

The
Journal
...reason, truth and equity

AUG 9 -16 2020

CORRUPTION IN NIGERIAN: PROFILE
OF A POLITICAL ECONOMY

IPPIS: DOES ASUU HAVE
SOMETHING TO HIDE ?

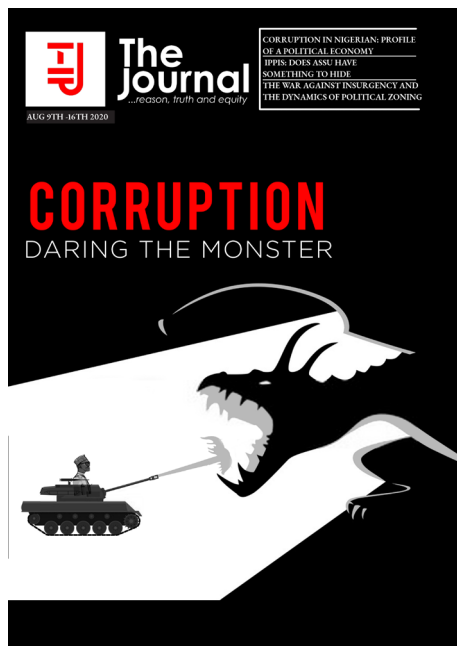
THE WAR AGAINST INSURGENCY AND
THE DYNAMICS OF POLITICAL ZONING

CORRUPTION

DARING THE MONSTER



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STORIES AROUND THE GLOBE

NIGERIA

GOVERNMENT MOVES TO ACTION AS STRANDED NIGERIAN STUDENTS IN SAUDI ARABIA CRY OUT



Video of Stranded Nigerian students studying in Saudi Arabia has gone viral. The students accused the Nigerian embassy and consulate office of impeding their evacuation plan. Nigeria seem to have left her scholarship students behind during the pandemic. It was revealed that, students from about 150 countries have travelled to their respective countries.

It was later discovered that Saudi Airline had prepared six trips for the Nigerian students to travel home for holiday, but the Nigerian embassy would not consent to the request made for landing permit due to their self-interest. The embassy has, however, refuted the allegation, claiming it to be false.

Mustapha Lawal, Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has assured Nigerians of the government's commitment in tackling the issue at hand and that it will

be resolved soon.

PRESIDENCY REFUTES THE ON-GOING CLAIM OF ABSORBING EX-BOKO HARAM FIGHTERS INTO MILITARY

Mallam Garba Shehu, Senior Special Assistant to the president on media and publicity, made a clarification on the false news going around as regards the plan of the Presidency to absorb repentant Boko-Haram fighters into the military.

He further said that the rehabilitation and conversion of violent fanatics is a borrowed practice from other countries with similar experiences. He said that this was adopted into the Nigerian system to achieve good and positive result. He said this decision already earned the support of the European Union and United Nations academically and materially.

NLC AND NECA IN COLLABORATION TO PROTECT WORKERS RIGHTS

NLC and NECA joined forces to protect workers' rights with respect to job security, rights at work, social protection, occupational health and safety for workers amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

The signed memorandum of understanding (MoU) is to aid the social partners

to evaluate the effect of COVID-19 on workers and also to promote the health of Nigerians, their job security and to give a sense of living to millions of Nigerians.

Emmanuel Ugbofa, Secretary-General of Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), affirmed the positive results recorded from its collaboration with Nigerian Employers' Consultative Association (NECA).

FEDERAL HOUSING AUTHORITY GETS A NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - ABDULMUMIN JIBRIN

Salihu Yakasi, media aide to Abdullahi Ganduje, the Governor of Kano State, unveiled the appointment of the new Executive Director of the Federal Housing Authority via a tweet recently. Abdulmumin Jibrin, former Kano lawmaker, got appointed by President Muhammadu Buhari as the new Executive Director of the Federal Housing Authority in charge of Commercial, Corporate and Social Housing.

AIRPORT PROJECT TO BE COMPLETED IN 2022 - EBONYI GOVT.

Governor David Umahi disclosed the plan of his government to complete the Ebonyi Airport project come 2022 regardless of the financial unpredictability permeating the world as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The governor unveiled the size of the airport to be two and half the size of the State's International Shopping Mall, with the tartan track to be 100 meters in width, with 10 lines by 4km and is said to be five times the work on road projects. The result of the work on the tarmac will have an impact and traction on the special design.

E-LEARNING DEVICE DONATED TO SOUTHWEST PUPILS

The Ibironke Adeagbo Foundation donated 55 samples of learning devices to the Development Agenda for Western Nigeria (DAWN) Commission, DAWN. The devices were meant for pupils in Southwest States of Oyo, Ondo, and Osun. This to bring about the continuation of learning for pupils amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Ibironke Adeagbo said that this is in fulfillment of the foundation's goal which is geared towards the production of the device for improved learning to cater to

the myriad of challenges in Nigeria.

Adeagbo said, 'We know that the future of education will be digital, but that future suddenly arrived with the outbreak of the coronavirus...' He believes digital learning would continue after the lockdown because the digital world is where the future is.'

GOVERNMENT'S QUEST TO FINDING VACCINE FOR NIGERIANS

Vice-President Yemi Osinbajo recently unveiled the plan of the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari in the quest to finding a vaccine for coronavirus for Nigerians and also made known the virtual meeting with the BUT162 representatives as regards progress in the development of the vaccine in Africa and the rest of the world.

The meeting scheduled with Pfizer Biotech International Pharmacy firms was borne out of a dire need of a vaccine and find a cure to COVID-19.

LAGOS LAND USE CHARGE RATE REVIEWED

Rabiu Olowe, Commissioner for Finance said that the reversal in the Land Use charge law of 2020, and the reduction of the annual charge for agricultural land from 0.076 to 0.01 per cent

would reduce the people's financial burdens. He said that The Land Use charge is to be reversed to what it was before 2018 and also penalty for defaulters between 2017 and 2019 should be waved.

The reviewed Land Use charge law also exempts property of pensioners, including public and private retirees or persons who have attained the age of 60 and are not active in any profit-making business from Land Use charge, whereas, profit-making cemeteries and burial grounds and private libraries are not exempted from the Land Use charge.

The government also re-introduced 15 per cent and 10 percent COVID-19 incentive,

N59.7M APPROVED FOR AMOTEKUN TAKE-OFF

The State Security Network popularly known as 'Operation Amotekun' takes-off as the Oyo State government approved the sum N59.7 million for the purchase of uniforms, lanyard, combats boots, baseball hats, security belts, logo, etc., for easy identification of personnel of the agency.

DMO DG, AMAECHI, AHMED AND OTHER GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS SUMMONED OVER LENDING FROM CHINA

Zainab Ahmed, Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, Isa Pantami, Minister of Communication and Digital Economy were called upon by lawmakers of the House of Representatives over loans taken by Nigeria from China.

The committee appointed to investigate Nigeria's borrowings is of the opinion that the agreement signed by Nigeria with China might put Nigeria under the duress of conceding its sovereignty to the Asian country.

It was made known that more top government officials had been summoned by the panel as the loan was no limited to the Ministry of Transport alone.

700 ACCOUNTS OPERATED BY GOMBE STATE OFFICIALS UNDER THE EX-GOVERNMENT COMMISSIONER

Zubair Umar, State's Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice revealed the 700 accounts operated in the name of Gombe State Government by

ministries and agencies in the previous administration.

