SHRINKING THE BALLOONING YOUTH PRECARIAT CLASS IN NIGERIA: THE NEED FOR YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

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Abstract

All over the world, the debouchment of a new class has been observed with new demands for the progressive troika of equality, liberty and fraternity. Far from being the forlorn cry for the establishment of a Marxian utopia or pantisocracy, the genuine demands for egalitarianism necessitating the restructuration of economic, social and cultural capitals has become a desideratum for society's preservation. Social upheavals, civil protests and collective movements led by a determined precariat class to address social ills and worsening inequalities will continue unabated until the political and economic managers of the state capitulate to these demands. In Nigeria, the elite is already aware of the potential vitriol and precariousness of this class. Existing diurnal narrative in Nigeria is awash with the virulence and dudgeon expressed by this class. Violent crimes such as terrorism, armed banditry, carjacking, cybercrimes, human trafficking of persons, militancy and kidnapping are major highlights of the viciousness and sadism manifested by this class. Evil contrivances have become weapons for economic compensation and retribution on an insensitive elite and society. The imagery of Nigeria's future is akin to sitting on a time-bomb or walking a jagged precipice. In this paper, authors contend that the growing youth precariat class in Nigeria must not be ignored. Leaning on the anomie/strain paradigmatic thesis, they argue that the political class must reverse its natural shenanigans and rhetoric for change programs that will impact on Nigerian youths who are simmering with rage and despondency. Lurking around for the right moment, this dangerous class could spell the doomsday for an already divided polity if genuine efforts are waved aside. Youth empowerment programs must be practically rolled out soon and fast with a genuine politics of paradise built on the principles of economic security and social well-being to integrate this class into mainstream society.

Keywords: Precariat Class; Inequalities; Economic Security; Politics of Paradise; Youth Empowerment.

Introduction

Society is standing at a threshold of a mild revolution or movement hitting its formidable gates and demanding the progressive troika of equality, liberty and fraternity. In some countries, this revolution or movement has succeeded in overthrowing governments, instituting regime reforms, redefining the governance landscapes, rewriting political narratives and catalyzing socioeconomic permutations. This blitzkrieg has manifested itself in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Nigeria, in the United States Occupy Wall Street, United Kingdom, France, Greece, Spain, Ukraine and in many First World, Second World and notably in Third World countries where the atmospherics are brimming with dark, minatory clouds of angst, despondency and precariousness. Joining many watchful commentators and academic writers, Bailey (2014, para. 6) asserts that:

> ...the left have identified the prominence of street demonstrations and occupations of public space and the relative lack of industrial militancy of workers as the defining features of these new movements. They tie this analysis to an argument that broader structural changes in capitalism have weakened the link between capital and labor, thereby displacing the revolutionary proletariat of Marx and Engels with a more atomized, fragmented, multitude whose relationship to work and production is much more tenuous. This new social force has been dubbed the "precariat."

Guy Standing, through his magnum opus, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class, and subsequent oeuvre, has popularised the concept of precariat* and brought it to the focal point of academic, political and policy discourse (Standing, 2011a). The reflections of Standing not only highlight the commonalities of the precariat as seen in many modern societies today but also underscore a dominant kindred Weltanschauung shared by many academic writers, researchers and concerned citizens of the world about the "other" side of neoliberal economic and political

orthodoxies. One side of these ideologies affirms the beauty and necessity of the marketization or commoditisation of the economy through market forces of demand and supply, privatisation and commercialisation of state resources, and political and social liberalisation for social advancement, but the other side has balkanised society into two wide extremities of an elite minority that cold-heartedly strives to perpetuate its plutocratic interests in the state and a bulge of hapless citizens, full of dudgeon and antisocial passions, in which a class is gradually crystallising: this class is both insecure as well as precarious.

Existing status quo in Nigeria gives credence to the existence of the precariat class. Although not a homogenous group because of the socioeconomic and demographic differentials that members of this class manifest, since it includes women, children of the poor, the aged (pensioners), unemployed citizens, unemployed youth, unskilled and semi-skilled labour and physically challenged persons, the danger this class poses to the Nigerian society seems to derive from largely the unemployed youths; or better still, what has been termed the NEET population (Population Reference Bureau, 2013). This NEET population represents youth who are not in employment, education or training. While unemployed youth who are in school or receiving training are investing in their future employment prospects and earning potential, NEETs are unemployed and not engaged in educational opportunities and because of these, they risk being unemployable and being quarantined in the labour market for a long time (Urim, 2014). This, of course, can have a backlash on society, and it already has in a mammoth country as Nigeria.

The recent Nigerian Immigration Service employment in 2014 where over 125,000 candidates (in Abuja and Lagos) jostled for 4,000 positions, turned into a fiasco with the deaths of some of the candidates due to a shoddily planned recruitment exercise in which organisers thought it wise to shoehorn tens of thousands of candidates into a small stadium facility resulting in a stampede with all the familiar hallmarks of corruption which the Nigerian state has come to be identified with. In another well-televised incident in 2014, a young Nigerian graduate who claimed to have searched for a job in 32 of the 36 states of the federation and ended up in Akwa Ibom State where he thought he could lay hands on this Holy Grail, after much job search and finding nothing contemplated suicide by lying on the road leading to the state's government house to be crushed by vehicles plying the route. More than being a histrionic display of despair, from Edo to Kano, Abia to Adamawa and Delta to Bayelsa, more youths are seeking ways to vent their pent-up angst-ridden emotions on what they see as society's taciturnity towards their plight. There are many young Nigerians who make up a large shoal of primary and secondary school dropouts, who do not have any form of employable or financially viable skills and some who are very disadvantaged when it comes to western education because they are illiterates. These young Nigerians have become lumpenised and exist on the fringes of social and economic progress in the country. Many of them are hungry and angry, and because they are hungry, they cannot sleep; and because they are "awake", the elite cannot sleep.

