

## **Another Nigerian Tale**

**Babafemi A. Badejo, Ph.D.**

When I read accounts on how Nigeria is lagging behind on infrastructural development, I always marvel. A drive to and beyond Nigeria's Kirikiri: Medium, Female and Maximum Prisons clearly demonstrate the rot on infrastructure. Prisons, an essential part of rule of law need not be a punishment institution. At the UN, the spirit is more of correction/rehabilitation of human beings to return to being full human beings and not wild animals.

Kirikiri prisons evoke a strong unpleasant feeling even without visiting inside of them. To mention Kirikiri brings on fear of total incarceration. So, when on last May Day, I had mentioned to my wife that we were at Kirikiri when she called, she had a huge shriek of why are you there? She obviously had a relief when I mentioned that we must drive through the Prisons' compound to reach Naval Town.

With the traffic and decrepit roads, we faced on a public holiday, I had told my 3 younger friends that I will not join them to go to Naval Town to play Golf again. In being accommodating, Ayo Aderinwale suggested we go to play at the Şagamu Course. I agreed to going out of Lagos. Şagamu is a nice town where I lived for a month as a Secondary School teacher before being forced by family members, including my dad and late Cousin Adenola Alaba to give up my freedom and accept my admission as undergraduate student of Political Science at the University of Lagos in 1973. More on this another day, In Sha Allah.

But early Saturday May 4, 2019, Ayo Aderinwale called about 05:30 and mentioned that he had used Google maps and our so-called expressway out of Lagos was clogged and it would take us over two and a half hours to make a journey of less than 30 minutes of free flow of traffic. It is another story to look into the oppression of two Mega Churches on night vigil on the first Friday of every month and the other on the morning of the first Saturday of the month. And this is in addition to and beyond the corruption ridden eternal reconstruction of the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway. I suggested we cancel. One of us Vincent Sogolo already left Otta and was almost in Lagos. He was clearly unhappy when he heard of my suggestion. So, I was advised to join others at Mr. Aderinwale's residence and make a decision. By the time I joined, they had refused to listen to St. Paul on which time of the day is fine to try alcohol. To cut the story short, I agreed we return to Naval Town to join the kitty there to play. It was the best option. There was a competition at my Ikeja club and we did not pre-register as required. We are not members of Ikoyi club and decided not to even mention the opulent Lakowe course as an option.

Returning to Naval Town Golf course allowed me to pay attention to the "ghettorisation" of Kirikiri which ought to be a prime real estate belonging to the Federal Government of Nigeria. One cannot but wonder if there had been budgetary allocations to the Prisons Service since Independence almost 60 years ago. You cannot but wonder about the quality of life Prison Warders are being subjected to and the impact of this on prisoners. With the land and modern technology, the Kirikiri prisons could be self-sustaining if we were to have a leadership that is not self-aggrandizing but public spirited and service oriented. Of course, that is a big if.

Upon reading me, some so called leaders at the 3 different levels of governance are probably thinking about how to steal the choicy Kirikiri land. How many service lands have been converted all over into private estates without docile Nigerians not battling an eyelid? President Buhari when seeking office stated that if we don't kill corruption, it will kill Nigeria. Does he still have the conviction to forge ahead to give leadership in slaying corruption?

Another Golf day at the Dolphin Golf Club, Naval Town, Ojo, Lagos. It was the way to spend May Day that used to be a big affair in my younger days before General Babangida broke the back of Labour by breaking up the Nigeria Labour Congress.

I had set out at 06:30 to join 3 younger friends at the residence of Mr. Ayo Aderinwale at 07:01 and we all went in Aderinwale's specialized car. So much time was lost in the traffic caused by many articulated trucks on horribly unmaintained roads in this part of Lagos that was once a show-piece at the time of FESTAC 77. This deplorable state of affairs make you wonder if we have the 3 different levels of Government in Nigeria. And if we do, you cannot but wonder about the usefulness of Government to the people. Self-aggrandizement without service to the people allow these sordid states of affairs.

We had to drive through Kirikiri Medium Security Prison before getting to one of the 5 Golf Clubs in the Lagos area. A well-kept course with so many natural and man-made obstacles. We had a grueling nice time with me playing least well.

Of course, we had to go back through the same bad road in which cars drove on both sides as they meandered through huge potholes and motorcyclists as transporters challenged drivers in the chaos that makes this part of Lagos. I wish we had gone to my own club at Ikeja even though it is a smaller course.