Majority of the revenue operated in the name of Gombe State Government didn't reflect in the government's account. The State Government decided to merge all accounts into one for close monitoring and public accountability.

AFRICA

EGYPT AND SUDAN SUSPEND TALK WITH ETHIOPIA OVER DAM



Egypt pulled out of talks with Ethiopia and Sudan on the controversial \$4 billion dam on the Blue Nile. It is a growing disagreement with Ethiopia over access to water. Egypt and Sudan are afraid of conceding to the proposal put forward by Ethiopia. They are worried over the structure's safety. Both nations have requested a suspension in their talks with Ethiopia for further internal consultations.

However, despite Egypt's resistance to the filling of the dam without a legal agreement

on how it will be managed, the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) is still holding back water. The satellite picture of the dam shows that the dam will be the largest hydro-electric plant in Africa and is seen as been crucial for economic development.

POACHER SENTENCED TO PRISON AFTER KILLING A SILVERBACK GORILLA IN UGANDA

A poacher confessed to killing a silverback gorilla in self-defense in Uganda. The 25-year-old Silverback gorilla by the name Rafiki was the leader of a group known as Nkuringo troop, a dominant male in a family of 17 mountain gorillas, was said to have been missing on June 1 and his body found the next day at the Bwindi National Park in Uganda.

THE REST OF THE WORLD

CHINA SENTENCED A CANADIAN TO DEATH OVER DRUG CHARGES

Xu Weihong, a Canadian, was sentenced by a Chinese court for manufacturing ketamine drug. The drug which has become a popular recreational drug, was said to be a powerful tranquiliser for animals.

In 2019, Robert Llyod Schellenberg and Fan Wei were likewise sentenced to death over producing, smuggling and trafficking Methamphetamine. Wenbin Wang, a spokesperson for China's Ministry of Foreign Affairsaid, 'China applies the death sentence with strict control,' and 'keeping the death sentence will deter serious criminals.'

COVID

TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS FROM CORONAVIRUS



**Wash your hands
very often**



**When coughing or sneezing,
cover your mouth and nose
with your arm**



**Dispose of any tissues
you have used**



**IF YOU ARE SICK
Wear a face mask**



For further information
[GOUVERNEMENT.FR/INFO-CORONAVIRUS](https://gouvernement.fr/info-coronavirus)
0 800 130 000

THE PURSUIT OF REASON, TRUTH AND EQUITY



Welcome to the inaugural edition of The Journal! This publication emerges, and strategically so, at a time when nations and societies are submerged in an overabundance of seeming unavoidable distractions, disruptions and interruptions of diverse shades and colours. Yes, colours indeed! With many sociopolitical developments emerging and playing out almost at the same time, the reality remains that of a defining uncertainty at best. We are therefore often compelled to ask what exactly the colour of truth is. What are the times saying and who is taking account of such significant events that enable society to properly understand itself, and to gauge the performance of authorities and the conscience of an emergent sometimes over-suspicious and sometimes unsuspecting public?

At times like these, it becomes increasingly baffling that everything from religion to technology, sports and the economy now, more than ever, assumes the colouration of politics in the hands and minds of those who ‘play the game.’ Indeed, these are interesting times when reality tends to endlessly oscillates between truth and untruth, and more agonizingly, between hazy facts and surplus fiction well encapsulated and vaguely nuanced in the heart and soul of national discourses.

Already, Nigeria as a national space has, over a long historical time, come to present a titanic yet fascinating context, which is at once interesting to both the insiders

and the keenly conscious outsiders who ‘scout’ for social, political, economic and sometimes religious lacunae within the national discourse, which they consider uniquely stimulating. Certainly, while all of these contesting, often conflicting, and sometimes complementary realities play on as in an exaggerated big screen in the eye of the watching world, the local lookers-on and the active political and economic players, there appears to be a noticeable existence of a certain absence. The absence of an objective ombudsman who sees the emergent and unfolding events just as they are and applies the cutlery of critical and analytic judgement in dissecting same, with less or no bias at all.

It is therefore in this very sense and wide context that The Journal is, in many serious ways than just a few, to be welcomed and appreciated as the distinctive voice of the times, the epitome of sound journalistic judgement offering unique views and reviews of social knowledge production that tends to overwhelm many actors in the trenches of media and journalism. On a daily, indeed moment-to-moment basis, many news outlets and media houses –government-owned or independent –are now, more than ever confronted with the demands of critical judgement as news-worthy stories flood the social and political landscapes almost by the minute. While many media outlets consider the exigency of ‘breaking news’ as paramount, there yet remains a significant gap to be closed where balance, objectivity, and realism are concerned, albeit without losing grasp of the need for the positive, pleasant and inspiring sides of many narratives.

As The Journal, our vision encompasses but is not restricted to sheer weekly releases of printable items of news and current affairs in the Nigerian, African and global polity; nor are our objectives constrained by a seeming jousting in the marketplace of news business. We do seek to become the most reliable, first-choice Pan-Nigerian information and public knowledge platform. Ours is an outlet which will privilege a promptness of information germane and applicable to the very contexts in which they are already gaining currency

in the meantime. With our team of dedicated writers, editors, researchers, and contributors, we hope to be the big player in the brokerage of not only news-worthy updates, but of the much that is likely to be considered as timely reportage and 'knowledge items' applicable on account of their ease of consumption. The Journal is thus no mere 'newcomer tabloid' in the news market for these very reasons.

Pertinent to our vision, therefore, is social engineering and reengineering made possible through our definitive offering of news reports and analyses, feature stories, and opinions from perspectives favoured to enrich the general polity, and through the brilliance we show in establishing clear positions in the midst of issues considered subjective enough to create social and political divides. This fact, being one of our journalistic strengths, holds the propensity to prime our present and prospective readers and audience for more critical and beneficial social engagements, armed with ideas garnered through our valued contents.

The Journal represents, at these important historical times, a true celebration of the Nigerian spirit through a journalism of conscience and goodwill. In spite of the unpredictable vagaries and uncertainties of the times in the midst of which opportunists of all sorts take undue advantage of citizens and netizens, The Journal stands as a beacon to the sublime virtues of our humanity. The idea of our platform is a timeous response to the abiding gaps and gullies in modern journalism and reportage often characterised by a vacillation between fiction and falsehood of the one hand and truth and fact on the other.

While our brand yet exists and our will to maintain and defend enterprise, good governance and social fairness subsists, we shall not relent from our mandate and task of filling the existing huge gaps by covering stories with an objective stance hinged on the tripod of reason, truth and equity. The sustainability of this objective will rest hugely on our core values of truth, objectivity, integrity, analytical reasoning, and constructive criticism, made possible through empirical research, rigorous enquiry and hardcore professionalism.

Where the mainstream reportage becomes defined by an

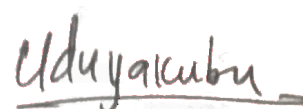
overarching mood of gloom, we will do our best to spot missed or ignored positive elements that provide not only an alternative view, but also the glimmer of hope that society needs.

The Journal shall embody the elevating and transformational ethos of the media. It will seek at all times to mend the growing gap of misinformation and disinformation in the 21st century media; provide objective and comprehensive analyses of current news and stories of interest; stimulate critical and constructive debates and intellectual discourses; offer deep insights on national and international issues and development; explore national and international socio-political and economic trends; promote the good and the beautiful; and denounce the bad and ugly.