Already, some members of this class have declared tacit war on the Nigerian state by embarking on antisocial vices as quid pro quo for their negligence and continued lumpenisation, which diurnal narratives evince. It follows that unless something is done to rein in the precariousness this class poses to the continued existence of Nigeria, the existing climate of terror, kidnapping, youth violence, human trafficking of persons, political assassinations, carjacking, religious conflicts and ethnic unrest may fester inflexibly until the Nigerian federation atrophies. In this study, the authors argue the need for the youthanization of empowerment programmes embedded within a politics of paradise and humanity and driven by the principles of economic security and social well-being to integrate this class into mainstream society and avoid the impending apocalypse brewing in the horizon.

Objectives

The general objective of the study is to examine the global emergence of the precariat class with focus on Nigeria. Other objectives of the study include:

i. To explore the ballooning youth precariat class in Nigeria and the dangers it poses to the country.
ii. To identify factors that have reproduced the youth precariat in Nigeria.
iii. To prescribe youth empowerment, guided by the politics of paradise, as a panacea for youth precarity in Nigeria.

Methodology

The methodology adopted for this study is the qualitative approach with heavy reliance on secondary data such as books, journals, technical reports and online resources.

Conceptualisation of terms

Probing the terms "precariat" and precarity

The use of the term "precariat" dates back to the 1980s when French sociologists used it to define unprotected, temporary workers as a new social class, and it has its variants in French (*précariat*), Italian (*precariato*) and German (*Prekariat*), with shifts in meaning determined by the time, place and social context in which it is used ("The precariat", 2014). The emblazonment of the term was pioneered by Guy Standing in his very fecund oeuvre which has resonated across epistemic boundaries because of its vraisemblance in many modern societies.

Precariat is a blend of adjective *precarious* and noun *proletariat*, a word used to describe working-class people as a social group. *Proletariat* has its origins in Latin *proletarius*, which denoted a person who had no wealth in property and whose only way of serving the state was by producing offspring ("The precariat", 2014) that would work for the good of society and who sell their labour to live. Generally, the precariat typifies a social group consisting of people whose lives are difficult because they have little or no job security and few employment rights.

According to Standing (2012), the precariat embraces an agglomerate of insecure people, who live in bits and pieces, are in and out of short-term jobs, without a narrative of occupational development, and include millions of frustrated educated youth who do not like existing socioeconomic conditions before them, millions of women abused in oppressive labor, growing numbers of criminalized tagged for life, millions being categorized as 'disabled' and migrants in their hundreds of millions around the world. He calls them denizens because they have no occupational identity, and lack a restricted range of social, cultural, political and economic rights than citizens around them (para. 11). Being urged to be "flexible" and "employable", they act opportunistically. They cannot construct occupational careers or draw on a social memory, or have a feeling of belonging to a community of pride, status, ethics and solidarity (Standing, 2011). Standing further argues that the denizens are also denied effective rights because they have nobody to represent them in the political mainstream (Standing, 2012, para. 21)

The precariat, therefore, suffers from a combination of insecurities which includes labor market insecurity, employment insecurity, job insecurity, work insecurity, skill reproduction insecurity, income insecurity and representation insecurity (Standing, 2013). These overlapping insecurities force the precariat into precarious circumstances which feed their anger, needs and desperation. Facing a prospect of economic insecurity, members of the precariat class are increasingly disengaged from mainstream politics and sometimes are against the political establishment because it is seen to support the muskeg of deprivations in which they are submerged.

According to a recent survey in the UK, the precariat belongs to one of the seven new classes in UK and Europe which include the elite, established middle class, technical middle class, new affluent workers, emergent service workers, traditional working class and the precariat in that order ("Great British Survey", 2011; "Huge Survey", 2013). This creates bifurcated extremes of a plutonomy and a precariat.

While the plutonomy refers to 1% of the population who make up the elite and very wealthy members of society and who can afford luxury lifestyle, the precariat leads a precarious existence at the periphery of society with substantial numbers falling into the precarity trap in many societies of the world (Chomsky, 2012). Many political thinkers from Winston Churchill, Alexis de Tocqueville and Noam Chomsky have vituperated plutocrats for ignoring their social responsibilities, using their power and influences for narcissistic purposes, thereby increasing poverty, marginalizing the majority, nurturing class conflict, and contaminating societies with greed and hedonism (The Guardian, 2011; Toupin, 1985).

