

Nigeria hasn't been a stable country since the late President Yar Adu'ah. The local citizens would say the country has been suffering from a case of continuous bad leadership, and I would say that they're definitely hitting the nail on the head there. At least, based on my knowledge of the number of years I've been a witness,

During the years when former President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan occupied the presidential seat, both for his tenure and as acting President following the demise of Yar Arduah, the economy had started plummeting downward and the middle class scale had begun to change.

The dollar had kept increasing over the years, and inflation kept growing by a margin. It continuously became harder for those living slightly above the middle class to keep up with the cost of living as the years went by.

With every passing year, families that were once rich and comfortable started finding it a struggle to keep up with the cost of living due to the ever-inflating prices of commodities.

Chisom's father, Mr.Fola, was one of the many whom the changing economy had affected. He had lost his job and had no money to support his family the way he did before. He had invested all he had into building a family house following the brewing economic crisis. His manager at work had taken out a loan, using the workplace as collateral. Unfortunately for him, he wasn't able to make the payment in the time given to him.

The unexpected loss of his job had left the entire family staggering. Not being able to afford paying school fees for his kids during this period, Chisom and his siblings had to quit schooling for a term.

We had gone to his house as a collective. It was a tradition we had formed in school to check up on our fellow classmates whenever something wasn't right. We had gone to check up on why he had stopped coming to school. He assured us it was nothing to worry about and that he had started attending another school. I knew that he wasn't telling the truth. Others believed it, but I knew what was really wrong. I never said a word about it to anyone.

Before the term finished, when our school had been making preparations for our graduation party, I went to Chisom's house, hoping he'd accept my personal invitation to come join us as a friend. I saw a vehicle in their compound that I had never seen before.

Mr.Fola had bought a used keke. He had gotten it from Iya Titi's husband. Iya Titi was well known in the community as the food seller. Mr.Fola had bought the vehicle from them in hopes that he could use it to earn some money, no matter how little.

I remember Chisom telling me how he would be able to resume with us in the next session now that his father had been able to secure a mode of business. It made me happy that my friend was going to resume working with us in school again.

When school resumed, I excitedly anticipated watching Chisom walk through the school gate. I waited for the entirety of the first day, but Chisom never showed. I didn't think too much of it, though. I felt he probably didn't want to resume on the first day of school. It was normal for people not to resume on the first day of school. It wasn't as if any school activities would be happening. All we did was make a few scribbles of the terms and scheme of work for whatever subject our teachers came in to teach.

I went to his house after school had finished for the day so I could ask him why he didn't show up. Even though I knew most people would skip the first day of school, it kept bothering me all day because I knew Chisom wasn't one to do that. He prided himself on being a student with perfect attendance.

We were both in this competition between ourselves where we strived for students with a perfect attendance score. It was something we both always looked forward to on our report sheets at the end of a school term. I just needed to be sure that he willingly chose not to resume with us on that first day.

When I asked him why he hadn't shown up to school on that day, he replied that he wasn't going to resume with us anymore. He said his family had made plans to move soon to the house their father had built, even though it was not completed.

I felt sad but didn't think too much of it until I heard my mom tell my father during dinner that Chisom's family were being threatened with eviction by their landlord. With the increase in cost of everything and Chisom's father not being able to afford the things he could anymore, they couldn't gather enough to pay the house rent on time. They had been making promises to the landlord but were unable to deliver.

I never mentioned to Chisom what I had learned from my parents' conversation. It felt sad to lose my friend to distance, but we kept in touch on Facebook. This was the time when anyone could use Facebook for free.

We would talk about our days, especially how he had been adjusting to his new environment. He mentioned how hard it was to make new friends, especially when he perceived other kids as living better than they did. He didn't want to come off as desperate and trying hard, so he mostly kept to himself. I assured him that he was the one overcomplicating things, and no one would care how they lived if they were ever going to be genuine friends with him.

Eventually, our conversation started dying out, getting less and less with every passing day. It was mostly my fault. I had focused all my time in school, as I had just entered junior secondary school. My parents had placed limitations on my screen and play time, so I would focus on preparing for my junior WAEC examination.

A few years passed, and the country's cost of living had gotten even higher than it was before. The scale of the standard of living, constantly changing, had wrecked a lot of people in the

country financially. Nigeria had gone through the presidency of Goodluck Ebele Jonathan and had elected President Muhammadu Buhari for a change in government and a breath of fresh air. They hoped he would deliver on his promises and bring about the change the country needed.