In living up to our own bidding, this maiden edition offers a distinguished array of coverage from current news reports to commentaries, feature and opinion writings. In 'balancing the act,' we have sourced from contributors whose fortes and tastes cut across interests and fields such as healthcare, travel, politics, economics and entertainment. These are areas within our scope of interest, which equally include media, finance, business and markets, arts, culture and lifestyle, education, science and technology and international affairs.

These, we are persuaded, will serve to create a balancing effect both in the nature of our content assemblage and indeed in mediating the tendency towards tensions that often get the polity livid. While we live up our readers with the information-pellet of this first offering, we are of the utmost confidence and optimism that this inaugural outing will be a historic take-off for a transformational trajectory in the positive purveyance of news.

Welcome!



Dr Udu Yakubu

CORRUPTION DARING THE MONSTER

Corruption is no longer a series of isolated cases exposed by the Nigerian media. It is culture fostered by years of misrule and mismanagement, trickling into every faucet of the Nigerian life. Corruption is best described as a hydra-headed monster that has become buoyant because of the lack of fairness and justice which bolsters greed. The multiplier effect of the lack of punishment for crime are replete in the interconnectedness of the industries and ethnic nationalities of Nigeria.

Judge Tsoho John, Acting Chief Judge of the Federal High Court, has admitted in a statement that he is not surprised that there is corruption in the judiciary because the Judiciary mirrors the society. This position is faulty because the Judiciary is meant to be the last bastion of hope in society. It is the Judges who should help vindicate lawful Nigerians instead of collaborating with legal luminaries who help to stretch cases into points of no return. Femi Falana's position on the need for the media and civil society to engage corruption is a step in the right direction. Nevertheless, it portends some dangers. The media whose tireless work of presenting facts, engaging the Nigerian people on recent happenings, politics and governance, have also swerved into corruption. It is no longer news that journalists have played a major role in derailing discourse and positioning ideas based on the exchange of message for brown envelopes.

This makes the highly underfunded institution of governance to be incapable of leading Nigeria out of the quagmire. In fact, in a Carnegie Development for Peace article, Micheal Page asserts that 'Brown envelope journalism and other types of media corruption are commonly practised and undermine democratic norms.' This is the same situation with every aspect of the Nigerian life where the Naira must change hands in surreptitious manners for rights, privileges to be short-changed and justice subverted. The Nigerian Police is part of the apparatus of Justice that has been smeared with stories of unethical highhandedness, extortion, and brutality which go against all the statutes that establish law and order in the country. However, we cannot lay all the blame on the policeman on the street. The policeman on the street has often been reported to make huge returns to corrupt superiors.

For many, the civil society has helped immensely in the fight to secure and maintain the nascent democracy in Nigeria. Civil society groups are also immensely exposed to best operational practices and management skills. However, it has been revealed that the civil society groups have also fallen short of expectations as the third sector of governance, and as a force in shaping culture.

Jide Ojo, a civil society consultant, wrote an article in the media which concluded with the fact that many respected civil service personalities have been besmirched by corrupt practices such as doctoring accounts from grantors. In other references, the Civil Society has been employed to present untrue pictures for the gain of certain parties.

This unending tale of corruption cannot be full and convincing without exploring briefly the corruption in the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation. This cesspool of corruption oils the entire mechanism of governance. So, stories like the secret implementation of subsidy, the diversion of 378 billion NLNG dividend, the failure of due process in the acquisition of bids and contracts are replete. The fact that the NNPC, is a business of government and is a regulatory body, is not only contradictory in a country that peddles privatisation but it is ultimately contradictory for a firm to be in competition and yet be the regulator, leading to a leverage of opportunism and sleaze. Recently, the NNPC was named as one of the government agencies who are unable to account for the government allocations approved to them between 2014-2018.

It is therefore not surprising that the saga of the Niger Delta Development Commission is at our national doorsteps. Our shock is only the fact that despite the clamour for the development of the Niger Delta by its intellectuals, elders, and community members, this opportunity given, through the vehicles of the agency has been misplaced and diverted to untracked pockets through bloated contracts, ghost employments, juicy allowances, among other acts. The NNDC saga may soon be archived in our habitual and systemic forgetfulness and self-denial when a far overbearing saga of corruption is revealed in the public space by the national assembly or the media. Nigerians have reduced the saga to memes and troupes of fascination out of the inherent powerlessness.

Nevertheless, there is a light at the end of the tunnel. The Buhari government is doing all it can to fight the dreaded and established monster called corruption. It cannot be done in four years even if all energies are exerted to overpower it. The exposure of corruption within the Buhari government is a trustworthy declaration that the government admits that it is purging the scourge from within, making unequivocal signifiers to those who are not within government circles that no one will be spared in the fight against corruption. How much Buhari can do will be dependent on the collaboration of all well-meaning Nigerians to lead honest lives irrespective of the faulty reward system.

URGENT REFORM FOR THE EFCC

In the preface to his magisterial book on the origin of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC, titled *A Paradise for Maggots*, Professor Wale Adebaniwi recounts an incident that occurred in Berkeley, California, on Friday, April 3, 2009. The author had accompanied Nuhu Ribadu to the screening of a 55-minute documentary on bribery in the weapon procurement deals between Britain and Saudi Arabia. Sometime into the screening, Mr. Ribadu said to the author that Nigeria would be mentioned before the end of the documentary. Indeed, some sixteen minutes to the end of the documentary, Nigeria was mentioned. The largest punitive award up till that time was in the Halliburton case, a case in which Nigerian officials and personages were bribed to the tune of \$182 million dollars in order to secure a \$6 billion dollar LNG plant contract in Nigeria. The Americans involved in the scheme were jailed in America but not a single Nigerian involved went to jail in Nigeria.

More than a decade after this incident, it is still difficult to seriously discuss corruption on the global scale without mentioning Nigeria. The notoriety and sheer scale of corruption in the country made Nigeria a pivotal case study in what to do and what not to do when the subject is corruption. Other countries may be older or they may have larger economies but it is unlikely that the daring heists which Nigeria has witnessed since creation in 1914 are equalled anywhere. It is a sick reputation to have, because the vast majority of Nigerians are honest, hardworking and resourceful people who do not ask for too much.

In part to combat this negative image of Nigeria and in part because the global financial system demanded it, President Olusegun Obasanjo set up the EFCC around 2003 and gave it legislative backing by July 2004. After the founding Czar of the Commission was Mr. Nuhu Ribadu, three other persons have headed the Commission since inception, and over the course of the nearly two

decades of the existence of the EFCC, a few fundamental flaws have been observed which will need addressing if the purpose of the Commission is to be fulfilled.

The flaws, not in any particular order, of EFCC are a lack of quality assurance metrics, a lack of adequate whistleblower protection and reward mechanisms, poor synergy with FIRS and State Internal Revenue Services across Nigeria, poor inter-agency coordination generally, an absence of a policy of continuous improvement and a fundamental incapacity to adequately deploy digital technologies in the anti-corruption fight. The existence of sacred cows and the protection of known felons has also been an albatross on the neck of the Commission. All these are surmountable obstacles.