The growth of the precariat has been accelerated by the neoliberalism of globalization, which put faith in labor market flexibility, the commodification of everything and the restructuring of social protection (Standing, 2011 & 2012). Not yet a class- for-itself, but a class-in-the-making, the precariat is internally divided into angry and bitter factions because of a combination of anxiety, alienation, anomie and anger which makes it the dangerous class. As Standing (2011) observed:

> Frustrated youth comprise the progressive vanguard of the precariat. They are growing restless, especially since the Faustian bargain exploded. Budgetary cuts are eroding the commons and the precariat's living standards. Stirrings on the edges of global capitalism are harbingers of momentous events. The middle east uprisings were the first revolutions in history to be led by the precariat, technologically-savvy youths with nothing to lose because they had nothing to gain in the existing global economy, in which their rulers were in league with the world's financial elite.

Thus, the precariat is a mixed class comprising insecure masses of the people, the lumpen, the commons, bottom of the poor, bottom of the pyramid, the unemployed, unemployed youths or the NEET population and other citizens or denizens of the modern state whose present social, economic and political situation is worse off and whose future seems blighted.

Precarity, on the other hand, is a social condition that lacks predictability or security, affecting material or psychological welfare of the masses of the people. Specifically, it is a phenomenon in which large parts of the population are being subjected to flexible exploitation or *flexploitation* such as low pay, underemployment, unemployment, casualization and intermittent income and existential precariousness such as high risk of social exclusion because of low incomes, welfare cuts and high cost of living (Standing, 2011). In many developed economies, many of their citizens and residents are already victims of precarity in different sectors but particularly youth, women, immigrants, the unemployed, the underemployed, many seniors, the poor and physically challenged people are exposed. In Africa, including Nigeria, the youth, women, the poor and their children and senior citizens have been tethered to precarious existential conditions that qualify them as members of the precariat. However, youths are the vanguardists of this dangerous class in Nigeria and Africa, just as the undertakings of this class have demonstrated in the metropolis.

Theoretical Underpinning

Anomie/Strain Theory

The theory of Anomie/Strain was chiefly embedded in the work of the French sociologist, Emile Durkheim. According to Durkheim, anomie manifests itself in one of two interrelated ways depending on the evolutionary stage of society (Smith & Bohm, 2008). In less developed, more homogeneous societies, anomie is likely to be a product of the breakdown of social norms or the dissociation of the individual from the "collective conscience" while in advanced industrial societies, anomie is more likely to occur when there are problems in the "division of labor" (the interdependency of occupational roles) (p. 2). In other words, in the first case, the collective or common conscience is unable to regulate human desires (lack of regulation), while in the second case "individualism" is promoted to such a degree that people become so egotistic and no longer care about the welfare of others.

To Durkheim, the consequence of a society that is temporarily unable to exercise its regulative function is an increase in the rate of suicide, and presumably crime. It is important to note that heightened prosperity can disturb the collective order in the same manner as national declines of wealth (Smith & Bohm, 2008). The distillate of Durkheim's theoretical ratiocinations is that society must place adequate restraints on the aspirations and appetites of its citizens or better integrate them into the collective whole in order to maintain equity and sustain itself.

While Durkheim underscored the role of inherent and often insatiable human appetites or aspirations as the reason for anomie, Merton (1938) contended that many human appetites or aspirations were not intrinsic but were culturally induced. This means that the inability of people to achieve culturally defined aspirations, such as the accumulation of material wealth, by legitimate socially structured means produced what Merton called anomie or strain. According to Merton, individuals develop adaptations to the strain they encounter. These adaptations include: conformity,

innovation, ritualism, retreatism, and rebellion (Smith & Bohm, 2008). Three of the adaptations (innovation, retreatism, and rebellion) tend to manifest in aberrant or criminal behavior (p. 2). To Merton, lower class individuals are more susceptible to frustration and strain because they have less opportunity to attain vertical mobility while aspiring to achieve common success goals, such as wealth or good income status. It is for this reason that Merton states that lower class society possesses more innovators and hence more criminals than other class groups. Therefore, it could be argued that the lower class produces more innovators who are economically alienated; with crime or any form of vice representing a potential means to achieve cultural status (Smith & Bohm, 2008). Thus, innovation becomes an attempt to integrate oneself into the hub of society, while other adaptive behaviors such as retreatism describes those who lack the means and desire to achieve cultural goals such as the activities of psychotics, pariahs, outcasts, chronic drunkards and drug addicts while the rebellion adaptation attracts members or individuals who seek a drastic change in their current social conditions (Merton, 1938).

A gestalt of Merton's theory of anomie reveals that these adaptations are normal (or functional) responses to alienating social conditions, particularly the disharmony between the cultural goal of wealth accumulation and limited legitimate means to achieve such capital (Smith & Bohm, 2008). The dialectic between goals and means to achieving them leads to some social policy implications. To Merton, a reduction or change in success goals and/or an increase in means or opportunity to achieve these goals will result in a decrease in crime, while an increase in success goals and a decrease in the means to achieve them will result into precariousness.

This theory enjoys great applicability when the issue of the precariat is examined. A peep into the precariat suggests a class that suffers social exclusion, lumpenisation, poverty, discrimination, joblessness, skill deficiency, and sometimes social and political abandonment. This results in frustration which in turn leads to dissatisfaction, resentment, and anger, which are all the emotions that result in strain and crime or violence. In Nigeria, where for many years, the precariat has been taken shape, especially as it is seen in its youth population which lacks access to social, economic and cultural capitals, these denials has forced these youths to display the tripartite adaptations of innovation, retreatism and rebellion manifesting in violent and malevolent acts such as armed banditry, juvenile crimes, kidnapping, militancy, ethnic confrontations, terrorism and all kinds of violence and venalities, which are carried out to protest the elite's taciturnity or a quid pro quo by young members of the precariat class on society's apathy. Thus, the precariatisation of the majority of the youth population in Nigeria and Africa has resulted in the precariousness of this class to the survival and continued prosperity of the nation and continent.

