THE WINNING ESSAY

Susan Olusan

VACLAV HAVEL: HIS LEGACY AND THE NIGERIAN REALITY

True heroes have been ultimately scarce since the beginning of time. To be seen as such a hero, one needs to stand out from the rest, with love for humanity in his or her heart, and do things a little different from everyone else with the purpose of making a positive change in the world. Starting from him.

A passion-driven man who has earned his place on the list of the true heroes is Vaclav Havel. He was born on the 5th of October 1936 to a reputable architect and the daughter of a well-known writer, clearly this family is far cry from poor. He was born in Prague in Czech in the heart of Europe. Some 12 years later, in 1948, a group of communists arrived and took over the region. Havel´s father was not ready to give in to these people. As a result, he was imprisoned. Havel´s family had to flee from Prague due to banishment.

Havel had a tough time getting a good education but managed to scale through secondary school. Another battle was enrolling in a post-secondary school but still, he finished successfully unfortunately without a humanities programme. He then progressed to study Economies in Czech Technical University but dropped out 2 years later. He proceeded to serve in the military from 1957-1959. Later in 1959 he left the army and got a job in a Prague theatrical company and soon enough began his collaboration with Ivan Vyskočil in writing plays. He wrote his first personal play in 1963 titled “The Garden Party”. His second, “The Memorandum” was a bigger hit as it found its way to New York which made him get some recognition in the United States of America.

When Havel returned to Prague, the Soviet Union invaded in 1968. This triggered Havel as he was disappointed with the excessive boundaries placed on his people. He then founded Charter 77 and VONS for the purpose of battling acts of injustice. It definitely wouldn’t be breaking news that Havel had gained a spot on the black list of the communists. This led to his imprisonment for almost 5 years.

Sooner or later, the people could not take it anymore and sprang up and began a protest against the government. This led up to what is called the “Velvet revolution”.

Havel became the president of Czechoslovakia on the 29th of December 1989 and ruled with love in his pure heart. Over time, the idea of a division of region was raised which Havel was not so supportive of. The division eventually took place giving rise to two new regions, Czech Republic and Slovakia. Before this happened, Havel stepped down from the position of President. However, the people loved the Havel´s ruler ship and decided to make him the first President of Czech Republic.

When his tenure was over, Havel could not run for President for a third time so he put politics behind him and took up his writing once again. He and his country later joined the European Union and remained there until his eventual death in 2011. Havel´s time in European Union was a productive one as he used his position to pursue human rights.

In Nigeria today, series of events that has been occurring for decades led to eventual aggravation of the citizens to bring an end to corrupt practices and have real change in the country. For decade, Nigeria has suffered in the hands of “communists”, figuratively speaking, who are actually the leaders. Although, some leaders stood out among the rest for a better country, others have almost completely put their efforts to waste. Currently, the nation is in a state of anger and is fed up with these things. Some have taken to the streets of the country to cry out to the government for a tangible change similar to the actions of the citizens of Czechoslovakia. What is to be remembered at all times is the outstanding act of integrity displayed by Vaclav Havel. He stood for what was right despite opposition with nothing but love in his heart.

As a country, we must strive to make a difference individually with love for people in our heart. Always keep in mind that if we wait for one person to stand up, everyone will remain seated, still waiting. Fight, not with fist, but a powerful mindset of peace, joy, justice and love and we will be definitely dumbfounded by the amazing result!