of leaders in all fields of Human endeavour

Our Mission

To create knowledge and restore the dignity of the black man via a Human Development Total Man Concept driven curriculum employing innovative, leading-edge teaching and learning methods, research and professional services that promote integrated, life-applicable, life-transforming education, relevant to the context of Science, Technology and Human Capacity Building



A GENERATION THAT TURNS THE POINT

In the last six months of this year, I have had the great privilege of being asked by an eclectic range of young people led organizations across the world to speak to their gathering on different topics of their interest. As diverse as their issues of interest have been there has been one common thread that stood out for me. It was the palpable sense that today's young believe that the old world is over and that they have a responsibility to birth an entirely new globe that reflects their own uniquely different reality.

When I earlier this year read an article authored by a certain church leader, David Wraight characterizing the young of today, I simply could relate. I can relate because through my deep friendship with my sons and other contemporaries of your generation I have been privileged to learn how much of a purpose driven generation majority of you are. Wraight posited that there is a globalized generation of youth – often referred to as the Millennial Generation. He rightly said your generation “believes that you can change the world for the better, but you are unsure what you should change the world to; so you search for an ideology or system of belief to use as a foundation for the change you seek. You are actually searching for something worth living for and dying for.” “You are optimistic and idealistic with a deep desire to make your mark in the world. You dream of what can be, and follow your dreams with passion and perseverance. You are no longer prepared to be spectators watching the world go by, but want to be 'players', to get your hands dirty, to make a difference. You are knowledgeable about the affairs of the world and very mobile, travelling as much as resources and opportunity allow.”

As globalization and modern technology continue to shrink our world people are connecting worldwide as never before –

particularly young people – overcoming cultural, geographical, language and ethnic barriers with ease. For the first time in human history we are seeing the emergence of a global youth culture with common values, dreams and desires. I actually call you, the Nigerian, nay; African kindred group, the Turning Point Generation- TPG. Why TPG? Well, for a couple of reasons.

First, you are the generation that has come of age @ a time that the world as we knew it is changing dramatically before us- no longer the first world and third world divide that my generation was born into; no longer the developing and developed country divide, but a world where universalism of knowledge spread is spreading development solutions rapidly across those regions of the world that for a very long time where little imagined to have the capability to become the economic engines holding up the flailing global economy. Just thirty years ago for China and twenty for India, no one could have imagined the double digit growth records over the decades that have enabled China life over 500 million people out of poverty. China's economic miracle proved to the world that it can be done within a generation!

Although much less amazing than this, the fact is that Africa has over the last decade also turned the corner and is increasingly doing better in its economic growth and reduction of poverty than it did in the past. So, for example while the OECD economies continue to struggle following the global financial and economic crisis of 2008/2009 with growth rates of less than a 3%pa since then, 1.6 for this year and 2.4 for 2013. The average rate for economies in Africa rebound after the dip to 1.9% for 2009 from the average of 5.7% pre-crisis but it remarkably rebound in 2010 to 3.9, 2011 to 4.5% and forecast of 4.6% and above 5% in 2012 and 2013 making Africa the third highest economic growth rate region after Asia and Latin America. Clearly, the looming second round global economic crisis

occasioned by the Eurozone crisis is certainly one that all African countries would do well to watch as a potential dampener of growth.

This improved performance from the laggard records of the past is driven by the same principle of better macroeconomic, microeconomic and structural reforms that supported the economic transformation of the countries that our continent looked on with awe over the decades. The morale of the turning is quite simple. It is that as with other countries, constant improvement of Africa's policy environment is fundamental to our emerging on the higher rungs of the global economic ladder. Recent policy gains have earned Africa increasing respect as a potential economic growth pole of reckoning. Publications like the Wall Street Journal, the Economist and such like across the world mostly known for their "single story" characterization of Africa could not but bow on the altar of evidence to acknowledge that Africa has indeed become a "a rising continent". It is a continent on the move and you were born for such a time as this!