The Global Emergence of the Precariat

Although, Standing (2011c) contends that the global precariat is not yet a class in the Marxian sense because it is internally divided and is only united because members share similar fears and insecurities, he posits that the global precariat is a class in the making, approaching a consciousness of common vulnerability. While it consists of those in insecure jobs such as temps, part-timers, casual workers, those in call centers or in outsourced arrangements, the precariat is generally a class of the vulnerable who feel "their lives and identities are made up of disjointed bits, in which they cannot construct a desirable narrative or build a career, combining forms of work and labor, play and leisure in a sustainable way" (Standing, 2011d, para. 4).

The precariat has championed the Occupy movement in the United States and Europe demanding the reversal of economic and social inequality with the goal of making the economic and political relations in all societies less vertically hierarchical and more flatly distributed (Collins, 2011; "Woman dies", 2011). Local groups often have different focuses, but among the movement's prime concerns deal with how large corporations and the global financial system control the world in a way that disproportionately benefits a minority, undermines democracy, and is unstable (Dobnik, 2011; Leessig, 2011; The 99% Declaration, 2012; Thompson, 2011). For instance, delegates of the 99% Declaration gathered in Philadephia in 2012 to address what they considered an injustice regarding the growing precarity in the United States in which 46 million Americans were trapped in poverty (The 99% Declaration). Describing the Wall Street protests as being targeted against economic inequality and corporate greed aimed at the nerve center of American capitalism, Walters (2011) asserts that these dissents are no longer merely a New York phenomenon. Thompson has also reported the transcontinental nature of the precariat movement in this excerpt:

...the protests are neither entirely coordinated nor entirely spontaneous. Their messages are consistent: the creep of austerity and the continued anguish of the global middle class in the developed world after the Great Recession. The motifs are familiar, as well. The Guy Fawkes masks. The 99 Percent signs. In Rome, the protests turned violent, but they were mostly peaceful throughout the world.... thousands of people (are) marching across several continents, including in Sydney, Australia; Tokyo; Hong Kong; Toronto; Chicago; and Los Angeles, where several thousand people marched to City Hall as passing drivers honked their support. (2011, para. 1)

The first Occupy protest to receive widespread attention was Occupy Wall Street in New York City's Zuccotti Park on 17 September 2011, but by October 9, Occupy protests had taken place or were ongoing in over 951 cities across 82 countries, and over 600 communities in the United States (Walters, 2011). As Adam (2011) also observed, Occupy Wall Street protests that began in New York, became contagious as tens of thousands of people around the world took to the streets to reprise their anger at the global financial system, corporate greed and government cutbacks. Rallies were held in more than 900 cities in Europe, Africa and Asia, as well as in the United States, with some of the largest occurring in Europe (Adam, 2011). The demonstration in some parts of the world has been violent leading to the deaths of protesters while other protests have been largely peaceful.

Notably, the precariat in Europe has been involved in different forms of movements and protests to bring their governments' attention to the plight of the urban poor and the growing precariat trap into which most citizens were ensnared during this period. These precariat protests have been seen in the Euro May Day parades and loosely organized protests, the Spanish *indignados* who rejected mainstream political parties, while demanding what appears as a discordant bag of changes (Standing, 2011d); protests in Milan, *den plirono* actions and prolonged mass protests in Greece, and the various first precariat-led revolutions in the Middle East dubbed "The Arab Spring", a revolutionary wave of demonstrations and protests (both non-violent and violent), riots, and civil wars in the Arab world that began on 18 December 2010 (Borger, 2010). In fact, concerning the Middle-East precariat-led uprisings, by December 2013, rulers had been forced from power in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen; civil uprisings had erupted in Bahrain and Syria; major protests had broken out in Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, and Sudan; and minor protests had occurred in Mauritania, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Djibouti, Western Sahara, and the Palestinian territories (Peterson, 2011; Spencer, 2011; "Tunisia's Ben Ali", 2011) .

As Harsch (2013) noted, social protest in Africa is a perennial because of the embedded social dislocations, people-governance disconnect and impoverishment of a vast majority of the African people over the years. For Harsch, this was why in 2013 alone, there were thousands of protests held across Africa in the forms of strikes, marches, rallies, sit-ins, boycotts, or unorganized outbursts of violence where Africans took to the streets in large numbers to vocalize their social and political discontents (2013). While the elites on the continent have many ways to influence policy such as bankrolling of favorite candidates and parties, evading unwelcome taxes and regulations, subverting state institutions through corruption and bribery, public protest is one of the few weapons available to the oppressed classes to bring their grievances to their governments and force the latter to listen to them. According to Harsch (2013), with only a half dozen of exceptions, in 2013, every African country experienced some form of public protest, even in authoritarian states where citizens have been subjected to panopticon treatments such as in Angola, Chad, Ethiopia, Gambia, Sudan, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe.

