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*Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.*

- James 3:13

## How Great Is Nigeria! by Olawale Lekan Christopher

Many people would say that Nigeria is a great country because of its population that stands at a whopping figure of 191 million: the 7th largest in the world and the largest in the African continent. I may as well offer this rejoinder that there are countries in the world with significantly high population, which have never been esteemed with the word greatness or any such similar word. I would rather I did not mention peculiar cases.

Other people would say that rather than strength and greatness in sheer number, Nigeria is great because of her rich minerals resources. Indeed, Nigeria is blessed with abundant natural resources. Nigeria is the number one oil producing country in Africa and the 12th in the world; it has the 2nd largest oil reserves in Africa and has, in addition, ample quantities of natural gas, tin, iron ore, coal, limestone, zinc and arable land. But what do all these mean? They are merely circumstantial. The entire Africa continent seems to be encrusted in natural resources. From gold and diamond in Ghana and DR Congo respectively, to a substantial quantity of crude oil in Angola and Libya, just to name a few, Africa is hugely endowed with human and natural resources. However, in the world at large and in Africa in particular, only few countries can lay claims to greatness even when the touchstone is Nigeria.

Furthermore, some people, Nigerians and non-Nigerians alike, would even go as far as questioning the greatness of Nigeria. They will cynically dismiss it as a delusion of grandeur. Without wasting words, I will aver that Nigeria is born great. Verifiable statistics prove this to be more than just a mere unsubstantiated dogma. Even at present, Nigeria has the largest economy in Africa and the 21st in the world. This is a pointer to the greatness of Nigeria, not to mention its past and previous exploits and achievements. What then makes Nigeria great?

Nigeria is great today because of what I call the Nigerian Spirit. The Nigerian Spirit is borne out of a healthy blend of tenacity, hard work, intelligence, talent and humour: these are the constituents of that spirit.

Particular events in the history of Nigeria have served to wean the Nigerian Spirit into maturity. The colonial experience, the civil war experience, periods of economic boom and recession, among many other events, have strengthened the sinews of that Spirit so much so that the average Nigerian is tenacious. There is this unflinching will and resilience by the Nigerian in the face of struggle. Nigerians know that life is not a bed of roses, and that to get headway in life, they must tenaciously hold on to their dreams, summoning at all times their Nigerian Spirit. A former president of the country once said: "In my early days in school, I had no shoes, no school bags. I carried my books in my hands but never despaired." The Nigerian Spirit is that spirit that made a president out of a pauper. Goodluck Jonathan is an exemplar of that Nigerian tenacious and resilient spirit.

Through the Nigerian Spirit of hard work, Nigeria is gradually raising an army of millionaires for itself. There are 16,000 millionaires in Nigeria: the third highest in Africa. The likes of Mike Adenuga, Alike Dangote, Ifeanyi Ubah, Folorunsho Alakija, Femi Otedola, among others, are all billionaires today through sheer hard work. In addition, while these moguls are good examples of the Nigerian Spirit of hard work, it is even more interesting to know that those at the lower rungs of fortune are twice as hardworking.

On the literary and intellectual scene, Chinua Achebe, Woke Soyinka, Ben Okri, Chimamanda Adichie, etc., are world-renowned names. These are veritable specimens of Nigerian intelligence. In the 1970s, Ayodele Awojobi, the first African to be awarded the Doctor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering, invented his Autonov 1 that had a second steering wheel which made the vehicle move in both forward and backward directions almost simultaneously and could reach its top speed at a moment's notice — it was a stroke of genius. Also, Dr Osato Osenwengie is a Nigerian that is currently festooned with more than eight higher degrees: six Master's degrees and three Ph.D's. I have lost count of the number of times I have read that a young Nigerian in a foreign university has achieved an academic feat, either by breaking a long-standing record or by setting an unprecedented one. A close friend of mine has written over 200 poems, none a doggerel, and invented a stanza, which he called the "Ledin 10", the onomastics of which is from Yoruba. (i.e. a poem of 10 lines in alternating increasing, le, and decreasing, din, lengths.)

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