SPEECH FOR
THE HURRIED CHILD PRESS CONFERENCE
AND DOCUMENTARY LAUNCH
19TH NOVEMBER, 2021

Opening/ Preamble

His Excellency, The Governor of Lagos State,
All Permanent Secretaries here present,
All Heads of Schools, Teachers, Parents, Caregivers, Students,
and Stakeholders here present
Ladies and Gentlemen;
Introduction

“It takes a village to raise a child” (African proverb)

“Haste and hurry can only bear children with many regrets along the way.”

(African proverb)

“The pikin wey you hurry today, if we no take time, go come back con worry you tomorrow”. (Iyahjogbo)

1. Chinua Achebe, of blessed memory in the book “Things Fall Apart” said: A man who calls his kinsmen to a feast does not do so to save them from starving. They all have food in their own homes. When we gather together in the moonlit village ground it is not because of the moon. Every man can see it in his own compound. We come together because it is good for kinsmen to do so.”

2. We are all gathered here today to hold ourselves accountable to the challenges facing the Nigerian child in the present day. Beyond our collective concerns is to revive our culture and habit of responsibilities towards our families, our nation, Nigeria, and Africa at large.

3. Strategically, today, the 19th of November marks the World Day for the Prevention of Child Abuse.

4. And this event is intentionally held on this day because there is a constant looming cancerous subliminal behavioral pandemic, an underlying basis for all forms of child abuse that is subtly permeating every homes and system in a manner that is adaptive irrespective of gender, class, race, ethnicity, religion, social strata, or socioeconomic status in the world. This
pandemic is called the “Hurried Child Syndrome”.

5. Four decades ago, Prof. David Elkind, a renowned child psychologist published a book titled “the Hurried Child” to express his concerns on how children of the middle class are being hurried in America. He made several attempts to showing parents and teachers where hurrying occurs and why.

6. Also, Elkind offered insight, advice, and hope for encouraging healthy development while protecting the joy and freedom of childhood with specific interest on western society.
Body

1. Today, we share with you, a compilation of our research, knowledge, experiences, encounters, and feedback from the African Community on issues relating to the hurried child syndrome.

2. For a common understanding of succeeding discussions, the “Hurried Child Syndrome” is a set of stress-related behaviours which occur when a child is expected by his parents or the society to perform well beyond his or her level of mental, social or emotional capabilities.

3. In other words, hurrying a child through early childhood years consequently leads to maladjustment, mental health challenges and psychosocial incompetence in a child as he or she grows through adolescence into adulthood.

4. A synopsis of our history as Africans reveals that the emergence of slavery and rise of the industrial revolution heavily impacted our social structures and family dynamics resulting in several maladaptive survival patterns, which consequently, are seen today as the new normal.

5. Consequently, the changing roles of parents: mothers becoming breadwinners and homemakers at the same time, the absence of fathers in child raising, the rise of single parenting, loss of the extended family system, child labour, cultural contamination, child marriages, unhealthy competition among parents and children, economic rush and pressures, addiction to speed and technology, the capitalist mindsets, to mention a few all contributed to the Hurried Child Syndrome.

6. Also, the emergence of technological revolution has intensified the degree of isolation and self-centeredness, thereby promoting the culture of individualism in the society.

7. Without doubt, many Nigerian children, especially adolescents and
youths are confused about who they are, and what the essence of life is as a result of the hurried child syndrome.

So, in practical terms, what do we mean when we say a child is being hurried?

• To hurry a child is to rush him/her through their developmental milestones
• To hurry a child is to present them with tasks and responsibilities that are inappropriate for their age and maturity
• To hurry a child is to deprive them of play and other unstructured activities of childhood
• To hurry a child is to expose them to information beyond their scope and capacities thereby clogging their creativity and critical thinking skills
• To hurry a child is to overload them with emotions that are unhealthy for their mental health
• To hurry a child is to create unhealthy competition between them and their peers
• To hurry a child is to deprive him or her the quality time needed from parents
• To hurry a child is to project your fears and inadequacies on them as parents or caregivers
• To hurry a child is to rush them through their education unconditionally
• To hurry a child is to neglect their social and emotional needs in their formative years
• To hurry a child is to present them with curriculum meant above their cognitive levels ... and it goes on and on
1. The present day society is engulfed with loads of negative news and toxic events because a parent, a teacher, a caregiver, a school, a community, a government or agents of globalization intentionally or otherwise decides to hurry their child(ren).

