

## REVISITING THE ‘SILENT’ VOICE OF TEENAGERS IN LAGOS 1940 – 1950

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### Abstract

Some of the most remarkable features of archival records in Ibadan Nigeria are the written expressions of teenagers to supposed European benefactors. These writings reflect the wholesome acceptance of the European value system that the teenagers had been significantly accustomed to and which had become entrenched in their worldview and mindset. This speaks to the significant reformations that had occurred in the psyche of individuals in their generation – old and young alike. This paper presents these expressions, leaving them as they are, to allow the words ‘speak for themselves’. Particular attention is given to personal experiences as regards livelihood challenges, *as they were written* in correspondences to colonial authorities with the aim to give readers access to the uncensored ‘comments’ of youngsters on general livelihood in colonial Lagos. Earlier sources exist, which provide significant discourses and perspectives on the experiences of a good number of these teenagers. However, there is more room for engagement with their texts. One way of making the texts available for a more expansive interrogation is to present them in the teenagers’ own language, in full view of its ‘disorganisation’, ‘lack of finesse’, ‘bad grammar’, ‘errors’, ‘vagueness’, and in certain cases, ‘outright inconsistency’. Hence, this article makes no pretence about trying to ‘elevate’ the status of the texts, but rather treats them as a kind of picaresque that discusses colonial urban livelihood realities.

## **Introduction**

Of the non-elitist reactions to the social transformations engineered by colonial rule, that of teenagers was remarkable and indicative of the depth of impact colonialism had on livelihood patterns. Thus, the experiences of teenagers revealed efforts to come to terms with the new value system typified in the new urban regime. During the colonial period socio-economic change processes had impacted money, education, vocation, settlement pattern, crime, religion, group membership, employment, and labour. These factors created a new regime of survival options and strategies, indicating in the lives of these young lads a decline in traditional extended family practice. Teenagers suffered neglect from immediate and extended relatives because of lack of economic power on the part of those who could have been positioned to assist them in their time of need, the death of parents, marital problems, and inadequate parental care. This paper thus exposes the 'reactions' of these teenagers to these factors and presents direct 'commentaries' from them. These commentaries reflect their experiences in the light of the impact of new urban culture engineered by the British colonial system and presents, directly from archival sources, their views and petitions to the colonial establishment.

## **Trends in existing literature**

A large body of literature is expanding on the experiences of children and teenagers in colonial Lagos (Fourchard, 2005: 116, Heap 2010: 47-70); and in the manner of other studies conducted elsewhere in Europe and the Americas, there is a consensus that teenagers are 'empty spaces' in which all forms of influences converge to alter their identity, psychology, and the extent of their vulnerability (Johnson & Lichter, 2010: 151-176); Murphy & Tobin, 2011: 32-37; Banning, 1955: 36-47; Reich, Culross & Behrman, 2002 : 4-23; Julianelle & Foscarinis, 2003: 39-54). Some of the studies have discussed the experiences of teenagers in colonial times with emphasis on the manner the colonial establishment responded to the attitudes of these teenagers towards the new realities posed by colonialism. The use of the word "silent" in the title is used to suggest that their writings were not directly 'confrontational' and public-oriented as the petitions of the elite and advocacy groups were in the period. The tone of the letters written by the teenagers suggests that many of the youngsters wrote in such a way as to confide in the colonial officer. Hence, the 'silent' nature of such correspondence.

Fourchard (2005) and Heap (2010) have also presented the perspective of colonial institutional structures in the understanding of and response to the children's challenges. Fourchard examines the legal regimes which criminalised the unwanted activities of youths, underscoring the fact that the youths were labelled as criminals because the colonialists promoted 'approved' urban standards by which the immigrant or the indigene had to abide. Although Fourchard confesses that his analysis is based purely on the pieces of evidence provided by Nigerian newspaper reports and administrative reports – two sources that only reveal the perspective of adults (Fourchard, 2005: 116), his sources align with the perspective from which he argues his case, while noting that the socio-economic conditions which prevailed in Britain were replicated in Lagos. Simon Heap examines the experiences of these youths in the way they were perceived by the colonial establishment and the elite (Heap, 2010: 48-70). For Heap, the colonial establishment considered delinquency as a condition that must be reversed if the efforts at colonisation was to be successful. Hence, the need for home-like institutions (boys and girl hostels) that would fill gaps created by the separation of the children from their homes. Generally, the plight of the vulnerable has been one of the thematic preoccupations of scholars in different societies. In some societies that have been examined, they were hidden and unheard (Coates and Silburn, 1973) in others they were oppressed and suppressed (Fanon, 1963), in others they were enslaved (Lewinson, 1965). Their expressions often infuriated the whims and caprices of the status quo and endangered political superstructures across the ages.