The Japanese have a word which describes a philosophy of continuous improvement: Kaizen. Looking at the trend of the Commission over the years, there is clearly a decline in the reputation of the organisation as well as a glaring lack of effort to try and improve. No one can deny that EFCC has done some commendable work in the course of the years but rather than continuously improve, the Commission has regressed at an alarming rate. From inception,

it was clear that Nigeria wanted the finest officers in the EFCC. Nuhu Ribadu was urbane, intelligent and largely accountable, retrieving funds for government, businesses and individuals. The precipitous decline in standards, crystallised in the many pitiable gaffes of Ibrahim Magu, the recently ousted acting head of EFCC, speaks to the absence of Kaizen. No successor in office should be less intelligent or less accountable than the last occupant of the EFCC chair if Nigeria is really serious about the anti-corruption fight.

There is an argument for a guiding ethos for continuous improvement of a high order which all right-thinking individuals can agree upon, and it is hinged on the many obvious points of pain apparent over the years. The world

is watching. We have to realise that we haven't shown the world a credible picture. If the world cannot be convinced by what it sees in the EFCC, why should we expect Foreign Direct Investment or any other investments in Nigeria from abroad?

The Senate should not, under any circumstances, consider a candidate for the top job at EFCC where intelligence reports are unequivocal about the corrupt tendencies of the candidate and certainly no candidates without a track record of work in financial intelligence and asset recovery should be considered. It would amount to bringing a knife to a gun fight, which is what has happened over the years. Fraudsters have garnered for themselves sophisticated and semi-sophisticated tools for executing schemes capable of bilking the unsuspecting of billions. The offshore accounts of shell companies through which ill-gotten wealth are dissipated or salted away, call for serious concern as at present, there is no serious arsenal of cyber sleuths on the side of law and order whereas—nd to the embarrassment of Nigeria and Nigerians—the cyber criminals we failed to nab at home have gone abroad to do more of the same things they started back home with the exception that eventually, abroad, they are often arrested and their nationality used to describe a broad range of virtual brigandage which much of the world youth indulge in.

On a policy level, the Nigerian government first needs to make the work of the EFCC a joy to execute even as it is serious by more active adherence to the Freedom of Information Act. This will strengthen the hands of civil society and community-based institutions interested in making useful information available to the public. Stonewalling Freedom of Information requests should be punishable by both appropriate government agencies as well as parties requesting for information. Failure to deliberately facilitate a more transparent government apparatus only fuels corruption. The maze that is the oil and gas industry alone is enough to keep operatives of EFCC busy as things stand in the country presently.

The Petroleum Industry Bill, which a serious country would have passed into law with necessary amendments in aid of transparency has been on hold till now. As things stand, the room for under the table dealing defines this crucial industry in Nigeria. Since the Halliburton scandal broke, the Shell/ENI scandal has also broken with European courts handing down heavy sentences and fines for corrupt dealings by their companies while

no Nigerian involved in the sleazy deals has been convicted. In the 21st century, it ought to be modal, in fact, necessary, for all government officials to conduct official communications especially those dealing with the execution of items on the budgetary list only on secure government servers and e-mail accounts archived in government servers ONLY. The country has sufficient computer scientists and engineers to complete a transition from paper-based communications to digital communications in 2 years. Such servers are to be backed up with cloud storage and mirrored in strategic government agencies such as the NIA and the DSS. It should be an automatic red flag to see official government business conducted over commercial email servers or more embarrassing still, WhatsApp. The reason Hillary Clinton met with such vehement opposition during her last bid to be President is in part because she conducted official business using her personal email on certain occasions. This seems innocuous enough until we consider how easy it is to hack into these by foreign and domestic interests.

In a global economy, with international criminals constantly phishing and conducting surveillance on different individuals and government agencies, it is suicidal to engage with less than the very best that we have. Much of what the notorious Yahoo-Yahoo boys from Nigeria do is pilfer from abroad. It will be a sad display of failure to grasp the theory of mind for a minute that more and more sophisticated individuals and groups outside the shores of this country are not also intent on stealing as prolifically as possible from a porous Nigerian digital domain. The way these things work, the new buccaneers don't discriminate and will follow the money into Nigeria if it became necessary to do so.

In the 21st century, the arraignment and trials of suspects cannot be managed without objectives. Public prosecutors must be insured and assured of protection. Their work must be benchmarked and their successes acknowledged in promotions and professional advancement. There is nothing more dispiriting than to watch as dedicated officers get passed over during promotions after recovering billions for the country and private businesses. Private firms to which briefs are farmed out for recovery of asset should have case managers who obtain signed satisfaction reports regarding proof of evidence in briefs. These firms should be paid a percentage of what they recover. A private practitioner who is found to have deliberately bungled a case under management should be disbarred and prosecuted in every single instance. Any judge found to have compromised a case through incompetence or compromise should also be prosecuted.

A rigorous and exact accounting schedule should be put in place for all sums and assets recovered. The office of the Accountant General should oversee a well provisioned and secure digital portal where details of such recoveries and assets are posted MONTHLY so that researches and government itself are kept on the same page. Ideally, this portal should be put in place without delay. Assuming such a dedicated portal is opened in the month of July 2020, it would then run forward with monthly feeds AND digitally back-tagged in reverse for every month of the year until July of year 2004. The reason is simple: Nigerians deserve to know where all their resources recovered went. It will be a form of moral legacy for all Nigerians until such a time in the future when dipping the finger into the till would have been well and truly forgotten because a prosperous country would have been built not from recovered loot but from the common resolve of the Nigerian citizens to keep themselves and their governments accountable.

A regime where whistle blowers are not protected and adequately rewarded is unsustainable. All anti-corruption agencies, and especially the EFCC and the ICPC must ensure that those who have provided credible information are protected and duly rewarded. The moral courage necessary to disclose potentially dangerous information cannot be rewarded by a mere handshake in a country where the idea is to encourage citizens to come forward with useful information about who is holding what and where. An unserious country will rely on wikileaks but a country determined to get out of the corruption swamp will provide a golden handshake to those bold and good enough to point at the location and at identities that help the country to get back on its feet. A lot of Nigerian money ends up in bank accounts abroad and never make it back to Nigeria. This is tragic because it is precisely the kind of prodigal waste which the country must henceforth avoid.

It is clear that the EFCC needs better synergy with both the Federal revenue services and State tax boards. In the same vein, the EFCC needs better working relations with other institutions in the anti-corruption fight. Too many times, it has been a turf war with these other agencies and the villains have not failed to take advantage of the breaches in the working relationship of these organizations. The job of building this synergy should be a primary responsibility of the Attorney General and the Solicitor General of the Federation. This is yet to happen and in the most recent example of dysfunctionality, the Attorney General of the Federation had resorted to a formal complaint against the acting Chair of the EFCC. An atmosphere of distrust between law enforcement agencies is the most insidious arrangement possible and must be avoided at

all cost. Valuable information from tax authorities and sister organizations boost the fight against corruption tremendously. On the other hand, micromanagement of the anti-corruption brief, the encouragement of a personality cult by the head of the EFCC and pointless turf wars with other law enforcement agencies defeat the purpose and weaken the hands of anti corruption fighters.

There cannot be scared cows in the anti-corruption struggle. A situation where the dragnet of anti-corruption catches sardines and croaker fish while sharks and swordfish tear through the nets ultimately defeats the purpose. From Nuhu Ribadu to Ibrahim Magu, there has been pursuit of a class of criminals while other classes, usually deeply embedded in the ruling political party, flagrantly display obscene affluence. Odious opulence is a blight on the Nigerian society. How can the young ones be instructed to apply themselves to work and solutions when everywhere around them they can see the spectacular display of unexplained wealth? What justice is there when a young computer programmer is harrassed at every turn by policemen when some politician who had nothing to his name before assumption of office cruise about in the latest cars in town undisturbed? These point to institutional weakness and these have to be addressed.