Considering the enormity of challenges it still faces, it does not always feel like Africa has made such significant progress worthy of note. This is even much more so @ the personal level of the family where two out of every four members of African families are yet to benefit from the much lauded economic growth of the continent. And yet, the reality is that it is a good first step in the economic development process that is a Necessary though not a Sufficient Condition for the ultimate improvement in the quality of life of the 48% poor in Africa. I shall come again to this point of disconnect between economic growth, poverty reduction and deepening inequality later in my speech but just hold my main point in your mind for now. And that point is that you are privileged to be a Generation coming of age at the same time that Africa is moving away from being singularly viewed as a "basket case continent" by the rest of humanity. You are my friends, our

Turning Point Generation.

That Africa is emerging as a credible destination for the inflow of global private capital into diverse sectors of opportunities gradually moving away from the single commodity story of the past. Achieving the structural transformation that such economic diversification heralds will yet be the most revolutionary milestone that differentiates your generation from the rest. Your Generation is best positioned to challenge the archaic model of natural resources driven development model of your parents. Observing your choices of vocation thus far across the continent, suggests you are in a hurry to replace the commodity driven model with a knowledge driven, economic structural transformation approach. And to boot, you do so deploying technology for your crowd sourcing entrepreneurship techniques. How then can this not possibly be Africa's momentous turning point? I believe it is, because the bane of the continent's several decades of checkered economic performance and poverty travails have been evidently situated in the resource endowment curse. It was the commodity centered development that brought with it the near intractable problems of poor governance and elite capture of state alongside the conflict and contest for control of rents.

Whether it be the maturing sectors of information and communication technology (ICT), or the still emerging sectors of financial services, tourism, real estate, agriculture and agribusiness, green growth technology solutions, infrastructure systems and logistics solutions, energy, human capital development and such like, the reality today is that the one billion population of Africa is emerging as a formidable USD2 Trillion market that any investor ignores at their own peril. Now, if the rest of the world is in a new wave of discovery of the opportunities in your continent, then you much more must apply your intellectual and network skills at strategically preparing

yourselves as important players that will provide the necessary leadership of the new opportunities for higher productivity.

So then if we all agreed that Africa's future prospect is very promising we must be strategic in understanding the risks and threats that should be managed to avoid a train wreck. The risk factors that will constantly threaten Africa's great future and which we all must work hard to mitigate are numerous ranging from exogenous to country specific structural and political economy type risks. However of all these, the one that most threatens the optimistic trajectory would be continued absence of expanding access to quality and relevant education to the myriad citizens still excluded from this important basic service. This is more so because of Africa's burgeoning population of which African youths would account for 29% of young people in the world by 2025. Without access to education, such population ceases to be the potential demographic dividend that supports economic growth through enhanced productivity but rather becomes the other end of the double edged sword of menacing millions of angry and illiterate citizens trapped in low productivity.

As I had early noted, with the fledging economic growth rates of the past decade has come serious worries about disconnect between economic growth and poverty in the face of widening inequality. Instructively, it would take massive but effective public investment in education to narrow this manifest gully between those that have and those currently excluded from the benefits of growth wither due to a lack of education or access to a poor quality and economy irrelevant one that produced persons without life skills. The Education you have just acquired has been an important determinant of the economic prosperity of nations as economists have established through the centuries. Education remains the most effective vehicle for helping people lift themselves out of poverty while contributing

positively to the aggregate social outcome of the society. I believe in nations learning from the experiences of other nations.

So I went back in time to look at a period in US history in the early 80's when it feared that it was losing its solid top position on the global economic competitiveness ladder. At that time, in 1983 a study aptly captioned "A Nation at Risk" by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, had just been released and alarmed the entire nation into a fast paced attention to education reforms. "If only to keep and improve on the slim competitive edge we still retain in world markets, we must dedicate ourselves to the reform of our educational system for the benefit of all—old and young alike, affluent and poor, majority and minority."

The economic benefits of higher levels of school attainment and the benefits of higher levels of cognitive skills was once examined by Commission that the US Government set up to lead the effort for America's reemergence as a leader in OECD education ladder for English and Math. The Commission examined their relationship to the average annual growth rate in the country's gross domestic product (GDP) per capita from 1960 through 2000. They found, as other economists before them, that when the average number of years of schooling in a country was higher, the economy grew at a higher annual rate over subsequent decades. Specifically, they found that, across 50 countries, each additional year of average schooling in a country increased the average 40-year growth rate in GDP by almost 0.5% which is significant. It also found that a highly skilled work force can raise economic growth by about two-thirds of a percentage point every year. Is it therefore any wonder that countries like China, India, Brazil and South Africa which have attained above 20-25% of tertiary education level have given a wide berth to most of the other countries including ours outside of the OECD countries. Therefore, the more that we can push up the current below 6% tertiary education level in Nigeria up the

higher the prospects of shared and inclusive economic growth for a larger number of our citizens.