### **Revisiting the 'silence'**

When youngsters are not 'endangering society' or 'posing as direct threat', some categories become silent, withdrawn and left to continually live their conditions 'outside' of the stereotypic nature (forceful, aggressive and volatile) of their identity. Thus, this article presents words of teenagers that, in themselves give clues as to the nature of colonial rule. Although the teenagers were trained in basic knowledge promoted by missionary schools, their aspirations were truncated by the conditions identified earlier. This article thus attempts to magnify their voice and thus present colonial Lagos and its institutions the way and manner these teenagers expressed it in words of their own. Hence, the desperation and determination with which

teenagers survived in Lagos between 1940 and 1950 was partly dependent on their willpower to contain internally suppressive variables of urban challenges that they had to contend with; silently, often unnoticed, except for the archival documentations that now bear witness to their tales of psychological trauma.

Socio-economic superstructures of colonial Lagos society had a direct bearing on the psychological development of the individual. Such occurrence has been attested to by recent studies (Turner & Lehning, 2006: 2). Particularly, some scholars have stated categorically that colonialism directly affected the psychological make-up of the individual in the period (Adeyemi, 2010: 28 – 29). This position is tenable given the uncoordinated responses of certain teenagers to unexpected exposure to economic hardship and the mischievous desperation of those in whom they placed their trust. This condition permeated the lives of teenage girls, as supported by the following narrative.

Rose Ojenughe was a teenager in Lagos in 1944. She had been ill and her mother, Madam Eleleji, brought her to Lagos where a woman named Alice Etovbodia convinced Rose's mother that rose should stay with her and go to hospital consistently for treatment (N.A.I., Comcol. 1, File No. 2844, Rose to Colony Welfare Office, Lagos, November 21, 1946). Before Rose's mother left Lagos, she paid one pound and a penny to the doctors and gave Rose two pounds and one penny for other expenses. From then on, Alice prevented Rose from visiting the hospital for treatment and rather forced her to do house chores (N.A.I., Comcol. 1, File No. 2844, Correspondence between Rose Ojenughe and Welfare Officer, Lagos). In 1945, Alice took Rose to Ikeja where Rose was told she would be better treated. At Ikeja, Rose was given out as a prostitute to a soldier who paid Alice 3 pounds. From then on, Rose lived with Alice as a prostitute making money that was kept and spent by Alice. After consistent appeal from Rose, Alice allowed Rose to visit the doctors who warned her not to approach any man for sexual intercourse (Ibid.). After being informed that European soldiers had arrived in Lagos and staying in Ikeja, Alice again forced Rose to leave with her to Ikeja. Rose refused, insisting she wanted to go back home, and that Alice should pay her money to leave. Alice refused and after much disagreement, Alice forced Rose inside a boat to go home. Rose returned to Alice insisting she be paid money and given clothes. Throughout her stay, Rose slept with several European soldiers, sometimes having intercourse with three men at a time (Ibid.).

Archival records did not provide answers to these questions: Did Rose's mother not visit Rose at least once after leaving her with Alice? Did Rose's mother get permission from the father before taking Rose to Lagos? Why did Rose's mother not conduct investigations into the character of Alice before leaving her daughter to stay with a stranger? Why did Rose's mother not allow Rose to stay with a family relation in Lagos? Records indicate that one Ben Esusu, a brother-in-law to Rose was living in Lagos at that time and reacted to Rose's situation after investigations by the colony welfare office discovered that he was a relative to Rose (Ibid.). Why did the doctors who were paid money by Rose's mother not inquire after Rose when they noticed Rose's absence at the hospital? Was Rose aware she had a relation in Lagos, while living with Alice? If she was, why did she not make efforts to lodge a complaint long before the matter got to a head? Was the family aware that Rose was brought to Lagos? Was Rose's 'mother' an agent of the sex trade? These questions remained unanswered even as investigations by the colonial welfare office revealed the complexity of the circumstances surrounding prostitution in Lagos at the time.

