

BLACK SOOT HAS TAKEN OVER OUR ENVIRONMENT

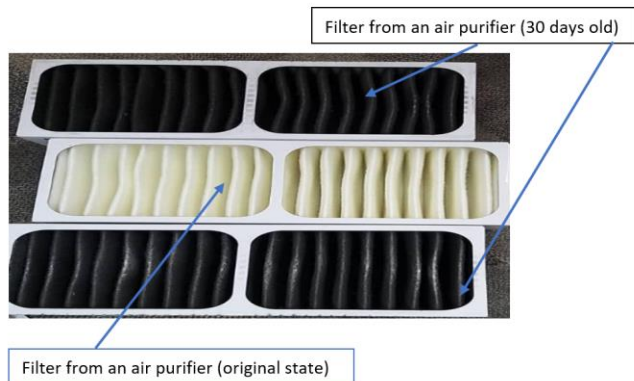
About 3 or 4 years ago, I realized that each time I walk around bare footed in my house I end up having my bath several times in a day as a result of the my blackness of my feet. It got even worse as my daughter plays in the house, same situation was experienced. I told my wife that the lady we employed to clean the house is not efficient: She probably may be playing games with us in our absence instead of carrying out her duties diligently. Stop accusing Jane falsely, I inspect her work, she cleans the house 3 times a day because of the continuous blackness of the floor! "my wife exclaimed". I still don't understand where she was coming from.... "We pay her above the stipulated minimum wage in Nigeria, we went further to pay her children's school fees. I don't know why she will not deliver on her assigned tasks". I mused in my mind while driving out to my cousins place. It was a public holiday, a perfect time to visit loves ones and have some memorable childhood discussions - Topics that are so different from work and other mind-numbing issues.

With full excitement and a welcoming smile, Godwin opened his entrance door for me. I realized that he had some guests but I greeted all of them and took my seat not knowing that there has been an ongoing debate concerning the environmental issues in Port Harcourt Nigeria (also known as the Garden City). Interestingly, the eight guests in my cousins house were sharing stories related to my house experience. It was still not clear to me until I got to work the following day, climbing the staircase, only to notice that my hands have been stained with black paint: just like a child playing with charcoal. This problem became apparently clear to me as several colleagues living in different parts of the state took turns to share their pains from this trending environmental issues. Several narratives from colleagues explained it better.

We have a big problem that has engulfed the state: The environmental black soot (carbon blacks) caused by indiscriminate burning of hydrocarbon - Crude oil from many illegal and local refineries by illegal "bunkerers", use of vehicle tyres in abattoirs and gas flares from oil flow stations. The air in Port Harcourt environment has been polluted and people in authority gave deaf ears to the cries and wailings of its citizens. Three years down the line the ugly situation still persists.

However, air purifiers dealers became the envy of all as this has created a thriving business for them. Just few months ago, following the installation of over 500 air purifiers in my work place, I was inclined in doing same. This temporary solution to sanitize ones immediate environment has become the order of the day for those that can afford it. "Seems that only the well to do" can protect their families from the side effects of the daily black soot dosage that people have been forced to inhale. But how efficient can the air purifiers be?

The picture below is from the filter of an air purifier installed less than 30 days ago.



Within 30 days the filter became black indicating what people have been inhaling. One cannot imagine the heart conditions of thousands of people that live in Port Harcourt. Health issues like lung cancer, respiratory diseases and cardiovascular dysfunctions have been on the increase within the population of the so called Garden city. Again, this ugly situation has persisted for over three years and we are still waiting on the authorities to step in and save our lives. I am still pondering on the right thing to do. "Should my family and I relocate from Port Harcourt"?