The same study had investigated which is more important for growth—having a substantial cadre of high performers or bringing everyone up to a basic level of performance? The answer they found is “not one or the other but both!” That is, both the performance of countries in ensuring that almost all students achieve at basic levels and their performance in producing high-achieving students both matter for economic growth. This therefore argues for the necessity to have government drive an education system and sector that produces a substantial cadre of highly skilled citizens and near-universal basic skills as a matter of national emergency if our country will be in a position to compete for global and even our own nationals' investment flows coming into Africa. “The more workers that have at least basic skills, the easier it will be for them to make use of those new technologies”. As the Report had concluded, “some workers need a high level of skill so they can help adapt the new technologies to their countries' particular situation. In countries on the technological frontier, substantial numbers of scientists, engineers, and other innovators are obviously needed. But so is a labor force that has the basic skills needed to survive in a technologically driven economy”.

On this matter of building an expanded labor force, I never let pass my opportunity to push my personal campaign for countries in Africa to commit through policies, institutional reforms and effective public investment to bridge the productivity gap between men and women arising from the latter's poorer access to education and skills training opportunities. When girls and women, more broadly are empowered to participate actively in a modern society, their inclusion enlarges the scope, size and range of human capital that is available to power our country's economic growth. Every society that disrespects and threatens with contempt the rights of women to access basic services, ignores their right to participate in the decision making process in the

family and society at large, tramples on their right to non-violent, non-abusive, non-assaulting relationships of any kind has always significantly operated below its potentials. The simple message that came out a recent World Bank study on the issue of Women and Equality of Opportunities is that countries that do not place sufficient premium on their women will end up losing grounds to other countries that value their girls and women. Investing in girls and women is smart economics!

For you graduating today (especially the girls) I once again congratulate you because your parents, guardians and the University have accorded you a rare privilege. With your access to education from preschool until your successful undergraduate study that we celebrate with you, your parents and guardians today, you stand the chance of competing globally depending on what choices you make after the certificate is handed over to you. For even though education quality may be failing many of your contemporaries who are either completely excluded from the opportunities of access or are where they have access are trapped in some of the failing public institutions where poor governance of public resources or inadequate funding hamstrung learning outcomes; here you are being celebrated as graduates of one of the most prestigious private universities in the land.

Furthermore, because of the more open and wider flow of information, many of you during the period of your study and going forward constantly acquire more of your learning not just through what you sometimes consider the boring lecture of your teachers but also through other platforms within your reach. These days, with all due respect to your excellent faculty here at Covenant University, your Generation does in fact sometimes know much more than your teachers and parent especially if they have failed to upgrade their own skills in navigating the multi modal sources of information for any concept worthy of learning. As for you, you endlessly search for new knowledge with all the “swag” you can muster and when you find it, you publish it

instantly so that many more may know. You are the Generation that the words Access, Freedom and Connectivity define. You lead us all in this new era of all things possible!

For you therefore, there is no reason why any human problem should be allowed to fester without someone working hard at finding a solution. You are the generation of IDEAS people. You celebrate new ideas and are profligate in generating innovative options either driven by technological application or even mere common sense generated but well organized service delivery. Considering what we know of ideas and curiosity which is that they are the key to exploding private enterprise and deepening the culture of incentives-driven economic model in every society, you are indeed the TPG that pulls Africa out of the trap economic morass.

The growing number of technology hubs led by your peers across the continent is a testament to the distance already covered with the telecom revolution that has seen the continent expand telephone access to over 500 million from a pitiful 20 million barely a decade ago. As internet penetration accelerates and data complements voice in providing access to information and connectivity, your expertise in deploying these tools of technology to solving Development problems will become a matter of profound academic interest. You “rep” through what your intellectual capital can produce and you take delight in enjoying the fruit of your own productive effort.