The Occupy Nigeria movement was a clear indication of the restiveness of the precariat in Nigeria regarding the stolidity of government to its social and economic situation. The Occupy Nigeria protest commenced on 2 January 2012 in Lagos as a response to the fuel subsidy removal by the Federal Government of President Goodluck Jonathan but spread to other cities like Ibadan, Kano and Abuja (VOA News, 2011). The protest was chiefly against the removal of subsidy on petroleum products, 120% increase in the price of petrol, corruption in government and the public service, inhuman treatment of Nigerians by government and security agents and high rate of poverty in the country. Using social media technologies and spaces, the activism by the protesters took on an international dimension drawing solidarity from Nigerians abroad and friends of Nigeria who organized similar protests in the U.S., London and South Africa. With sustained local and international pressure, the Goodluck Jonathan government capitulated to the demands for a policy reversal on the fuel subsidy removal.

Similar protests were witnessed in South Africa in different cities such as Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, Grahamstown and East London. The Occupy South Africa crystallized to protest and incite mass action against the racial, economic and social inequality in South Africa (AHS, 2010).

All these protests, which can be said to be legitimate demands by the people are aside the antisocial expressions of criminality, vices and malevolence which some members of the precariat class unleash on their respective societies as a way to also protest their angst and despondency and to demand an apology for what they consider an insensitive and amoral system. Consequently, the foregoing shows that the "precariatized mind" is enveloping the public space globally, including in Africa, creating a concoction of anger, desperation, despondency, fear, doubts, uncertainties and rebellion, which are sure-fire ingredients for criminal behavior, anomie, nihilism and antisocial innovations aimed at wresting justice violently from perceived institutional enemies or targets or demanding a quid pro quo from society that it considers blasé.

Ballooning Youth Precariat Class in Nigeria

As indicated in Figure 1 below, out of approximately two billion young people aged between 10 and 24 years, as against the estimated current world population of 7,211,239,210 people, over 75% of these youths are from developing countries; this is about 22% of the world's population (Population Reference Bureau, 2013; World Population Statistics, 2014).
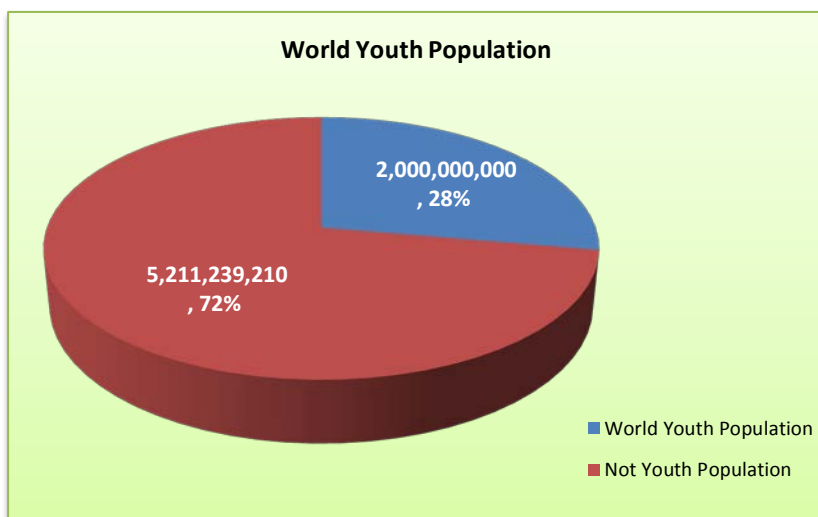

Figure 1: World Population Statistics
Source: World Population Statistics, 2014

In Africa alone, about 344.4 million young people fall into the category of 10 and 24 years (Population Reference Bureau, 2013, p. 6) out of the estimated population of 1.069 billion people for the year 2014 (World Population Statistics, 2014). If this age bracket is extended to 40 and 45 years, the population of young Africans within that bracket could extend to over 60% of the people, meaning that young people are the next generation of potentially productive economic and social actors for and on the continent, and as a report observed this growing youth demographic could be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for an indigenous-wired economic growth which has the potential of securing a prosperous future for the continent's poorest people (Risenetwork, 2013). Rather than ululate over this prospect, the ballooning number of young Africans in Africa could also become a social and political tinderbox for the security and economic stability of the nations in Africa if existing diurnal narratives are not reversed.

For instance, in Nigeria, while the country's estimated population in July 2013 stood at about 175 million, the youth population between 1 to 24 years is over 110 million people (Index Mundi, 2014). Absent an addition of young people between the ages of 25 to 45 years, the nation has a very youthful population that can either be a boon or doom depending on what the political and economic managers do with it.

Estimated Population of Nigeria (July 2013)				
Age Bracket	Male	Female	%	Male + Female
0-14 years	39,127,615	37,334,281	43.8%	76,461,896
15-24 years	17,201,067	16,451,357	19.3%	33,652,424
25-54 years	25,842,967	26,699,432	30.1%	
55-64 years	3,016,896	3,603,048	3.8%	
65 years and over	2,390,154	2,840,722	3.0%	
	87,579,043.4	86,928,840	100%	
Total Population	174,507,883.4			

Source: Index Mundi, 2014

With the dismal labor market outlook for young people which has worsened nearly in every region of the world (Ghana Business News, 2014), resulting in global youth unemployment which rose to 13.1 per cent in 2013, from 12.9 per cent in 2012 and 11.6 per cent in 2007 (ILO, 2013), many countries of the world are now concerned about young people who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) (Population Reference Bureau, 2013). The Nigerian government should be more concerned about its youth population because as at 2011, while the national unemployment rate was about 23.9%, youth unemployment rate was over 50% (Rise Network, 2013). This situation seems to have worsened as the recently aborted Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) job test held in the first quarter of 2014 showed in which over 125,000 job applicants, mostly young Nigerians, showed up in Abuja and Lagos for the advertised 4,000 positions in the NIS.

