

ANALYSES ON THE QUEST AND ATTRACTIONS OF THE 21ST CENTURY YOUTH.

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INTRODUCTION:

The 21st century adolescent is a wonder to behold. His world revolves in such fast paced rhythms that you quickly “lose” him, unless you are one of them; or you are an initiated or conscripted part, (as some of us born in the 20th century have been forced to become: forced to understand their thought-lines, adapt to their rabid changes, and adopt their acceptable lingo in order to stay connected to them, and flow with them as they glide through their glitzy world). As a result of this, Parents, Guardians, Teachers, and other Adults find it quite challenging to cope with the 21st century Youth.

There are obvious differences between your typical 20th century Youth and your typical 21st century Youth. Put side by side and analysed, you will quickly notice marked differences in Understanding, Conduct, and Lifestyle. While the typical 20th century adolescent seems more reserved, conservative, sober, and task driven; the typical 21st century adolescent seems more rabid, liberal / non conventional, excitable, and result seeking.

SCOPE:

Youth refers to a young person.

According to Advanced English Dictionary and Thesaurus, Youth connotes the time of life between childhood and maturity. An adolescent or teenager, to the stage of maturity.

For the purposes of our Noble Youth Association Inc. Projects, our adopted scope for youths is from 10 to 28 years.

DISCUSSION:

Ostensibly, there is a myriad of things and issues that will constitute veritable sources of attraction to the 21st century Youth. Below listed are some of the very few we have identified as strong quests and attractions of the 21st century Youth.

1. QUEST FOR FREEDOM:

Research has shown that generally, adolescents crave for freedom and independence.

As age gradually increases, and the child grows into adolescence, there is an equally increasing desire in the teenager to escape from the control of surrounding adults. There is now a yearning to be free from constant supervision and scrutiny. In the case of the 21st century youth, this is not merely a desire, it is a demand.

A very strong desire to “escape from time to time from people and things which bother me, to a favourite place, on their own or with friends, away from adult surveillance” (Abbot – Chapman. 2006)

This is a quest that once identified as manifesting in the Child must be managed tactfully. Because of the fact that quest for freedom is natural and part of normal human development process, it must be managed in the child in such a way as not to drive the personality of the child back to shell, and obfuscate his or her individuality. In other words, we must manage to strike a healthy balance between the age-guided mental and psychological development of the child; and what is within the range of reasonableness and acceptable societal norms.

Scientific researches have proven that the human brain goes through certain transformations between the ages of fifteen and twenty five. These transformations account for what may manifest as self-consciousness, mood swings, adventurism / risk-taking, impulsive behaviour, and hyper-sensitivity. At this stage their thought process and understanding are skewed.

2. ATTRACTION TO SOCIAL MEDIA AND INTERNET:

One major disservice hi-tech media has handed to humanity is the celebration and elevation of pornography, drug abuse, and other forms of immorality to pinnacles hitherto unknown to humanity.

Though there are lots of benefits derivable from the advent of the internet and social media, especially in finding relevant entertainment, ease of communication, providing intellectual knowledge, and accessing positive information; we have to equally accept the fact that very many internet sites and blogs host materials and information (videos, pictures, writings, etc) that are destructive to the fragile mind of children and youths. The 21st century media is not just about information, but weighs more on constant communication.

The sponsors, hosts, and promoters of these unwholesome sites understand the fact that habits, memories, visuals, and attachment to places formed between the earlier years of life, between 7 to 22 years are difficult to erase, thus, in their own quest to satisfy their evil desires and/or meet their satanic obligations they launch very fierce attacks on the minds of these young ones, using all sorts of things, deceptions, and promises as baits to hoodwink and gather them into their net.

This attraction is so strong that nearly all teenagers now belong to, use, or at least know about, one social media site or the other, and applications. To many youths their predicament with regards to the use and attachment to Social media and the internet is now more of an addiction, than education and leisure.

3. QUEST FOR FAST BUCKS:

I had earlier observed in my introduction that the 21st century is more result seeking than task driven.

He seems to have an already developed penchant to have quick fixed results without much labour; A fast food mentality.

So, it is common place to see a child still in junior High School agitated with deep hunger and desire to have enough money of his own to spend on his fancies. This is worsened by a society that seeks to elevate laziness and leisure to an enviable art, and give huge reward to her captives.

It is for this reason that many youths now engage in fraudulent acts (online and offline), armed robbery, pimping, and become gigolos whose only daily duty is to wake up in the morning, build his muscles, eat and wait to climb his paying madam.

Let's also take the example of a reality TV Show, where young people of opposite sexes are quarantined together in an apartment for weeks, doing absolutely nothing, but eat, sleep, gild, fondle themselves, and be strongly tempted to have sex or actually have it, shamelessly; all in the full glare of the whole of humanity. For which at the end, a winner emerges, probably for being the most ardent lazy bone, and is celebrated by his sponsors with scores of millions of Naira or Dollar, plus top of the range SUV, residence in a highbrow district, and mouth watering endorsement deals.

Juxtapose the above with the reality, as it currently obtains, where youths engage in very tasking Maths Quizzes, or any other form of School debates; contesting right from their intra school level, to inter schools within their region, right up to the National level, and a winner emerges, and is given One hundred thousand Naira or two hundred and fifty Dollars. This is an aberration.

4. ATTRACTION TO FASHION AND TRENDS:

The typical 21st century youth wants to be fashionable and trendy. They are in love with popular culture. For him it's 'cool' to wear a neck less polo shirt, and then wear atop it another shirt that must be left totally unbuttoned, and fly both. Why? Because his generation says it's okay.

Their fashion statements include knowing the latest songs, watching every newly released movie; and using popular lingo or slangs in their conversations. The Youth are in constant search for an identity that is trending. They are in constant quest and pressure to “belong”. Check out their hairstyles, tattoos, ear/nose/tongue/navel piercings, or trouser sagging. They choose a celebrity, especially in Entertainment or Sports and try to mirror his or her dressings and mannerisms.

The latest of this 21st century juvenile sickness can be explicitly pictured in the group of Youths in Nigeria today that refer to themselves as Marlians; parading as fans of a popular youth musician in Nigeria known as Naira Marley. These youths have become so fanatical in their admiration that they have adopted certain strange lifestyles (eg: going pant less including bra less for girls on several days of the week, sagging of trousers and not wearing belts), in celebration of their music idol and just to be different. Many teenagers want to do something because everyone else is doing it, using it, or talking about it; especially if their generation approves of it.

5. QUEST FOR UNIQUE LINGO:

The 21st century youth make use of various unique slangs and lexicon to communicate amongst themselves, leaving the uninitiated confused and lost, as intended.

This ranges from abbreviations, to words, to phrases, to clichés, and even signs. This is also an expression of the desire to be unique, setting further gap between their generation and others before them. Therefore, if you must perch and fly with them you must understand their lingo.