

Waka Waka! (Posted on Facebook on October 14, 2023)

I'm in Washington DC for the weekend to attend the first committee meeting of the 2025 American Historical Association Conference. Between today and December 2, I will be traveling to give lectures and attend academic events in Washington DC, Milwaukee, Charlotte, San Francisco, Dakar (Senegal), and Johannesburg (South Africa). It's going to be a pleasurable pain, especially the South African trip. While business travels add to the burden of work, they could also be their enhancer.

Being able to get away from a set of rhythmic tasks for a while could be the answer to fluctuating energy, undulating focus, and saturated ideas. The BINGO effect, which suddenly redirects thinking in innovative ways, doesn't always happen while staying on the grind, but off it. Letting things cool off or breathe while working on other things could produce the desired outcome rather than speeding through them, and thinking that the more time committed, the quicker the outcome.

For me, productivity is not about how much time I spend on a particular task, but how consistent I am at it. I prefer to put 30 minutes, each, on a dozen tasks, daily, and stay on them consistently over time until I get them done—than spend five hours on something today and not be able to return to it after several days, weeks, or months later.

Making transitions within a dozen different tasks—from teaching, to grading student papers, to writing letters of recommendation, to mentoring, to doing LSA, to assessing manuscripts for publication, to attending meetings and doing committee works, to working on the Fuji book and documentary projects, to Zoom meetings, to speaking on phone or texting, etc., is not as strenuous as they should be because they are done in pieces not in chunks.

During heavy travel schedules, like the one I would have for the next six weeks, these rhythms are naturally altered for good. I have composed some of my best letters of recommendation in the discomforts of the economy cabin of airplanes. The urgency associated with sleeping in different hotel rooms and catching planes may just be the push to help a colleague read a manuscript for publication. Being invited to talk about one's book, all expenses paid, in addition to an honorarium, is a good motivation to complete the next! The amount of troubleshooting that happens during a busy itinerary is one reason that I won't complain about a 15-hour flight to Johannesburg!

The family wants me away for a good reason. I'm the problem of our house. I hate spending money, especially on direct consumables and perishables, or anything that doesn't give me returns. My most expensive shoe—the one I wore to the Dan David Prize Ceremony in May—is \$37.50 (including tax). In strict economic principles, what I wear cannot be more valuable than my budget for commercial amala in Ibadan in any given summer.

My tendency to measure the value of perishable consumption in strictly amala terms has its own history. I suffer from what I have self-diagnosed as PGSPS (Post Graduate School Poverty Syndrome). Because we raised a family of 4 with \$1,200 (monthly) while I was in graduate school between 2005 and 2010, the ghost of the poverty of the past is still haunting me—even 13 years after leaving the poverty bracket. SAPA na bastard!

While I'm away, the kids don't have to worry about a father yelling while counting the new shoe boxes they brought in from the mall. Olamide doesn't have to listen to another useless and selfish sermon, from me, on why she doesn't need another red shoe.

Yours Sincerely in History,

Ìşòlá Alákọlà