What is incontrovertible from Rose's case was the desperation of Alice to keep up with a socio-economic lifestyle which defied decency and ethical conduct and made a victim of Rose who became the victim of Alice's mischievous imaginations. The substance of this calamity was not solely engineered by Alice, but also through the conduct of Rose's father (whose role was silent in the records), her brother-in-law in Lagos, the medical doctors who attended to Rose and particularly Rose's mother. It calls to question the sanity of the society within which such psychological catastrophe flourished. It was within this same society that the subjects of this paper desperately sought answers to their livelihood challenges, yearning for the positive alternative and succour that they desperately believed was within the powers of the systems that governed it to provide. The following sections thus examined this perspective as held by the teenagers in the period.

Teenagers did not just conclude that things were difficult or that the social environment was threatening to their livelihood. Already, colonialism had (in significant cases) created social conditions that threatened indigenous family values and generated reasons for the establishment of welfare institutions and the enactment of ordinances to curb the effects

(George, 2014; Aderinto, (2012: 79-80). Additionally, many had begun to suffer neglect from immediate and extended relatives mainly because of family challenges. In Yisa's words:

Since the dead of my father, my senior brother refused to send me to my school. My mother responsible for my schooling. They are now in that case. Now I imagine that she was too tired. Because our senior brother has sent us from our father's house with my mother. So my mother rent a house for me and take my rest responsibility [Errors in the original] (N.A.I., Comcol. 1 File No. 2766 Vol. I Correspondence from Yisa Molake to the Commissioner for the Colony, Lagos, 26 July, 1944).

Added to this included the consistent absence or death of a bread winner, marital problems particularly divorce, inadequate parental care leading to delinquency, child trafficking and prostitution. While archival data proved that the foregoing was true, what was particularly revealing was the increasing trend of teenagers physically despising the financial incapacitation of parents: Kolade's words in 1949 resonate: "And the mother that I have is as poor as a church mouse" (N.A.I., Comcol. 1 File No. 27666 Vol. II Correspondence from Kolade Victor to Commissioner for the Colony, Lagos, November 30, 1949). Fourteen-year-old Grace Williams did not even mention her parents in her correspondence to the Welfare Officer in 1943:

Having learned from friends and local papers about your activities, I now put myself in your care and hope to achieve good result. I have all confidence in you as my earthly father and trust that you will not allow me to be an unfortunate girl when I am still small and wishes to pursue my education. You interview with me will convince you to arrange for my education as a father to a daughter. please sir, I beg you most respectful not to allow me to be a cast away. I want you to own me and feed me with the seeds of education. From the name of your office, I know that you are sympathetic, kind and good to those who deserve your care as I am one of them [Errors in the original] (NAI, Comcol. 1 File No. 2766, Vol. I, Correspondence from Grace Williams to the Welfare Officer, Lagos, October 25, 1943).

Many of the teenagers did not depend on the ability of the extended family to cater for their needs. This is more so because the performance of the extended family 'was determined'

by the level of dependency on it by supposed beneficiaries. As prospective beneficiaries themselves, the teenagers considered the performance of the extended family as less tenable and were attracted to the probability that the colonial government could directly lift them out of poverty. Consider the words of Layiwola Folawiyo in 1943:

I have made a constant effort to beg you possible to be the representative of my both parent in schooling me in the year 1944. What you have offered to do for me [without evidence of such commitment] is more than any man is expected to do for another. No one man can possible save me unless you, the man of great kindness. I have been hearing that you render as you can to those who riches and poor, as I am, therefore I was treacherously beg for the best assistance from you. Thanks [Errors in the original].” (N.A.I., Comcol. 1 File No. 2766 Vol. II, correspondence from Layiwola Folawiyo to the Commissioner for the Colony, Lagos, September 7, 1943).

Hence, they rated the establishment’s capacity more than that of the extended family. One of the deficiencies of the thought process of some teenagers in colonial Lagos was to ‘shift loyalty’ from the nuclear and extended family system to the colonial establishment which did not share the social sentiments and emotions that was the hallmark of the extended family. By communal standards, the colonial establishment was far from the teenagers and ill-equipped to play the role of the extended family in the lives of the children (Ogunremi & Adediran, 1998).<sup>5</sup>

What worsened matters, and not surprising, was the fact that hometown voluntary associations established in Lagos during the period had objectives which dealt with issues essentially devoid of teenage concerns. This is not surprising given the fact that the associations were established by the efforts of “men in their thirties who were relatively better educated... these men evolved overtime into local leaders who eventually became the power elite of the