To clean the Augean stables, a powerful flood of law enforcement has to be let loose on the country. It will involve the very best forensic accountants that the EFCC can hire, the best linguists, the best computing geniuses, the best prosecutors, the best lawyers and ultimately the best Chairperson EFCC can afford. Corruption is bleeding the country dry and the sooner the citizens do something about it the better. Neither EFCC nor ICPC can afford to be shoddy at this point.

An outlook around Africa will reveal that the problem is not really a lack of manpower. At about the same time that Nuhu Ribadu was pioneering EFCC in Nigeria, John Githongo was doing very much the same in Kenya. At a point, the two led efforts that seemed destined to lead these two countries out of the woods and into true prosperity. It is interesting to realize that both individuals were eventually forced into exile at some point. The organizations they led never quite gained the momentum that was lost with their respective ouster. This is another way of saying that the will is what is missing. The will to continuously improve.

It has been argued that Nigeria is too big to fail. This is a fallacious argument at best and a risky pursuit at the worst. Experience shows that this is a dangerous trajectory

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THE ICPC AND ITS MANY HURDLES



For many Nigerians, the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission, ICPC, is a silent and powerless anti-corruption agency, while the EFCC is the bolder and more active on the Nigerian landscape. The ICPC is interested gaining tangible results by working undercover to earn landmark prosecution, while protecting the identity of the whistle-blower from the harm that untrammelled publicity of the cases under investigation may bring. It is a method to 'catch the thief by the ankles' and not by the slippery elbows. The agency is not one without fangs. It has the legal powers to search, seize, arrest, summon, investigate, gain access to any confidential information that will be helpful to the case from any persons in Nigeria. It has recently embarked on the first phase of monitoring and investigations on the mismanagement of procurements, funding and support provided by government during the COVID-19 Lockdown across the country. The ICPC may have kept a less controversial profile compared to the EFCC, however, it has a lot of hurdles to cross in order to achieve its set objectives.

The ICPC was founded and empowered by the Corrupt Practices Act 2000 and signed into law by President Olusegun Obasanjo in order to gradually destroy the cankerworm of corruption without destroying the host. The executive act made the ICPC the main anti-corruption agency of the country. The agency is saddled with a vision to 'fight corruption to a standstill and restore Nigeria to the enviable standard of respectability and dignity within the comity of nations'. The agency is saddled with the responsibility to receive and investigate reports

of corruption and misappropriation and to prosecute offenders. It is also a leading agency in the deployment of standards in the review and correction of habitually corrupt systems and processes in civil and public offices. In addition to this, the ICPC is meant to engage, educate and enlighten the public in order to create massive support for the anticorruption crusade.

The emergence of the ICPC took place at a time when Nigeria needed to gain the trust of other nations after many years of military rule, and after many years of corruption and distrust. Before 1999, Nigerians and the rest of the world had gone from marvelling to worry at the shocking news of high corruption which were never quelled by interventionist coups and counter coups, by individuals who claimed to have come on the wishes of the Nigerian people to displace corrupt leaders. The World Bank's Federal Public Expenditure Review published in 1995 claimed that approximately US\$ 200 billion was invested in Nigeria, between 1973 and 1993, with very little development to show for it.

The enactment of the ICPC meant that corruption would be systematically eroded through the activation of petitions, the investigation of the same, and the legal prosecution; all within the ambits of the rule of law. The ICPC seem interested in the participation of the citizens in the exposure of backhand practices in the public and private sector without losing sight of protecting the whistle-blower by not only making sure of his or anonymity, but also making sure that security is provided to him or her. The

ICPC has simplified the petitioning process without losing sight of the important parameters of fairness, integrity and scrutiny. A petition by an individual or an organisation goes through preliminary investigation by the agency. This preliminary scrutiny will examine all the features of the case. After critical examination, it will be determined whether it is a prima-facie case. It will also be determined whether the case is within the jurisdiction of the ICPC. Any case outside the jurisdiction of the ICPC but in the jurisdiction of the EFCC, The Nigerian Police or other agencies, will be returned to the petitioner with an advisory on the best way to tackle the complaint.

Prof Bolaji Owasanoye, the ICPC Chairman, in his opening remarks at 20th Anniversary the African Regional Webinar of the Independent Corrupt Practice and Other Related Offences Commission, ICPC, Abuja in July, 2020, made known that the agency had received 19,381 petitions in 20 years, which included 44 petitions in 2000 and 1,934 petitions in 2019. The agency has investigated 5000 petitions and prosecuted about 1000, and has secured convictions in about 200 cases. It has also gone ahead to win a case against its establishment in the supreme court. The work at the ICPC seems more systematic with a decent number of convictions due to the fact that the judicial system is fraught with a long-winding judicial process that delays justice, frustrates the prosecutor and impinges on the resources of the prosecutor to continue to seek justice for the sanity of the polity.

Vice President, Yemi Osinbajo who spoke at the regional webinars also highlighted the challenges posed by the presence of secret corporate ownership and beneficial ownership in Africa. This must be tackled by the international community in order to have a headway in the fight against corruption and to salvage the continent from narratives of poverty and underdevelopment. He explained that the design of secrecy has been used as a conduit to perpetuate corrupt practices such as conflicts of interest, corruption, tax evasion, money laundering and terrorism financing. Osinbajo hinted that the pipelines of money laundering and other corrupt activities earlier mentioned are extensive to the Western world, where an unjust global economic system permits unaccountable transfers from Africa to the West.

‘We simply must work hard at it and be determined to succeed. We must make corruption expensive for those who engage in it and send the unequivocal message that

corruption simply does not pay,’ Vice President Osinbajo said.

When many engage corruption, they are quick to point fingers at those in government circles. Unfortunately, corruption has become a growing concern in the entire nation. It is a growing epidemic that has reduced all Nigerian lives to a struggle for survival, instead of a life filled all the needed infrastructure to thrive. The reality of giving and taking of bribes and kickbacks in the civil service and agencies, tax evasion, and the praise and defence of persons facing corruption allegations, based on social and cultural sentiments also go a long way to building a society of unscrupulous individuals and a landscape of ghost workers and abandoned projects.

Nevertheless, the ICPC have continued to use the high and mighty as scapegoats in order to prescribe a new culture to all in society. The ICPC has continued to monitor the execution of the constituency projects to enhance an equitable distribution of development across senatorial districts. In times past, constituency projects had been reported to have suffered abandonment because they were directly under the influence of execution by members of the National Assembly. With the intervention of the ICPC, constituency projects are legally monitored by the agency, while the MDAs, the senators and the contractors go through a screening process under the principle of Open Government Partnership and Participatory Governance.

This has led to the investigation of fraudulent procurement practices in the execution of contracts for constituencies and executive projects in Rivers, Delta, Cross River, Taraba, Ekiti, Ogun, Gombe, Nassarawa, Kebbi and Kwara, Jigawa, Abia, Ebonyi, Oyo and Kaduna in recent times. It has also continued to track past and present constituency executive projects in many states alongside its partners—pressure groups, NGOs, and Professional Bodies.