2. These events have snowballed into a new culture, a culture that hurries the child through life, with total disregard to the essence of culture itself, which is to let them grow in the way that they should!

Today, what is observed is:

- The culture of wanting it now, and getting it now (Get rich quick syndrome, get it at all cost, etc.)
- The culture of prematurely turning children into adults, and forcing them to grow up before their time, thereby throwing their undeveloped minds into stress and confusion
- The culture of forcing the under developed minds of children to bear burdens and responsibilities meant for adults
- The culture of child stardom, launching children into the gruesome and challenging world of celebrities with its attendant uncertainties, even before the child understands the meaning of money and fame
- The culture of heightened domestic roles and undue academic expectations on children
- The rise of single parenting and death of the African concept of extended family
- The intentional focus on the girl-child development while no one intentionally cares for the boys, the main reason why a lot of our male adults today are still boys when they should have matured into responsible men
- The culture that promotes unhealthy competing for economic and social status caused by the dearth of true civilization and identity crises
1. However, to be a competitive nation or continent, Africa needs a change. The change that Africa needs lies in the dreams and objective realities of the African Child, yet to be Born and those alive as we speak.

2. No matter how robust and attractive the policies or interventions of a government and institution may look, if the outcomes do not impact the African child positively, it is as good as a waste of time and resources.

3. This cry, and campaign against hurrying the African child is a seed that bears many fruits for the benefit of the child, the parents, the home, and the society at large.

4. If we can take a moment to reflect on lives, we will all agree that the potential impact of slowing down in this fast-paced world is of enormous benefits to the physical, biological, cognitive, emotional, social, spiritual and economic spheres of our existence.

5. Need I say here, that, slowing down the process does not imply retrogressing. It simply ensures that we maintain moderation and balance in the pursuit of the overall development of a child with the goal of recreating functional and resilient adults for our society.

6. Slowing down brings about personal reflection, adequate preparation, increased awareness of self and others, intentionality, attentiveness, non-toxic stress, control, efficacy, resilience, peace of mind and clarity of purpose.

From the slums to the streets, from the suburbs to the cities, from IDP camps to campuses,

- Every child, a day at a time, deserves a quality time in their formative years
- Every child deserves the opportunity to relive their childhood memories
• Every child deserves the opportunity to attain self-actualization
• Every child deserves life changing memories to rewrite the history of Africa

We must sincerely come to agree that, right direction is far more important than speed.

Why rush through the core phase of childhood when indeed, adulthood bears its own struggles: struggles that can be experientially managed if our childhood was solid.
Call to Action

1. At this juncture, we acknowledge the struggles and advocacies of various civil societies, corporate organizations (local and international), and non-corporate organizations in adding value to the overall development of the African child.

2. However, all past interventions have either attempted to offer palliative or remedial solution to this hydra headed problem without bringing to the limelight the fundamental significance of the hurried child syndrome as a universal driver of most issues affecting the lives of the African child.

3. **The bad news** is that We are all guilty of the issues as individuals or groups, and **The good news** is that there is a lot of room for redemption for every individual who has a duty to the African child.

4. We at “A Mother’s Love Initiative’ are taking a step further towards safeguarding the wellbeing and the future of the African child. Collectively, we must ensure that every family in Africa is AWARE and understands the implications of hurrying a child based on their local realities.

5. Beyond that is to provide information about knowledge, attitudes and practices that can reverse the hurried child syndrome in private and public spheres.

6. All these cannot be achieved alone and this brings us to the basis for this conference. We believe that a concerted effort by all stakeholders will not only relieve our fears about the problem, but also catalyze the interventions carried out at all levels.
Close

This is a clarion call to all and sundry to support a struggle, an agenda that will reposition the status of Nigerian Child, with its consequent positive outcomes on the families, schools, communities and Government of Lagos State, and indeed Nigeria; to a hopeful future.

In the spirit of heightened Self-awareness, Hope, Optimism, Resilience, and Efficacy, We official present to you the Hurried Child Project from An African Perspective.

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