



Sanwo-Olu and the Imperative of Sanitizing Lagos Island

- by Major -General Tajudeen Olanrewaju

The pivot and the very womb of central Lagos is undoubtedly Lagos Island. It is the heartland of our ancestors. It is the centrality of our beginning, the core provenance that defines our cherished heritage.

It is the home of our great men and women.

It is the beginning of all the Oba of Lagos from Ado Keme, Gabaro, Akinsemoyin, Ologunkutere, Dosunmu Akamṣa Ekun, Oba Oyekan, to the present Oba Akiolu.

It is here that sprung Alhaja Pelewura, Alhaja Alaṣo Oke, Olaniyonu of Isaleko-Offin, Oshodipipe of Isale- Offin, Dawodu, Kosoko, Olusi , Doherty, Jk Randle, Fashina , Olayeni, Olanrewaju, Bank Anthony, the Coles of Olowogbowo, the Williams, Taiwo Olowo, Salawu Ado-Dosunmu, Bello Fashola, Shitta Bey, Alli-Oloko, Gbajumo, George family of Evans street, Agunbiade alias Baba Oṣa, LJ Dosunmu, Alfa Momoh Tinubu, Dr Maja the Rhodes family, I.S Adewale, Gbajabiamila, Oki, Fashina, Muritala Animashaun,

Landude, Smith of OkeArin/ Alakoro, Pa Dallass of Evans Street, Herbert Macaulay ,Fashanu of Isalegangan, Jinadu of Faji enclave Okunnu of Isaleeko,Savage and so many numerous names of illustrious men and women of distinctions who actually built Lagos and gave it the magnetic commercial allure that still remains the envy of the world.

It is the home of the famous Pelewura market which now lies in ruin and a severe eyesore. It is the abode of the once prosperous Jankara market which presently festers in a glaring perpetual wasteland of unrelenting miseries and un-abating economic chaos amid a vast growing rot of decay and abandonment by successive Local Government Leadership.

From the far fringes of Lafiaji in the east to Sandgrouse, Okepopo, Campos, Itafaji, Onala, Aroloya, Idumayingbo, Dosunmu, Idumota, weaving across Tinubu fountain in the west, hurrying towards the choked huddle of Balogun, the cluttered largeness of Isale -Offin, Oke-Arin and the tumultuous stretches of Apongbon on the western edge of Lagos Island-our beloved and once beautiful pride of place is gradually deteriorating into an unrecognizable, distorted landscape of lost hopes, of perished dreams and shattered vision.

It is now a place of moribund lives where septic waters run across homes, where the stench of putrid , clogged drainages hover from the living spaces into schools , into mosques , into churches and the derelict, muddy, flooded crumbling expanses of the streets and the markets.

It is here the grim stare of poverty confronts us all in the abject faces of unemployed youths taking refuge in drugs and illicit activities, where the young and old are resigned to a life of despair and penury, where the very harsh symbols of irredeemable destitution imperils the essentiality of existence.

This is the ugly face of our new Lagos Island we now invite Governor Sanwo-Olu to do a physical working tour of determined and thorough evaluative examination with the ultimate resolve to rehabilitate, cleanse the dirt and the odium pervading our ancestral home.

We at De Renaissance Foundation borne upon the common bond of our Omọ Eko Pataki ethos are now respectfully tasking the governor to go round the aforementioned

neighborhoods and streets not in the screened , intimidating distance of endless convoy of Sports Utility Vehicles but alas in the intimate proximity and the humbling embrace of the common man tricycle popularly known as kéké marwa .

Yes. Let the governor remove himself from the elite based promotional agenda of water sports or Formular one elegance of Hollywood themed events and subject himself to the harsh and worsening realities of our people's lives.

We do not ask him to demolish or eviscerate our heritage like they are now doing with the ancient Itafaji market. We do not ask him to remove our people from their ancestral homeland. We are surely not against modernization. But modernization does not and should not entail a destruction of cherished ancestral structures and spaces.

The Vatican City is about 2000 years old and no one has ever suggested its replacement with a modern architecture. So is the Élysée palace or the 300 hundred years old Buckingham palace.

The Megalithic temple of Turkey is about 11,000 years old and is still standing fit and firm save for strict renovation work whenever it is necessary. No one has ever suggested its modernity. It is considered a national treasure. So is the 7, 000 years old megalithic temple in Malta.

What we request is restoration, renovation, a cleansing that does not destroy our history which we rejected in our recent intervention about the proposed demolition of the old Randle hospital.

Everywhere in the enlightened world, a people's heritage is never allowed to decay. They are treasured, revered, respected iconic places of pride like the Stonehenge in England which is about 5,000 years old, the Coliseum in Rome is almost 2,000 years old, the Pyramid of Djoser in Egypt is about 4,600 years old, the city of Jericho on the West Bank is 9,600 years old, while the ancient tower of Pisa is about 850 years old .

We remember vividly some decades ago when some people suggested that the leaning tower of Pisa should be straightened up. That it should not lean and tilt again. The Italian

government rejected the suggestion outright and engaged in the renovation and strengthening of the leaning tower of Pisa. Today it still remains a leaning tower. That is the preservation of a heritage. That is an appreciation of an historic monument.

We have gone to this length to illustrate how iconic structures are often embraced as historic treasures that remind a people about the creativity and the ingenuity of their ancestors. We do not disdain our past. We are proud of the attainments of our ancestors.

While we agree with Governor Sanwo-Olu that those who deliberately built on canals and drainages at Festac , Alaba, Trade fair and other places are scoff laws, our concern here is preservation of our own Lagosian ancestry against the seeming indifference of our elected government. The governor should kindly hasten on this pro-people's tour to protect our endangered ancestry. As they say, a stitch in time saves nine.

We believe it is the duty and responsibility of government to protect and serve its people with diligence and passionate candor. This is the moment our own governor should stand up firmly and courageously and yield genuinely to the yearnings of our people. Now is the time to rectify and mend the broken places. Now is the time to restore our pride of place as anchored by our ancestors.

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