Rasheedat Okoduwa, spokesperson for the ICPC noted the pilot phase of monitoring projects which cut across 12 states in the Federation yielded results. ‘The commission, in 2019, launched the pilot phase of the exercise in which it tracked projects performance from 2015 to 2019 in 12 states. Successes of the exercise included the recoveries of tractors, ambulances, dialysis machines and other hospital equipment from sponsors of the projects across the pilot states. The successes also included the recovery of huge sums of money, hundreds of tricycles, grinding machines

and other empowerment items from the project sponsors. Furthermore, the exercise forced contractors, who hitherto had abandoned projects, to return to the site to complete them.'

Okoduwa also told the media that the ICPC had seized a multi-million naira property belonging to Governor Bala Mohammed, the Bauchi State Governor, for using his privileges and position as the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory to allocate a property belonging to the Federal Ministry of Agriculture to Zinaria International School. It was revealed by the ICPC that he and his family members are shareholders of the school.

Akeem Lawal, ICPC's Director of Operations has also disclosed that they will investigate and prosecute agencies of government and individuals who had allegedly diverted emergency funds, food and have exploited the COVID-19 lockdown to enrich themselves. The agency said that it was monitoring the operations of the Conditional Cash Transfer Scheme and the Home School Feeding Programme.

A research on the website, the leadership of the ICPC had made available some of the documentations pertaining to pending, activated and ongoing cases targeted at exposing the names and organisations that have corrupt cases in the country. It has also made available various documentations such as the '2018 ICPC Budget, An Update on Criminal Cases in Various Courts, the United Nations Convention Against Corrupt, The ICPC Report 2015, System Study and Review of Federal Ministries, Departments and Agencies, its Internal Procurement Information from 2016 to June 2020. The database also includes newsletters, papers such as such as Guidelines for the Conduct of Procurement that Respond to COVID19, The Legislature and Fight Against Graft and Corruption, and the NAVC documentations--Guidelines for Community Advocacy, among others.

This openness is in the spirit of the principle of the open governance and transparency principle and will go a long way to help media and the general populace garner ample information on the activities and achievements of the ICPC per time. The ICPC is fully aware that lack of openness breeds corruption and has decided to practice what it preaches by revealing to the extent that it will not undermine the fundamental rights of Nigerians, and will not undermine ongoing investigations.

Bolaji Owasanoye had mentioned in his keynote address at the National Summit on Diminishing Corruption in the Public Service and Presentation of Public Service Integrity Award in November, 2019 that his tenure had already begun to make gains in its tracking initiatives among others. In his words, 'The new initiatives include our constituency project tracking initiative, our partnership with the National Social Investment Office and the Social Investments programs comprising school feeding, conditional cash transfer, N-Power and the Growth and Entrepreneurship program of Trader Moni and Market Moni and our pro-active response to review MDA systems and practices and evaluate their risks and disposition to corruption.' He extrapolated further by saying that the agency embarked on the tracking of constituency projects done across the country in 2015-2018.

The projects which were worth a N100 billion cut across the geopolitical zones. With its agency's partnership with the Budget Office, Accountant General, BPP, Auditor-General, members of the Nigerian Institute of Quantity Surveyors, representatives of the civil society and the media, these projects will be monitored and made to come to fruition for the Nigerian peoples. The ICPC has also uncovered gross budget padding and mismanagement of funds by the MDAs in its preliminary investigation from 2017 to July 2019. In evaluating the codes of ethics in MDAs located in Abuja, the commission found that the MDAs lacked a unity of vision and guiding operational principles. It also publicly listed universities who have padded their budgets and therefore have cases to answer.

As Owasanoye noted in his speech, 'In the past 10 months we have recovered over 250 physical assets worth about N32b in seizures, interim forfeiture orders and final orders. We also have cash recoveries in interim and final orders in Naira and USD amounting to over N3b. We are mindful of Mr. President's directives that recovered assets should be properly disposed of and the proceeds paid into the national treasury. We are taking steps to comply fully with this directive'. The agency has also begun to compile companies who have evade standards in the acquisition of contracts without valid tax papers, and other requirements. Owasanoye points a finger at civil servants who have used their offices to subvert due process and enrich themselves. He prescribes to the President, the need for lengthy jail terms for such civil servants. Although Owasanoye did not engage the issue of funding, he expressed concern on the need for information sharing across all agencies of

government especially anti-corruption agencies.

Government is at the driver's seat of changing the culture and internal practices of the MDAs, the executive and legislative arms across boards, especially where these appear to be counterproductive to the system. The Presidency must not only peddle corrupt as a staple of national discourse, it must fund the agencies, provide full access to information and give them the freedom

to investigate those who feel that they are sacred cows. The expected ripple effect of undermining the 'sacred cows' syndrome is to establish a firm culture of crime and punishment that will not only keep Nigerians abreast of the emergence of a new Nigeria, but will enhance compliance and rejection of established culture of corruption.

Femi Morgan



The ICPC Complex in Abuja

URGENT REFORM FOR THE EFCC

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to pursue. Any entity can fail and fail woefully at that if deliberate steps are not taken to ensure that things are done properly. A culture in which a corrupt public official or fraudster can count on tribesmen to bail him out will ruin plural society. There has to be a society in which the rules are not only fair but are seen to be fair. That society must apply the law to everyone. The result of the just application of the law must be verifiable by all. The EFCC is going to be crucial to the realization of all these. It is a task that cannot be accomplished without embracing a new philosophy, the philosophy of kaizen.

Tade Ipadeola

a multiple award winning poet

STAMP DUTY: A LOOMING TENANCY CRISES

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been avoiding my landlord because I also have overdue rent fee to pay up.'

'At this moment, every naira counts for me. I have also explored catering business but because of the ban on events, I hardly get customers requesting for my service,' she added.

Nigerians are going through a tough phase. They need more support and employment opportunities to assist in taking care of the basic needs of life. The government should find alternative ways of generating revenue rather than stifling the lives of the average Nigerian. For instance, attracting foreign investment in agriculture and infrastructure, building human capital investment, provide an enabling environment for the teeming youths, and ensuring that looters of public funds are not just probed but made to refund every naira taken out of the national treasury.

Joyce Adelanwa

communications executive

IPPIS: DOES ASUU HAVE SOMETHING TO HIDE?

The Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) as an employer of labour is like any other employer worldwide. They have the powers to determine what, why and how to pay their employees. The recent decision of the FG to migrate the payment system of its university employees to the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) has however met with stiff opposition from a faction of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU).

President Muhammadu Buhari had in November 2015, directed that all Ministries, Departments and Agencies, MDAs, including universities, drawing their personnel cost from the Consolidated Revenue Fund, CRF, must enrol in the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS). This directive did not really affect the universities then, not until July 2019 when the President repeated it. On the 8th of October 2019, while presenting the 2020 budget to the joint session of the National Assembly, the President said the decision was part of the Federal Government's effort at managing personnel costs in line with its fight against corruption. He added that 'Accordingly, I have directed the stoppage of the salary of any Federal Government staff that is not captured on the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System platform by the end of October 2019.'

The IPPIS Secretariat is a Department under the Office of the Accountant-General of the Federation (OAGF) responsible for payment of salaries and wages directly to Government employee's bank account with appropriate deductions and remittances of 3rd party payments, such as Federal Inland Revenue Service, State Boards of Internal Revenue, National Health Insurance Scheme, National Housing Fund, Pension Fund Administrator, Cooperative Societies, Trade Unions Dues, Association Dues and Bank Loans. The IPPIS platform, which was established in 2007, boasts to have enrolled 490 MDAs with total staff strength of over 700,000 employees as at April 2018 and claims to have saved the Federal Government of Nigeria billions of Naira by eliminating thousands of ghost workers.