The nascent expertise many of you are acquiring in deploying technology in such amazing multidimensional and multi sector manner may yet be the most important distinguishing factor between Africa's own economic emergence and those of other regions that went ahead. Already for you, the whole idea of Development as an owned local concept and process comes is expressed in the uniquely Africa originated Apps, fashion trends,

entertainment, social activism etc that some of your peers have already registered on the global map. You find Solutions that are very local and appropriate and yet stand on their merit as world class options like Ushahidi and such like.

Your education here which has culminated in Covenant University branding you as Eagles conveys to all that you have been found worthy in character and learning. Your great University is sending you into the world of works confident that you have acquired the basic prerequisite character, aptitude and competencies necessary for identifying opportunities, confronting challenges, mobilizing solutions and excelling in entrepreneurship and public service for the progress of humanity. You are after all an Eagle! The Eagle as a big bird of course has certain core characteristics that you should from hence model. Just like the eagle you are supposed to be absolutely without fear no matter the size of your prey, you are supposed to be tenacious with a readiness like the eagle to look for and fly into storms, you are supposed to be nurturing of those in need of support- just like the eagle, you pay gentle attention to the needs of the younger ones, you are now a highflier but you are one with a realism like the eagle which is able to swiftly land on the ground from as high an altitude as 10,000 feet.

For me personally, the characteristic of an Eagle that I find most appealing is the non-retreating mindset of strenuous effort, of protestant work ethics, of hard work of the kind that shuns ignoble wealth accumulated by a life of contemptible ease. Like the eagle you set your standards for effort and reward so that you never eat “dead meat that you did not kill”, like vitality of the eagle, you will be full of life and have the power to endure and finally, you like the eagle are supposed to have a keen vision that enables you the necessary long distance focus and clarity that you need for your competitive edge amongst your global peers. You have no sense of disempowerment as you confidently draw

strength from each new success someone in your generation accomplishes. You celebrate as much as you sanction yourselves.

You are the new Africans that seek to create wealth rather than simply wait for their turn to share rent from natural resources into which no effort was put by those who control, distribute and then misgovern them. Your paradigm shift is of the kind that does not consider the public treasury as the most “exciting” source of your personal wealth creation. Wealth that is founded on corruption, distortion of rules or inefficacy and incompetency of public policy, unproductive public investment, influence peddling and the like cannot and should not appeal to you as you know that the rest of the world looks on with contempt at unearned prosperity.

If all the qualities of the eagle were rolled into a single description, it would be “independent mindedness”. That independence of thoughts and direction explains yet another distinguishing feature of your generation. It is that unlike ours and those before us, you have no illusions that the role of government as the all-time provider of employment for all is at best an illusion. You are the generation that finally gets it! You know that wealth and poverty of nations are determined by the necessary interplay of roles of government, private sector and citizens. From government, you demand sound policies, effective investment and provision of public goods like infrastructure and education as well as predictable legal and regulatory frameworks including security and order. As citizens you and the private sector while guided by the rules make myriad of decisions bordering on savings and investments in allocating scarce resources to accomplish certain ends a precursor to the attraction of foreign investors.

Your generation understands the power of incentives and disincentives from a positive dimension and so possesses the tool

to be better economic decision makers and players. What a remarkable departure you can be if you embraced this advantage from your forebears whose negative variant of responding to incentives perpetuated the prevalent culture of pillage of public resources! The best among you will be the ones that will make one very important personal choice. That choice would be to adamantly refuse to be like your forebears who were held down by some inferiority complex mind set that consigned the continent for many decades following independence to “an unworthy and negative Exceptionalism. It was a mindset challenge that resulted in the very different paths and outcomes seen in Asian countries like Singapore with similar historical experiences when compared to ours. The self-defeating attitude posits often that “something a little less than outstanding is quite good enough since it is after all for Africa” and it has been very destructive as basic philosophy of life. No! There is absolutely no reason why Africa, more broadly and Nigeria, more specifically should be closeted in mind boggling robe of dwarfism just because some among us think that some things are simply beyond our reach!