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<sup>5</sup> In pre-colonial times, the traditional extended family system prevented a wide gap in the pre-colonial class structure. The closeness was sustained by the system through which those who were poor were effectively contained. It was an inbuilt welfare system that hindered widening poverty. Though some entered into debts, the debts were easier to pay through the non-monetary format. Colonialism however nurtured greater individual economic engagement rather than the household and communal economic engagement in pre-colonial period. New means of socio-economic integration emerged and the desire to gain access to such means became a goal for the individual. The result of this was emergence and proliferation of children and young adults who considered that greater opportunities abound in colonial urban Lagos. See the Ebi Theory of Akinjogbin in Deji Ogunremi and Biodun Adediraneds., *Culture and Society in Yorubaland*, Rex Charles Publications in Association with Connel Publications, 1998.



community that continues to wield influence” (Barkan, McNutty, Ayeni, 1991: 462 – 464). Of course, these associations’ objectives were to provide social welfare services, but the category of beneficiaries did not include children. These associations would have served to create a semblance of the response the children expected of the colonial establishment. The associations which tried to do so were the voluntary associations of boys and girls established by the elite of the Lagos colony to nurture the children towards urban transformation and orientation commensurate with ‘approved standards’. Hence such organisations as the Boys Scout, the Boys Brigade and the like surfaced to direct the course of this new urban orientation of youths (N.A.I., C.S.O. File No. 2600, *The West African Pilot*, Friday October 28, 1955).

Teenagers said so much in their written petitions, but what they did not say also stares at the researcher in the face. On 21 February 1943, Yisa Andu, a boy whose age is unknown wrote the word “Confidential” clearly on top of the letter he wrote to the Colony Welfare Office thus:

I am a boy in Eko Boys High School. I am in Class IV Middle. I am one of the cleverest boys in that class. The object of my writing you this letter is to ask you for a fatherly obligation. I want you to please help to send me to school for further study. I shall like to read up to class VI middle. My uncle who has been sending me to school all these years is no more able to help me further. I am prepared to accept whatever conditions your fatherly kind-heartedness will dictate to me. I promise faithfully that I shall D.V. pay every farthing you may expend on me whenever I begin to work. I shall also exert my utmost to repay your fatherly kindness with filial deeds. Awaiting your favourable reply [Errors in the original] (N.A.I., Comcol. 1 File No. 2766 Vol. 1 Correspondence from Yisa Andu to the Colony Welfare Officer, Lagos, February 21, 1943).

Thus, Yisa was also saying that ‘being a clever boy matters and that it is expected that a clever boy like me should attract the interest of an identified role model who should be able to care for me. Since I have been educated up to a point, it should be a relief for the potential benefactor to take pride in complementing my effort; particularly so because I possesses the potential to express gratitude for the expected benefaction. Hence, the willingness to help by the supposed benefactor would not be in vain and the benefactor should be a male figure who is capable of assisting’.



The implication of written and unwritten words of these teenagers is the relationship between correspondence and expectations i.e., their challenges as conceived and expressed by them are not as significant as the response they expected from the addressee; and this is the general pattern of the unstated objective of the communications. Significantly, a substantial number of teenagers subjected the attainment of personal objectives to education, so much so that they viewed the system from personal perspectives. In so doing, they 'assessed', as we shall see in their own words, their schools, the entrance examinations, their parents and the colonial government officials in the light of their [i.e., the schools, parents, officials, relatives] expected capacity to directly provide funds for them to complete their primary or secondary education or to engage in a vocation. Where any one of these role-modelling agents was not able to play its role, it was envisioned that the other 'should' be able to either assist or take over the responsibility entirely. Kamal Aro, a teenager who lived at 1, Alayaki Court, Freeman Street, Lagos wrote to the Commissioner in 1946:

My aim of writing this letter to you is about an important thing which is painning me in my mind. And I wish you to render it for me. I am introduced to you by one of my friends, if I put my trouble before you can take the trouble of curing it for me. That is to take the responsibilities of sending me to school or to put me into a job where I shall be learning. My mother died when I was a babe and my father when I was five years old. Because my father is poor, nobody cares for me. It was an old man in my area who sent me to school. When he died his children drove me out. Before he dies I had finished my course in elementary school. It is my friend who is feeding me and when he used any of his clothes and saw that it has torned he will give it to me. But I am not satisfy with that, for I want to go on my own ways. I want to attend school or to go to a business. I have my first school leaving certificate with me. When I write to any department it will not be appreciated. That is why I put it into writing that I must consult you first. I want you to try your possible best for me. May the Almighty God assists you in your work. I shall have more to say next time.