In line with the President's directive to capture all federal employees on the IPPIS platform, the OAGF fixed

November 25 - December 7, 2019 as dates for university workers to enrol on the platform. At the end of the enrolment exercise, 90,000 workers in 43 universities were said to have enrolled on IPPIS. 8,000 out of these 90,000 workers were lecturers.

ASUU has staunchly refused to align with the government's directive and has instructed its members not to enrol on IPPIS. The body rejected the IPPIS on the basis that IPPIS does not capture some peculiarities of the university system, that it is not corruption-proof as being touted, and that implementing the scheme in universities will mean a violation of university autonomy.

Professor Biodun Ogunyemi, the National President of ASUU, told the media that 'The most important reason is that accepting IPPIS will rob the university of its autonomy. There is a law that governs the establishment of all universities and those laws have a provision on how the university should be governed in terms of personnel management, finances. The law we are talking about here states that the governing councils should be the agency that governs the activities of the universities. Every university has a mechanism or a structure for its operations.'

ASUU proposed and has developed The University Transparency and Accountability Solution (UTAS), which it says is fraud and corruption-proof. The platform was put forward as an alternative payment platform, in order to avoid any heated disagreement with government.

When considered in isolation, ASUU's motive seemed valid, but it soon became obvious that the Union's employer did not agree with their position. In February 2020, the Federal Government commenced payment of lecturers via IPPIS and as it had earlier promised, it withheld the salaries of lecturers who were yet to enrol on IPPIS. ASUU did not take this lightly and commenced an indefinite strike on the 23rd of March, 2020.

Was the FG's decision to enforce IPPIS in universities

reason enough for ASUU to withdraw its services? Is there anything normal about an employee dictating to her/his employer how payment must be made? Could there be more to ASUU's claim of violation to university autonomy by IPPIS? Will IPPIS eliminate the likelihood of ghost workers?

In the same interview with Premium Times initially quoted in this piece, Professor Ogunyemi, ASUU's National President, made some assertions. He said:

'Universities are regarded as universal cities. This means that we attract the best and the brightest from any part of the world to come and work in the universities. So also, students can come from any part of the world because a university is a global marketplace for ideas and not just a workplace.

Universities are also ranked in terms of diversity of their scholars and students. What I mean is that a global criterion for global ranking of the university is in the diversity of the community. So, scholars can come from any part of the world, provided we have what they can contribute. There are lecturers that can come on short service either as visiting scholars, adjunct scholars or fellows to render some services; whether to establish a department or to nurture an existing programme and they will go back. A university needs a flexible work environment and the payroll system cannot be the one that is centralised somewhere outside the universities.'

With this provision in the university operations system, lecturers can choose to work in more than one university at any time, and draw salaries from all of them. Universities can also decide to hire contract staff, academic and non-academic, to make up for some shortfall in skilled manpower to cater to the courses they offer. Lecturers moonlighting or universities hiring contract staff are not bad in themselves, a possible problem though is that they leave a huge opportunity for corruption. A lecturer may decide to moonlight in more than the allowed number of universities (NUC dictates that lecturers can only teach in two universities including their primary university) and receive full payment from them. Same way university councils can declare that a number of contract staff were hired, and there's no way to question their assertions or say otherwise. These are probably some of the reasons the Federal Government decided to enforce IPPIS in universities. Members of ASUU may have realised that its sources of legitimate/illegitimate revenue was about to be nipped in the bud. So it has been so vehement in its opposition to IPPIS.

In June, Bayero University, Kano, sacked about 30 academic contract staff because there was no provision for their salaries on the IPPIS platform. ASUU was quick to react, they body said that this was one of the reasons they were not in support of IPPIS. ASUU's National President said, 'They forcefully moved our members to the IPPIS and consequently, contract staff have been sacked. And the disengagement of the contract staff is a disservice to the Nigerian university system as we have it today.'

'The first problem with that is that it is going to rob our universities of the high calibre human resources in certain areas. These are areas where we have a scarcity of personnel. If I ask you, how many professors of neurosurgery do we have in Nigeria? I don't think they are more than five, and universities have to produce neurosurgeons.'

'These are the people who have to train a new crop of academics because it takes a professor to produce a professor. So, when you dispose of their services, you have cut off that chain of continuity.'

'The disengagement has started in Federal University, Wukari, and the BUK, Kano. By doing that, IPPIS is creating a problem by appropriating the powers of the council in terms of employment, promotion, and disengagement of the people in the system.'

Mr Ben Goong, Spokesperson at the Ministry of Education rebutted, 'By October and November 2019, universities engaged so many staff; they were fraudulent about staff engagement and a university that has 5,000 staff will say they have 7,000 staff and you have this huge personnel cost that was pushed to the universities. Virtually, most universities are guilty of this.'

ASUU may not be truthful and truly altruistic about their reasons for resisting IPPIS. ASUU should be partnering with the FG to make IPPIS robust enough to address the peculiarities in the university system, or better still work to integrate IPPIS with the UTAS, which was earlier contemplated according to this report. A refusal to give the IPPIS a chance or an attempts to sabotage the scheme will make the union come across as having skeletons to hide.

Oriyomi Adebare

CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA: PROFILE OF A POLITICAL ECONOMY

Nigeria is on the verge of being completely destroyed by corruption. This is no longer news. What is news is that, since the middle of the 19th century, the Berlin Conference of 1884-88, the biggest theft in world history has been the colonisation of Africa.

Since 1960, the biggest theft in human history has been the colossal amount of money, approximately US\$450 billion or N285 trillion lost through corruption in Nigeria, the main homeland of blacks in the world. The picture of corruption in Nigeria is a horror movie.

This is the more compelling reason to begin to understand the political economy of a corruption, a socioeconomic and political malady which is doing so much damage to a territory of vast human and material resources. Such

huge human, material and capital resources are enough to build a modern state that can compete favourably with the rest of the world in the era of globalisation. While Nigeria has effectively or functionally failed, it still retains a national carcass which can be resuscitated with the injection of good leadership.

Political economy here refers to the connection between political and economic factors in understanding development

dynamics in social formation or national entities. And its use precedes the Keynesian paradigm of government intervention in market forces. A political economic analysis integrates considerations of historical, cultural and social factors with those of political and economic systems. In this sense, behaviour and values combine with political and power factors, and the production, distribution and exchange of elements of economics to determine the human condition over historical periods. Ultimately, what is happening to people's incomes, wellbeing and livelihoods, becomes the concern and target of political economy. The fact that recent studies have established that critical public institutions are the main centres of corruption justifies a

political economy analysis of corruption in Nigeria, What colonialism did was to integrate the pre-industrial mercantilism and petty production economy of the Nigerian colony established fully in 1914 into the global mercantilist, industrial, tyrannical, public relation and entertainment complex in their historical phases. This process of globalisation has not been peculiar to Nigeria. What has been exceptional here is the volume of slave-trading off the Nigerian coast in an era, and the liquidation of the Nigerian political economy by corruption; much of it institutionalised during the military era. This character has also become dominant with civil rule.

White settler colonialism and European-type productive capacity and a well-guided anti-colonial ideology have,

for instance, been instrumental to propelling South Africa forward. Egypt has performed well on the basis of political stability founded on a concrete ideology. South Africa has flourished despite a high crime rate apparently resulting from the transition from injustice to too slowly evolving equity. Egypt has marched on despite regional instability, including cross-border and neighbourhood wars. These countries should be on the same pedestal with Nigeria in terms infrastructure and



social services, as well as productive capacity with Nigeria on the continent, but they have, as it were, disgraced Nigeria. Nigeria has chosen to become the African star in corruption.