Thus, the number of young people who are not in employment, education or training in Nigeria is ballooning with dangerous portents as this class of Nigerians are forced on the fringes of society without any form of social or economic safety net to cushion their precarity.

Added to this blight are the rising cases of dropout primary and secondary school pupils in Nigeria. As at 2012, about 10 million primary and secondary pupils were dropouts in the country with 7.5 million of these being females (Information Nigeria, 2012). Nigeria is even regarded as the country with the largest number of out-of-school children in sub-Saharan Africa (Afisunlu, 2013). A visit to any of the state capitals in Nigeria in the night gives a shocking revelation about a growing army of NEETs whose livelihood hangs in the balance, whose future is bleak and who are potential quarries for anarchists, terror merchants, armed robbery gangs, human traffickers, sex slavery agents, cybercrime operators, violent criminals and sociopaths and blood lusty and feral politicians.

Many members of the initial Boko Haram terror group in the north were NEETs who had little or no formal education, employment or training and were easy marks for the religious blindfold and brainwashing they were subjected to. Had those recruits had some form of formal western education, financially viable skills or training or employment, they could have been able to resist as Standing (2012) styled it "...(the) populist sirens onto the political rocks, to rushes of anarchic discord or to support demagogues offering a neo-fascist vision or crazed evangelical message" (para. 30).

The precariatisation of these young people's minds not only makes them willing recruits to anarchic, insurrectionary or reactionary interests in the state but also has the potential of morphing them into death angels in society.

To make matters worse, the left in Nigeria have become *bourgeosified* so much that the social benefits they enjoyed as youths in the country like free education and other infrastructures have been left to deteriorate. Almost all the states controlled by the left have resorted to indiscriminate hiking of fees in education, especially in their tertiary institutions, making it more difficult for a larger percentage of youths who may desire to earn a higher national diploma or degree to give up their dreams because of the impossible fees meant for the plutonomy. This happened in the state-owned university in Lagos in 2014 where the state government hiked fees absurdly and stoked the fire of rebellion in their students who carried out a sequence of riots and protestations to force the state government to reverse what they considered an inimical and antagonistic policy which a human rights lawyer and civil society gladiator in Nigeria christened a "pro-Boko Haram policy" (Atoyebi, 2014).

Finally, the bloated youth precariat in Nigeria is populated by many uneducated or illiterate

Nigerians. This is caused by many factors. While some religious devotees like the Boko Haram sect believe that western education is evil and anathematized for moral and healthy human development and therefore subscribe to strict Islamic education, there are subsisting cultural factors in some parts of Nigeria that favor the education of male children as against that of female children. This patriarchal disposition limits the education of female children and advances that of male children.

Factors That Have Reproduced the Youth Precariat in Nigeria

There are international and autochthonous factors that have catalyzed the distention of youth precariat in Nigeria.

International factors swelling the youth precariat class in Nigeria

The first is globalization. Global movement of capital has made it possible for many investing corporations and nations to seek markets that provide the least resistance but a cornucopia of rewards. As a developing country with inchoate infrastructure and amenities, Nigeria is least favored for investments especially as it was ruled for many years by its military elite who did not respect international business agreements and treaties and were more disposed to heuristic approaches in the management of the nation's resources. For many years, the military was the Achilles' heel or albatross that frightened investors within and outside the country away. Nigeria just celebrated 15 years of uninterrupted democratic experience out of its 54 years of nationhood. Thus, the military era characterized by unfavorable economic and industry policies pushed out investors and businesses leaving many Nigerian youths without meaningful livelihoods or opportunity to gain employment. This bulging youth population has been pushed into the precariat trap and many are struggling to get out of the quagmire in which they have found themselves. The present administration is working hard to address this anomaly.

Second, the entry of the "Chindia" economies of China and India has redrawn global economic dynamics. With their huge population of about 2.5 billion people, the entrance of the Chindia economies has further swelled the global labor market. The cheap labor, the huge consumer market and the growing infrastructural and economic transformation that these economies provide have enticed global capital and investments and continue to do so. Although being the largest consumer market in Africa, yet Nigeria seems not to stand a chance if it wants to compete with the Chindia economies because in other factors such as the presence of an enabling environment for investments, benign economic policies that could attract investors and the political will to pursue a fair, open and transparent governance system which could increase investor confidence, Nigeria seems to shamefully lag behind. Thus, the Nigerian population is worse off when it comes to attracting global labor opportunities and its youth population is further consigned into the precariat trap.