Your generation thankfully does not carry the albatross of post-colonial trauma bequeathed by the conquering armies of Europe or the burden of militarization and despotism inflicted by our own armies and despotic leaders of the past. What you often ask is colonialism? Sometimes you are stupefied by the explanation that there was actually a time when foreigners reigned supreme in your homeland and were called “Masters”. God forbid, many of you say, as you release your hot headed irreverent questions like “how could our ancestors have allowed that to happen?” Told of the season of anomie when military adventurism ruled supreme of which many of us your parents had to endure as we grew up, you look bewildered and truly puzzled that we permitted such aberrant rule that is responsible for the almost institutionalized opacity of leadership that has been our nemesis

for so long to happen.

This benefit of absence of a yoke explains your absolute sense of freedom to question EVERY as well as ANY authority. With obvious confidence and sometimes much to the great irritation of your parents, elders, superiors and constituted authorities who simply do not take kindly to being “scrutinized” by their own children, you push for Accountability. How many times have you sat through and endured a lecture by your mom, dad, another adult or government official rebuking you for demanding accountability for their action that you considered inappropriate or a breach of trust? Well, the good thing is that you are hard nuts to crack! No amount of intimidation or adult blackmail will stop you from tweeting, updating your Facebook page or even more painfully (to the generation that has a lot to learn from you about aligning private piety and public accountability), doing a real time recording that makes its way to You Tube on the world wide web! Considering that we know by economic evidence that Accountability does impressive positive things for economic progress of nations, we all must be wise, rein in our ego and support your thirst for Accountability, Transparency and Probity in the affairs of families, government and corporations.

But then, I am the first to caution you in the manner you exercise your enviable role as custodians of good governance and social responsibility. First is that for you to persist in credibility for others to be above board, you also must endeavor to model the behavior you advocate. Second, you cannot afford to be reckless in using anecdotes drawn from perceptions, suppositions or assumptions that are not backed by facts and evidence in your very important role in social activism. Third, you must recognize that you can disagree on issues of public debates and dialogues about the directions the country should go without being disagreeable, objectionable and adversarial. Why? Your generation does better when it leverages the power of

collaborative partnership among yourselves, across your older and younger generation, with government, with private sector, domestically and globally.

For some of you possessing the liberating and dignifying mind set of enterprise, you may have in fact already worked out the outlines of your business plan, looking not just within our country, but seeing that the continent if not the world could become your oyster. Like most entrepreneurs worldwide, you are impatient to see the governments play their enabler role through the pursuit of the right kind of structural transformation of the economy so that current growth levels can be sustained, accelerated and accompanied by much needed productive employment for more people. The structure of African economies has not changed much in the last fifty years and so is still dominated by low productivity typed agriculture and mining which even if high productivity does not yield much employment.

As governments play their part by using a program of low cost sharply focused public policies to exploit the continent's latent comparative advantage in certain light manufacturing industries like leather goods, garments and agricultural processing for example; you as motivated entrepreneurs will do well to use your learning and wider connectivity to other people and knowledge to pioneer the production activities that will step into the grounds vacated by Chinese firms. Due to steep costs increases associated with rising wages and non-wage labor costs, escalating land prices and mounting regulatory costs the most daring among you can actually become the private sector leaders that will move the nation and continent from low-productivity agriculture and the informal sector to higher productivity activities.

You value economic freedom as the main driver of economic development just like your contemporaries do in other economies where citizens have thrived by driving the economic progress of their nations because Government played its noble role. Research findings validate clearly that those countries with the most economic freedom have higher rates of economic development than those with less economic freedom. You therefore seek to see government play a strong and effective role as an enabler, facilitator and umpire. You demand good governance from government not because you wish to be critical of those that govern but because you know that countries which prioritize good governance are more attractive, competitive and generally perform better than societies where government failure stunts productivity. As such you are hard on your parents, hard on your peers and harder on your government whenever you conclude that what is at best mediocre performance is celebrated as exceptional or even sometimes as transformational.

