

DEBATE SUMMARY

Should Nigerian professionals/expatriates living abroad come back home to contribute to the development of Nigeria?

The debate which began on the 26th of May and ended on the 24th of June—spanning nearly a month—has been very well disputed and discussed by both parties involved. It has generated a robust exchange of ideas, which has made our perspectives of the whole issues at hand quite richer. The topic, which pertains to the need for Nigerian expatriates to return home and salvage the deplorable state of our fatherland, is a very controversial one, especially coming now when the country has become one boiling cauldron of problems. Those in support of the motion (Prof. Sahalu Junaidu, Br. Fatai Anifowoshe, Br. Saddam Hussein) feel that we should not be ‘escapists’; we should stay around in, or come back to, Nigeria to rescue the appalling state of affairs in the country as ‘*foot soldiers*’ rather than ‘*fair weather returnees*’ and foster its technological advancement. Those who are against the motion (Dr. Hakeem Lateef, Br. Surajuddeen Adewusi, Engr. Idris Hadejia) feel that in a nation where unemployment has reached its peak with over 20 million people jobless, 6 million Nigerian expatriates coming back would only further jeopardize the unemployment crisis on the ground, and that the Nigerian Government should do a lot to revamp the decaying infrastructures, reduce corruption, ensure accountability and security of life and properties for the purposes of general development.

The debate was well researched and discussed, and participants and observers from both sides have done justice to the topic to the utmost content of the audience. What remains now is for us to draw our conclusions, and possibly our decisions, on this vexed issue. Below is a very condensed summary of the points for and against the motion. Owing to space and time, all the facts may not have been roundly reflected in the summary and any misrepresentation of ideas is regretted.

FOR THE MOTION:

1. The migration of Muslim intellectuals abroad is disadvantaging the Ummah in issues to do with admissions, mentor roles to Muslim students and in the holding of key positions in universities and other institutions hierarchy.
2. Nothing seems to be working in the country because of its obsolete technology and that those who could champion its progress have jetted abroad leaving the country starved of growth and at the mercy of political charlatans.
3. Graduates have slid back from ‘half-baked’ to ‘uneducated’ lot partly because experienced teaching staff has left for greener pastures abroad.
4. There is a need for sacrifice to help the country since we are all in a way enjoying the sweats and sacrifices of others. If we cannot sacrifice and come back to give a hand then we should hold our peace and not condemn the crooks managing our affairs.
5. A sizeable number of the people who have gone to stay abroad have been sponsored by governments and institutions to go and study with a view to coming back and utilizing their knowledge in their fatherland but they, instead, stay there and work which is a breach of the bonds they have signed with their sponsoring institutions.
6. Returning to contribute your own little way can make a difference. This is in relation to the case of a returnee who has had an impact in the National Pension Commission. He spread the gospel of contributory pension which resulted in the formation of a Research and Corporate Strategy Unit and the making of some mathematical modelling named ‘programmed withdrawal model’,

which has enhanced the periodic payment of pension, and this has been made into templates used by all Pension Fund Administrators. This is a clear case of how our efforts, little as they may appear to be, can have a remarkable impact.

AGAINST THE MOTION

1. There is a lot of unemployment in Nigeria - 70% of Nigerian graduates are unemployed, underemployed or unemployable (Thisday Newspaper). So, expatriates coming back under such a scenario would only compound the problem.
2. The fact that best brains are leaving Nigeria for better opportunities abroad should not affect our development. Personal contacts with professionals in similar fields in Nigeria should be encouraged to exchange ideas, useful information and materials. This is particularly needed in academic since NUC has already initiated a program that encourages professors to do sabbatical in Nigeria. It should also be noted that Nigeria has no problem of dearth of educated people but political patronage and corruption are the main problems.
3. According to reports, Nigerian expats averagely remit about \$16 billions home annually which helps the country in having a favourable balance of payment and in helping their families and siblings groaning under the weight of misrule.
4. The best sacrifice for someone is that which he makes for the betterment of his family in the form of alms as narrated by Abu Hurraira: the best alms is that which you give when you are rich, and you should start first to support your dependents.
5. Nigerian professionals and intellectuals in diaspora are helping in changing the battered image of the country abroad.
6. If diasporas come home, they are virtually going to be useless since facilities they are used to working with are totally non existent or dilapidated. Government should do a lot to revamp the decaying infrastructure for the purposes of general development.
7. There is terrible insecurity in the land, from that of lives and properties to that of jobs and political directions. Everything is literally on a standstill and people are seeking for escape routes. So, it would be foolhardy to leave your comfort zone and plunge into Nigeria (a resilient land) where others are desperately seeking ways to escape from.

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NMN-PCAC wants to take this opportunity to thank the participants and the observers for finding time out of their busy schedules to make such brilliant submissions. We do hope that in the future, whenever they are invited again, they would graciously accept the invitations once more. Thanks and remain blessed.

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