

Malaria Blues 2021 (Posted on Facebook on October 22, 2021)

It happened again! On August 10, malaria came knocking. The day started on a normal level. I was filming lecturer [Timothy Kayode Ajiboye](#)'s class on how to construct a talking drum with a built-in wireless microphone at the Department of Music Technology, the Polytechnic Ibadan. Suddenly, my body “started doing anyhow.” Instead of using myself to understand myself, I adopted a common vernacular medical diagnosis—understanding oneself through the feelings of others.

Me: Busuyi, are you cold?

Busuyi: No, sir.

Me: Tolani, are you cold?

Tolani: No, sir.

“A ti ni problem/there is a problem,” I said to myself. But to be totally sure of what’s going on. I did a final check. I asked my inner self if I would like to eat amala. The answer was capital NO. Right there, I knew the day must end at the hospital. A visit to the Military Hospital, two injections, and some oral medications ended Malaria Blues 2021.

I tried my best to avoid falling sick in Nigeria. Two months before my trip, I asked my uncle, Booda Dauda, a Canada-based pharmacist to suggest the most effective malaria prophylaxis on the market. I then asked my American doctor to prescribe it. I took my anti-malaria medication before and during the trip.

Why did I get malaria despite taking precaution? Answers: infrastructural decay, the nature of my research, and the living condition in Nigeria. Sharing traffic congestion with Dangote trailers is enough to activate dormant malaria bacteria in human body. I once had an appointment to interview Fuji artist Adewale Ayuba at Lekki in the south-eastern end of Lagos. To avoid the traffic on Lagos third mainland bridge, we drove from Ibadan through Shagamu, Ijebu Ode, Epe, and arrived in Lekki, only to receive a notification of cancellation of interview. We then drove back in heavy traffic. 10 hours on Nigerian roads is enough to give malaria.

In another case, because of unmotorable road, we carried recording equipment, weighting about 50 pounds, on okada when we went to Tunde Kelani’s house in Abeokuta to interview Muritala Sule, a veteran broadcaster, novelist, and creator of Lagbo Video, a TV personality show that featured artists in the 1990s. The road to the Abeokuta train station is among the worst in Nigeria. The cab drivers’ guild refused to allow Bolt and Uber in Abeokuta. Scarcity of taxi in the GRA area of the city where we went to film Sefiu Adegunle’s performance, compelled us to carry heavy equipment on okada to the train station--against the tide of the dangerous terrain. May Nigeria not happen to us.

Similarly, if we didn’t take three tricycles from Kollington’s house in Alagbado to Agege, we would have missed our train. The distance is just 8 miles, but it would take over 2 hours in a taxi or private vehicle because of traffic. The stress was so much that Tolani and Busuyi got into an argument over the best way to carry equipment across the old railway track in Agege, now converted into makeshift homes—Tinubuville-Fasholaville-Ambodeville-Sanwo-Oluville—to draw a difficult parallel with similar forms of economic hardship in Great Depression America. Instead of intervening, my demons commanded me to record them as I also struggled to walk with heavy loads hanging on my shoulders and back.

Our trouble didn't end there. Train ticket was oversold, so we "took standing" on Buhari's new train. Passing the night in Lagos wasn't a good idea. There is no official and safe parking space at the Buhari-Chinese-Amaechi-Ibadan train station. We must return to Ibadan that day if we want to meet our car, parked at a makeshift garage near the train station, in peace, not in pieces. Our car wasn't "parked at owner's risk," but at its own risk! The descendants of Ibadan thieves of the 19th century are everywhere in the city.

In short, I would blame Malaria Blues 2021 on infrastructure deficiency, not on mosquitoes and prophylaxis. Nigerian mosquitoes, like the Buhari government, are on the Next Level of Destruction. I don't think scientific research on malaria can match the transformation of Nigeria's pathogenic environment, which has worsened due to infrastructural failure. Unfortunately, Nigeria has made more advancement in sex medicines (aphrodisiacs) than in malaria cure. If our entrepreneurs commit the energy they put in finding the best agbo jedi on malaria research, we would have discovered homemade vaccines by now. The new turn in Nigeria's sexual economy suggests that sex, procreative or recreational, is the only thing people don't need Buhari's government to enjoy.

Yours Sincerely in Fuji:  
Emperor Saedo Okola and His International Fuji Lions