Second you are a generation that is not restricted to the boundaries of Nigeria; nay Africa, in defining standards and performance. You belong to a universal club of confident young people with humongous dose of curiosity and in perennial search for solutions to the problems. Like your friends from all other continents on your preferred social media platform ranging from Twitter to Facebook to Google+ etc., you have set higher standards of performance for yourselves and others including your country. You do so, because you know that in your truly globalized world, your competitor is not your class mate sitting next to you, not even those in other Universities in Nigeria, West Africa or Africa. Your competition is the youth whose Commencement I recently attended while still resident in the United States for one of my twin son's graduating class. For you, therefore, there is no cutting yourself or anyone else a slack. The ones among you who would continue to lead in your generation are those that keep pushing themselves, daily learning new

knowledge, unlearning unproductive or useless attitudes and values while relearning patterns that create and enhance their value.

Certainly although several of you will not be catching the private sector entrepreneurship bug choosing rather to pursue further academic studies in medicine, physical or social sciences, business and education et al, or to tread the path of public service or to delve into social activism or even social entrepreneurship. That is exactly as it should be. What already emerges among the older segment of your generation is the wide diversity of areas of occupational triumphs that are possible and your refreshing openness to accepting that there is no superiority of one set of career path over the other. The only thing that matters is how much social value beyond your personal benefit you used your career to create.

Therefore, whatever your choice of a calling may end up being, one thing I know we can expect to see of you as part of this generation of “doers” is an energetic and almost frenetic accomplishment of newer grounds for societal improvements than your parents. Not for you the paralyzing incrementalism that inculcated inertia into the delivery of generations ahead of yours. You like to do big and dramatic things to help “save the world”. Studies have shown how your generation is much more interested in dedicating your lifetime to a cause and so are likely to prioritize a life of purpose over just about any ordinary thing like money, fun or brings excitement. Your social consciousness and peer pressure to “join the cause” may yet be the catalyst for change in the relationship dynamics between the governed and their leaders.

It is not all awesome for your generation, though. You will be leaving your gated life of comfort where parents, guardians and school authorities struggled to give you a good life to one ridden

with uncertainties and turmoil. There will be moments in your new found life of freedom when you will confront the anxiety pangs associated with identity crisis- times when you will ask yourself, “who am I really?”, seasons of ebbing confidence when you suddenly are not so sure of your great worth, seasons when you will struggle to keep your bubbly optimism of today but are rather filled with a sense of hopelessness, seasons when you will be confused and faced with the tensions of moral ambiguity not quite knowing your breaking point threshold for defending what you consider to be right. When those seasons come, embrace and own your fears and failing. Stay authentic not just to others but to yourself. Fall hard if you must and then pick up strength quickly. With absolute humility you may wish to try what I always did when like you I came of age and wondered a lot about where my journey of life would take me.

Most of the time, I was very sure but those fewer moments when I was not so sure, were potential destiny wrecking seasons. As soon as I understood that much to be true, I made a decision that I continue to live by even today. The longest period that I permit myself to binge on the dark clouds of pessimism, misery, despair and weakness is twenty hours! No matter the nature of challenges that I have faced since that year in 1981 when I was like you are today, a fresh faced graduate of the University of Nigeria, God was and has always been my security blanket. In fact I know of two Truths in so far as my life purpose is concerned. The first Truth is that driven by a deeply ingrained sense of purpose and sacrificial service by our parents, I give to every Assignment, absolute effort to finding the right solutions and diligent commitment to staying the course regardless of any odds that come with the effort. The second Truth is that I do so knowing that my ultimate currency is absolute reliance on God. That He never ever fails is story that I can tell eloquently. I am not ashamed to shout out that I never could have made it all these years without the God of everlasting grace on my side.

So, what should you then do as soon as you decided your next step after this graduation? If I were you, I would get on my knees and enter into a purposeful life partnership with my Maker. I would promise that if He helped me realize every milestone necessary to my fulfillment of purpose, I would give my absolute all to His Assignments for my life. Should you decide to try the advice of this older- generation-badge- of- honor -carrier, then let Him at least know that you would hold nothing back from this moment forward as you constantly try to fulfill His purpose for your life. That way, the God who has brought you to a good place of celebration today, will see in you, not just the fertile seed you carry for Turning the Point for a greater Nigeria and Africa but that even better, you Turned it all to Him. Turn Eagles!

Congratulations! Fly off and go birth a New Nigeria and a New Africa. Soar. Never stop! Just keep soaring!! We all stand in awe of you...