Finally on the international dimension to the precariatisation of Nigerian youth, the dark sides of neoliberal capitalism which promotes individualism in the place of community, profit in the place of people and planet, and formality and certification in the place of vulnerability, has introduced a cold-hearted and blindsided capitalist system and bourgeosified political latticework that favor the distribution of resources and rewards to the elite and dominant class with leftover crumbs for the dominated and downtrodden classes. This system has further widened unchecked social and economic differentials between the rich and the poor. Furthermore, capital has become iron-fisted and crude in the treatment of labor, while the latter is controlled by the whims and caprices of supercilious and unrestrained tiny financial elite and its political allies and cronies. The youth who are children of the dominated classes are forced to walk the narrow and iron-gated path to the ivory towers of all social goods while the elite, their scions and cronies are given a free rein in determining who gets what, when and how and according to their whims and thrills. In Nigeria, this cold-hearted capitalism has repressed a greater portion of the youth population and pushed many of them into the precarity trap.

Autochthonous factors responsible for the ballooned youth precariat class in Nigeria

The following are well-considered homegrown influences which have also ballooned the youth precariat class in Nigeria. One, a strong reason for the distention of the youth precariat class is the problem of misgovernance in Nigeria. For many years, Nigeria has suffered misrule in the hands of its elected or selected or self-appointed leaders in the case of putschists. This culture of misgovernance

has not only become entrenched in the governance circle, it has also been perpetuated over time by the military as well as the civilian leadership. A government that refuses on one hand to pay a meagerly N18,000 (about $113) as monthly minimum wage but on the other hand promptly assents the egotistic sirens for bloated perks for members of the three arms of government especially the executive and parliament is one that cannot be excused for misgovernance. Imhonopi and Urim (2012) have rightly argued elsewhere that "the democratic system in Nigeria has been perfected as a conduit pipe for perpetrating all forms of kleptocracy and self-styled perpetuation of the dominant class' interests in the country" (p. 74). Such a system only protects what Stiglitz (2011) has called inequality of the 1%, by the 1%, for the 1%.

Two, as Imhonopi and Urim (2013) put it, Nigeria has remained a "victim of poor leadership and convoluted systemic corruption which has become pervasive and cancerous in the country's national life" (p. 78). The public and private sectors have been so much blighted by poor leadership and corruption in the country that resources, opportunities, positions and politics are all arranged within the grasp of the highest bidder. Wealth is accumulated at the expense of national development without deference to the basic needs of the masses (Imhonopi & Urim, 2013). This unfair, egomaniacal and venal disposition by the political and economic managers of the state has elicited resistance and unpopularity by the people who have continued to demand for the equalization and liberalization of access to opportunities in the state. Nigerian youth therefore are among those the state and its representatives have lumpenised and lumped into the precariat.

Three, lack of political will to develop a fair, transparent and accountable political and economic leadership that defers to the people has in addition increased secrecy in governance and put a smokescreen on the several abuses perpetrated by those put in charge of the public till or commonwealth. The youth are among those who are disenfranchised from enjoying the benefits of good and accountable leadership because of the indisposition of the establishment to do what is right.

Four, absence of or limited infrastructures have also hamstrung the empowerment of the youth and increased their social and economic vulnerability. Spotty power supply, uncongenial environment for enterprise and promotion of creativity, bad and gullied road networks and a general climate of misdevelopment are disincentives to youth development and empowerment.

Fifth, the curricula of most educational institutions, except for the recent tweaking done to some of them, are akin to an ancien regime. The outmoded streak with these curricula has meant that products from Nigeria's educational system are unfit for industry or for the competitive globalized market. Also, young Nigerians who are not able to go to school do not have the option of attending vocational schools or training centers where they can be groomed into professional blue-collar workers who can be further empowered to start their own businesses rather than depend on the government or the private sector for work since SMEs have proven to be the drivers of economic growth and industrialization in most countries of the world (Imhonopi, 2014; Urim, 2014).

Lastly, a warped value system that ignores the promotion of entrepreneurship has remained an albatross in government's recent efforts to liberalize the entrepreneurial space. The quest for quick money and a microwave generation that despises hard work but believes in sudden stupendous wealth has created a growing number of arrivistes who have become the heros and role models of young Nigerians. These nouveau riches bandy their ill-gotten wealth, having been minted suddenly by the system into the millionaire and billionaire status, and this veneer blinds young people to dream to build wealth from scratch. To escape any social impediments, young people who cannot wait to follow the narrow way opt to pursue their capture of the glittery society by engaging in antisocial and violent activities including kidnapping, cybercrimes, human trafficking, human sacrifice for ritual money-making, terrorism and militancy, among others, in order to achieve this goal. This situation fails to support efforts to grow an entrepreneurial culture as young Nigerians see those who have engaged in these vices as the inspiration and motivation to achieve their own dreams. In addition, there are insufficient funding windows and opportunities to support youth entrepreneurs; even existing entrepreneurial training establishments have become politicized and access to them is done based on political patronage and largesse for party apparatchiks.

All these endogenous factors have potentiated the growth of the youth precariat class in Nigeria and have continued to push many more youths into this morass.

Delivering The Youth Precariat Class In Nigeria Through Genuine Youth Empowerment Programs

To arrest the descent of many young Nigerians into the precariat, certain urgent steps must be taken by government and other stakeholders in the body polity to deliver many youths who through frustration and disenchantment with the system could choose violence, sociopathy and anarchism as a way of venting their stifled disaffection and anger as has been witnessed through the unsettling actions of ethnic militants of the Niger Delta, the liberation envoys of the Biafran irredentists and the near invincible Boko Haram terror messengers.