I am yours obedient.

Kamal Aro. [Errors in the original] (N.A.I., Comcol. 1, File No. 2766 Vol. 1, Correspondence from Kamal Aro and Commissioner of the Colony, Lagos, December 15, 1945).

This was also the opinion of those whose guardians became weary of providing funds for their education as was the case with Out Asuquo four years later:

I just enter Eko Boys High School this year 1949. I am in class 1 middle. My uncle who was helping me all the while is unable to do so again, and I am eager to learn more, but I am not financially supported. I shall be very pleased, as concerning my ambition if you will kindly support me financially to complete my secondary education in this high school in Lagos. I am ready to come to you if you wish at any time [Errors in the original] (N.A.I., Comcol. 1, File 2766, Vol. II, Letter 812, Out Asuquo to the Medical Department, Commissioner of the Colony, Lagos, October 20, 1949).

Particularly, the teenagers considered themselves fit for the employment market but ignorant of the policy that guided the theoretical assumptions of the colonial establishment on African labour and the attendant wage policy. The colonialists believed that the African was contented in the sense that he had little use for money and that any effort by the colonial establishment to encourage greater monetary rewards would result in diminishing returns in terms of the efforts the African puts in the job he is engaged (Weeks, 1971: 364). Though John Weeks considered that such assumption was racist, this paper contends that such assumption misunderstood the historical fact that pre-colonial society was less materialistic, and money was significantly a secondary motivating factor for individual endeavours.

However, teenagers in colonial Lagos readily absorbed the materialist bent of the new society without an understanding of the requirements for individual participation. Some teenagers like Nosiru Lawal petitioned the Commissioner for the colonies with an attitude that the Commissioner's Office probably considered as having a dose of effrontery:

.... It is not a fair thing for a youth like myself to be wandering about the street under this protected Region of the British. I am ready to do any work and when we are driven at times I sustain injury. I am tired of these Lagos troubles. Will your honourable please assist in the capacity of your honourable chair in getting

me a passport in order to travel to any part of Europe to learn a work which will indeed benefit me after becoming a man or will your honourable please play a reasonable effort for me in the Nigeria Government so that something tangible will be the result of humble petition [Errors in the original].

Three days later, the office of the Commissioner wrote on Nosiru's letter "No reply needed" (Ibid.). The teenagers did not fall within the 'target earning hypothesis' or the background sloping supply curve effort' assumptions on African labour by the colonialists as noted by Weeks (Weeks, 1971: 364).

In spite of this ignorance of the colonial wage policy, the children wrote often with similar convictions. G. A. Aina, another teenager wrote in 1949:

I am a poor and unfortunate boy who had been looking out for job for the past five years and no success. I was the one who came to you at Ikeja in 1944, whom you promised to recommend to RAF Oshodi... I could educate myself up to Government Class Two only, which is my present qualification. I have registered my name at the Labour Office since January 3, 1944, and unfortunately, I have not been called to any job since that time [Errors in the original] (N.A.I., Comcol. I, File 2766, Vol. II, Letter 807, G. A. Aina to Hon. W. A. Fowler, Acting Commissioner of the Colony, Lagos, May 3, 1949).

What was remarkable in the governance of Lagos during the period of this study was the manner in which the inhabitants petitioned the colonial office for one reason or the other. The welfare of teenagers in colonial Lagos was a matter of concern to the Colony Welfare Office which was established in 1941. Before then, correspondences of these adolescents had inundated the office of the commissioner for the colony requesting the office to alleviate their conditions particularly in the provision of employment so they could feed, pay their school fees and possibly secure accommodation. The contents of their correspondences revealed the belief by the teenagers that the office of the commissioner could alleviate the conditions of joblessness, ill-health, inability to complete standard school, and bereavement which they were experiencing. For the children, the office of the commissioner could take up their case. Elijah Olu wrote in 1950:

As you are the commissioner of the colony, I made up my mind to inform you this my note. Sir I feel it difficult to express how very deeply I regret the necessity which compels me to write you this my letter. I was in the school when my father died and in this case I have nobody who can help me more in my way to come to the point. And I have never study to any class which boy can work with it in this life. I have only study to std III.

I don't know the work which I can do with std III to bring my daily bread in my life. Now to eat food is so hard for me. Because of money. Sir I did not know what to doing in the case. Then I began think. In this think am think then I heard your opinion that you can help a poor boy like me, Sir I beg for your help kindly help me in this my difficult. Because I have nobody who I can go to help me after you.