In the first few years of his presidency, the entirety of the country fell under the illusion of his government's promises. The dollar had increased significantly. The rate of crime and corruption in the country became even worse. There was news of new kidnapped victims every day. Unions kept going on strike due to being underpaid or not paid at all by the government.

Every now and again, the government would cook up some absurd story to tell the people about how huge sums of money had mysteriously disappeared and couldn't be accounted for. For some reason, only a few people took it seriously. It was mostly played off as a joke by the average citizen.

I remember we talked during this time. He told me how his family had been keeping up during this period. It had been a very rough and tough few years for them ever since they moved, but his father had managed to get a new job, which paid him enough to take care of his family.

When they had moved to their new place, things had gotten increasingly hard, to the point where they had to beg for food and money. With the little his mother could gather, she used it to start a business, pounding fufu while her kids helped distribute it for her to shops around the area. She became known for her good fufu. It brought them a lot of customers, which in turn enabled them to earn an income.

With this business set up, they were able to afford going to school again. He told me how much time and effort it had taken him to properly navigate school work and catch up on lost time. He mentioned not having the best results for the first few terms, but he believed he was catching up and things were getting easier for him.

Chisom's father, Mr. Fola, applied for jobs around the sea port, and he was luckily able to get a job there. Chisom and his siblings were beginning to live comfortably again. With the money their father earned from his new job, he was able to finish building and furnishing their house and even buy his first car.

He opened a shop for his wife, where she sold wholesale provisions in the market. She was well known in her line of work. It was exciting to hear that Chisom had been doing well and that everything was stable for his family. We also talked about our former classmates and people we still kept in touch with. I had left our school for a boarding one a little after Chisom moved.

During the second tenure of former President Muhammadu Buhari, things became even worse for the economy. Nigerians had started moving to different parts of the world for a more stable economy, greener pastures, and a better cost of living. Some parents made plans to send their children out of the country for a better chance at life, while others didn't.

Before the end of his eight years serving as the President of Nigeria, the country's standard of living had become extremely suffocating. The numbers of beggars in the streets had increased, higher than they've ever been. The rate of unemployment and the search for jobs were alarming. Only the few who were connected were able to get a well-paying job.

People began to find it increasingly harder to survive with each passing day. Chisom's father had lost his job again. People couldn't afford to ship and import goods due to the value of the dollar being higher than it has ever been and continuously increasing in value with each passing day.

It was election time, and Nigerians both at home and abroad advocated for a change in better government. The youth were eager to vote for a change in governance. We all wanted to see our country, Nigeria, return to its former glory. I was part of the youth.

The elections were rigged. Ruined by the thugs running the country from behind the scenes. They did everything in their power, setting the stakes so that only one particular candidate would win the election. It was a robbery in broad daylight. Lots of hopes were killed that day. With this action, an alarming number of people desperately began to flee the country in search of a better life. It was very evident that they had lost whatever faith they had in the system. Chisom's father was one of them. With the money he had saved up, he made plans to leave the country for a better one. Unfortunately for him, he had been scammed out of his money by his supposed agent.

I had heard all these from my mother, who had told my father that Chisom's mother had come to visit her so she could borrow some money to assist her husband. It was sad to hear that Chisom's family was struggling again.

I waited for a while before I texted Chisom again on Facebook, asking how he was doing and how he had been keeping up. I didn't want him to speculate on anything or be suspicious that I had checked up on him then, probably because his mom had come to mine for assistance. He told me his father had traveled out of the country. They had been successful in borrowing money from people and the bank to assist Chisom's father in his travels.

He told me how hard things were, as it was left for his mom to pay off their debt while his father looked for a job in another country. He talked about how hard it was to live in school, trying to support himself anyway he could so he wouldn't be a burden, or as he described it, "one more headache to the family."

He had started considering dropping out of school if he wasn't able to keep up with the expenses. They were struggling really badly.

He told me how much he dreaded calling home. He didn't want to call home or pick up any calls from home because he was scared to hear his mother talk about how hard things were or his sister complain about how she was grieving for not having any money for herself. Every little

thing she could gather, she would use to assist their mother. Everyone had to pitch in and contribute in any way they could, so they would be able to sort out their situation faster. I felt sad for him. He was too young to start living this way. They were too young to start experiencing life like this.

I couldn't say anything to him. To offer assistance without asking would feel like a slap in the face. I withheld my words because I didn't want to say the wrong thing. It was a very sensitive matter. All I could say to him was that I was proud of him. After that, we didn't talk again. I have been occasionally checking up on him and sending texts to him, but I haven't gotten any response yet. I don't know how he's been keeping up or what the life update is for him right now, but I do hope he is okay.