First and foremost, the Nigerian government must offer an accountable, open and transparent leadership that is fair, equitable and just in its dealings with all ethnic groups and sections of the Nigerian society. Any attempt to continue the infamous tradition of impunity and privatization of government's business and public service will only embolden the vulnerable communities in the state to seek alternative survival measures. The youth population that is supposed to be a blessing may be lured by the sirens of insurgency, anarchism and doom further threatening the delicate peace, unity and economic prosperity of the Nigerian nation.

Second, there is need to revitalize the entrepreneurial space by encouraging more young Nigerian graduates to create their own jobs by exploring their talents, gifts and endowments for the good of their own selves and that of the society at large. To enable this, government must cease to pay lip service to its funding programs and platforms which have been tethered to partisan, sectional and subterranean considerations. Not only must access to the entrepreneurial space be liberalized, it must be done objectively and dispassionately admitting anyone and everyone who sincerely approaches it for funding for their financeable business ideas. By so doing, young Nigerians will be encouraged by the sincerity of government and rather than tow trails leading to the destruction of the state, they will choose to become architects of change and transformation.

Very importantly, to stem the slide into anarchism in the state, government must consider the compulsory payment of a monthly basic income to its precariat class. These are people who do not have jobs, education or skills or who cannot offer any reasonable labor exchange for payment such as physically challenged people, the very poor, senior citizens without pensions and other citizens of the state who may need some helping hand. Helping these people with basic unconditional income as is being done in India and Brazil at the moment will rescue a lot of these people from the nadir or fringes of the precariat trap and inspire them to tow the path of solidarity for the state, its institutions and totems.

Fourth, there is the need for the creation of a youth bank to provide the needed funding for young entrepreneurs without the traditional requests from banks for collateral and other loan pre-qualification demands. Through this step, more youth entrepreneurs will emerge who will create jobs for themselves and for others and offer society the much needed stimuli for its economic and industrial transformation.

Fifth, government and the elite or the political and economic classes should also consider supporting the creation of a special youth fund acting as an angel investment window for gifted and creative young people. Some projects that may not be financed by the Youth Bank because the period for recouping investment made may be longer or because of the technical nature of the project or business ideas can be assisted by this fund. Also, the same fund can be used to assist indigent youths who want to go to school at any level but do not have the resources to do so.

Sixth, government can and should draw up a policy that promotes free education at the primary and secondary school levels. This will reduce the number of primary and secondary school drop-outs, especially those who are unable to continue with their education because of lack of funds. Government can go a step further by providing simple meals for these young people. These efforts will resonate across the precariat class and wean many off their destructive and vengeful paths against the Nigerian society.

Seventh, the establishment of an Employment Commission could be considered a ludicrous idea or utopian nonsense, but as long as over 50% of young Nigerians are without jobs, the society may continue to bleed. In fact, the 1% minority may not be able to enjoy their wealth and have their

peace of mind when the precariat continues to suffer hunger and deprivation of basic necessities of life.

Eighth, genuine efforts must be put in place to transform the curricula of the nation's educational institutions so that entrepreneurship and vocational courses are incorporated. This would mean that more young Nigerians have the option to acquire education that leads them to further studies or those who wish to terminate their studies at the secondary school level could have the required financially viable skills to fend for themselves when they finally leave the four walls of their colleges. Also, vocational institutes can be set up to train school drop-outs not wishing to go back to school so they too can acquire important skills and training that can give them a job or provide them with an income. Ninth, government must begin to promote the right moral and ethical values in the state using its institutions and agencies. These values must espouse the dignity in labor, shed young people of the wrong thinking that wealth has to be created quick and fast regardless of the means and that community, rather than individuality should guide citizen relations and engagement in the state. Relying on the African culture that believes in fraternity and community, government must deploy resources to restore community support and assistance which African societies of the past were known for. Multi-stakeholder corporate social responsibility engagements will go a long way in revamping existing infrastructural decay.

Lastly, corporate citizens and social actors such as faith organizations, civil society groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), non-government development organizations (NGDOs) and wealthy private individuals must begin to look for ways to participate in the community development of the Nigerian state. Such supports will bolster government's dwindling resources but assist in meeting the basic needs of the people and promoting that spirit of oneness and camaraderie that has been lost on the people.

Conclusion

This paper is not against wealth or the wealthy. It is simply against a system that lets a minority in through the door and shuts it tight against the rest of the majority. Such narcissism or megalomania, to be properly phrased, by a tiny elite has created an ogre or Frankenstein that not only demands a pound of flesh but in some instances also hankers after the annihilation of an objectionable and cold-blooded system. A system that rewards conmen or masters of artifice and that embeds and cultivates a culture of nepotism, ascription and inequality within a context of mass poverty, discrimination and convoluted misgovernance breeds a growing community of disenchanted, bilious and revengeful class. Therefore, rather than being a tirade against or a vituperation of the plutocracy in Nigeria, this paper is congruent to an Argus that jangles warnings on the need for saneness, morality, justice and fairness in the design of the social and economic schema with respect to evolving a benign capitalist system that promotes inclusiveness and a politics of paradise built on an anlage of social and economic safety nets for all citizens or the vulnerable ones.

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