I trust that you may help me as I have no father. Sir I waiting for your help sir.

I am yours obedient servant Elijah Olu. [Errors in the original] (N.A.I., Comcol. 1, File No. 2766 Vol. II, Letter written by Elijah Olu to the Commissioner for the Colony, January 16, 1950).

Some of the teenagers resorted to praising the person of the colony's Commissioner in the bid to arouse sentiments for their plight. Phillip Ogunyemi wrote in 1949:

My lord you are a my backbone, my lord and my saviour through whom i can be favoured and grow under his shade. Kindly relief my agony for me my lord by helping me to get work. I have knowledge of typing and office written, no obligation done is thrown away but the reward be in heaven. [Errors in the original]" (N.A.I., Comcol. I, File 2766, Vol. II, Letter 814, Phillip Ogunyemi to Commissioner for the Colony, Lagos, November 11, 1949).

Others considered leaving the Lagos Township with the support of the colony administration:

I have the honour most respectfully... to draft you this few lines which I hope you will reply me with your deepest and sympathetic consideration. On my honour, I beg to confess that my present condition is above expression. My left palm hand is cut off through fire accident which I have undertook in 1939. I have no father, no mother and am born alone. There is none to help me. I am now a sheep without

a shepherd. I try one way or the other to get work as soon as I have attended school up to standard five in St. Johns Central School Sabongida Ora, but no success due to no labour card and also no assistance. Now I humbly beg the commissioner to assist me as to get money to transport myself to my homeland. As soon as I am jobless and unable to feed myself, is better for me to go home than to be wandering in the Lagos township. I am a freeborn of Ora, very far from Lagos and will be pleased if this note is considered and approved.

I have the honour to be, Sir, your's obedient servant,

James A. Ogedengbe. [Errors in the original] (N.A.I., Comcol. 1, File No. 2766, Vol. II, Letter No 816, Correspondence between James A. Ogedengbe and Commissioner of the Colony, Lagos, November 17, 1949).

Obvious in the various correspondence of the teenagers was the tendency to reiterate their stories of hardship and difficult conditions to underscore their plight and raise the possibility of response from the commissioner. Obviously, the teenagers considered the logic behind the possible response from the commissioner's office: they were aware that the office would demand clarification as to the conditions responsible for their present state. These they identified as death of breadwinners, parental divorce, inability of guardians to provide further care, and such like.

In the event that the colony's commissioner and welfare offices delayed their response, the teenagers took alternative decisions to seek help elsewhere. This was the case with Samuel Anyaegbu, a teenager in 1946 and an orphan who on the death of parents strove to send himself to school up till standard six (N.A.I., Comcol. I, File No. 2766 Vol. I, See correspondence between Anyaegbu and Commissioner for the Colony, Lagos October 30, 1946). Samuel was assisted by a man who accommodated and fed him for a period. The man, whose name is not on record, later left Lagos on job transfer to the provinces. Without any income to pay school fees, Samuel sought the assistance of the colony commissioner. After his request, the commissioner's office conducted investigations and found out from the inmates at 26 McCarthy Street in Lagos that Samuel had left the house as a result of inability to pay house rent and the need to seek menial jobs to sustain himself (N.A.I., Comcol. I, File No. 2766 Vol. I, See a handwritten report at the Colony Welfare Office, Lagos, November 7, 1946).

## **Conclusion**

As verifiable above, we have seen how the intricacies of everyday life of teenagers reveal the extent to which the teenagers were 'silent and submissive' (in some cases, even confidential). Particularly, they reveal the extent to which these young minds had been indoctrinated in the new urban culture that reflected a restructured value system; but indicting of parental and the colonial system's capacities to truly respond to their needs. These teenagers were at different times timid, bold, sentimental, indecisive, hopeful but together desirous of a hopeful future within the challenges posed by a transitory society that was managed by an opportunistic system of governance. This development is indicative of the yearnings of the unheard and an indictment on the 'glorified' economic and political superstructures which today enjoy greater attention than the very lives they are meant to impact positively. In the final analysis, this paper has thus noticed that every governance system is appraised by vulnerable groups of society – an appraisal that is equally as important as the results of electioneering campaigns and other such 'sophisticated' contemporary nation-building factors; particularly so because in many advancing countries in Africa, information on the needs and yearnings of vulnerable groups are yet to be adequately utilised or given appropriate attention; if at all, they are treated as data - figures devoid of the humanitarian reality that they truly express.

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