The colonial economy of Nigeria was founded essentially on agricultural and solid minerals. Groundnuts, cocoa, palm oil and kernels, beniseed and livestock, including hides and skins, were the principal cash agro-products. There were also food agro-products like cassava, yams, rice, maize, corn and others. The solid minerals of tin, columbite and coal also nourished the export-oriented Nigerian economy. Even with the discovery of oil at Oloibiri in 1957,

the fundamental economic resources of Nigeria were still agriculture and solid minerals, now abandoned for the monoculture of the hydrocarbon industry.

The hydrocarbon or oil and gas economy which has come to dominate foreign exchange earnings and accounts for much of what is called the federation account. The account provides the funding for emoluments and overhead costs of the public sector and finances the capital projects that are implemented mainly by the private sector. Nigerian oil and gas are extracted by mainly foreign partners of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) within the quotas of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting countries (OPEC). Other forms of crude extraction and sales are oil bloc allocations, spot lifts and bunkering. Oil resources have immediate target beneficiaries of about two million Nigerians and through multiplier effects of about five to ten million people. This is the money that is appropriated and expended by the President, Ministers, Federal Agencies and Departments, the National Assembly, Governors, Commissioners, State Assemblies, Local Government Chairmen, and Councilors as well as sundry government contractors, consultants and others. The excess crude account which captures the surplus from favourable international crude oil pricing has become a controversial fund subject to abuse.

Outside the capital that is managed in the non-contracting private sector, the mainstream economy including manufacturers, bankers and traders, it is the federation account money that has been the main victim of corruption. Of course, fraud and other forms of crimes exist in the wider society on an unacceptable scale. There have been other forms of politically-induced corrupt accumulation through indigenisation, privatisation and monetisation. The biggest damage to the society seems to come from the theft of public money meant for development purposes, like power, education, health, public transportation, water, housing and national security, among other sectors.

All forms of corruption are bad, but the one that bites hardest seems to be political corruption. However, in the case of the federation account, it is distributed to the federal government, states and local governments. Its distribution is in such a way that most non-oil producing states receive about 10 to 15 percent less than the oil-producing states. Added to this is a policy of 13 percent derivation, the Niger Delta Development Commission, the Niger Delta Ministry, and the community development programmes of oil companies, which

also channel its revenues from oil back to oil producing communities for community development, environmental rehabilitation, infrastructure, services and human capital development. Much of this money from government and the oil companies is embezzled.

A couple of examples, one of the chief executives of the predecessor to NDDC, a university professor, stole a lot of money and migrated from Nigeria with his television presenter wife. The 'tummy-tuck' governor of oil-rich Bayelsa State was arrested in Europe with large sums of money. He jumped bail and mysteriously returned to Nigeria, only to be impeached and prosecuted. He is reputed to have helped himself with substantially stolen public money while in office. Another oil-rich state governor is on the run, wanted for theft. On this one, the whisper is that he took away from the federation account alone, about US\$667 million or N100 billion in a period of eight years in office, slightly less than his colleague from another oil-rich state who took from the same source about US\$800 million, or N120 billion during the same period. Presently another former oil-rich state governor is facing charges of stealing 'only' US\$ 300 million or N45 billion.

This revelation is blood cuddling in a country like Nigeria where the big news would be that there are no corrupt practices to report. Governors of other states have also been accused of such wrongdoings, although involving smaller amounts of money. So have Presidents, Ministers and Assemblymen and women. Even top bankers have been exposed to be grand thieves.

However, the Niger Delta militants need to know who is stealing national wealth in their domain in order to know where to properly channel their wrath and aggression. The other national wealth comes from local and international loans, grants and taxes, customs duties and sundry internally generated revenue at the federal and state levels. Elsewhere, in the upper northern states, a feudal psychology, primitive culture, the subjugation of women, youth exclusion and desert encroachment are pauperizing large communities and populations.

Conversely, the south-west having benefitted from Awolowo's education policy, early westernisation, insular politics. and Obasanjo's largesse, seems to be sitting pretty. However, the east, despite massive energy and resourcefulness, has too little land. They need to be fully re-integrated after the civil war. The region needs to tame its materialism which leads a more of the general southern challenge of having its people engage in bad crimes worldwide. The agrarian middle belt suffers from pre-industrial agriculture, lack of agro-industry and a needless

identity complex. All states in the federation receive their statutory allocations from Abuja, their criticism of the shares of appointments based on federal character, and underdevelopment should be placed at the doorstep of their governors and local government chairmen, not on imaginary Hausa-Fulani oppressors.

The problem of Nigeria is not that of building alliances within regions or between and among ethnic or religious groups and a mix of nationalities or zones for elections. It is a problem of a national thieving elite versus the broad masses, both of which classes are everywhere. Those who steal public resources use them to purchase political power, so they recycle themselves. They create or amend the constitution to protect their interests and thereby promote the hegemony of corruption. So that despite the ingenuity and relevance of zoning and rotation of political and other top public service positions to deal with the national question in Nigeria, its political development challenges go beyond that. They include how to promote equity and egalitarian development and ensure that due processes are not violated or manipulated in public administration.

Morally speaking, reprobates cannot promote a productive economy because they do not need to do so. The monies they steal are hidden or laundered in properties, cars or used to satisfy newly acquired expensive tastes in clothes, jewellery, champagnes, sexual tourism or just plain prostitution. This corruption trickles down to pollute the rest of the society and associates with or promotes bribery and other forms of crimes and vices. They do not have a need for a productive economy because the objectives of production are to make money and provide services. However, since they are anti-social and irresponsible, and their money is made easily. It is substantial and it needs to be hidden, why bother about production?

In any case, Nigeria's factors of production are too weak or rendered too weak to propel the country forward. There is difficult land access across the physical terrains, coupled with underemployed, unpaid or unemployed labour, scarce capital, largely misplaced entrepreneurial skills, low technology, and a hardly existing industrial base. Low productivity engenders unemployment and poverty which promote criminal militancy, war and a high crime rate among the youth bulge. This is the story of the political economy of corruption in Nigeria.

This is the problem that has been thrown into the laps of three agencies: the Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB), the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

So, when the former EFCC boss, Farida Waziri cries out that the courts and the press are used by corrupt people, and that there should be capital punishment for some categories of offenders, we know that as a lawyer and a former senior police officer, she has appraised the problem to be very serious.

Nigeria could have done better but it seems to have derailed. Maybe the mishap was caused by military rule, the civil war and the discovery of oil. This must have cumulatively and conjointly corrupted the country and removed its good leaders from prominence. Some of the present crop of political leaders in Nigeria are probably the worst that are running any twenty-first century state anywhere in the world. They are opportunistic, unprincipled, unscrupulous and despicable. There is as a result no alternative to the return of Nigeria back on its correct political economic track except through a revolutionary reconstruction of its society, economy and polity.

Capitalism, whose theoretical foundation is rooted in selfishness and greed, is more prone to corruption than socialism. However, legislation, reforms and checks and balances have somehow blunted the vicious fangs of capitalism in many global communities, despite its recent crash, which has highlighted its weak foundations and vulnerability. In Nigeria, we seem to have moved into a combined phase of barbarism and savagery in a colony of corruption, run by its hegemons.

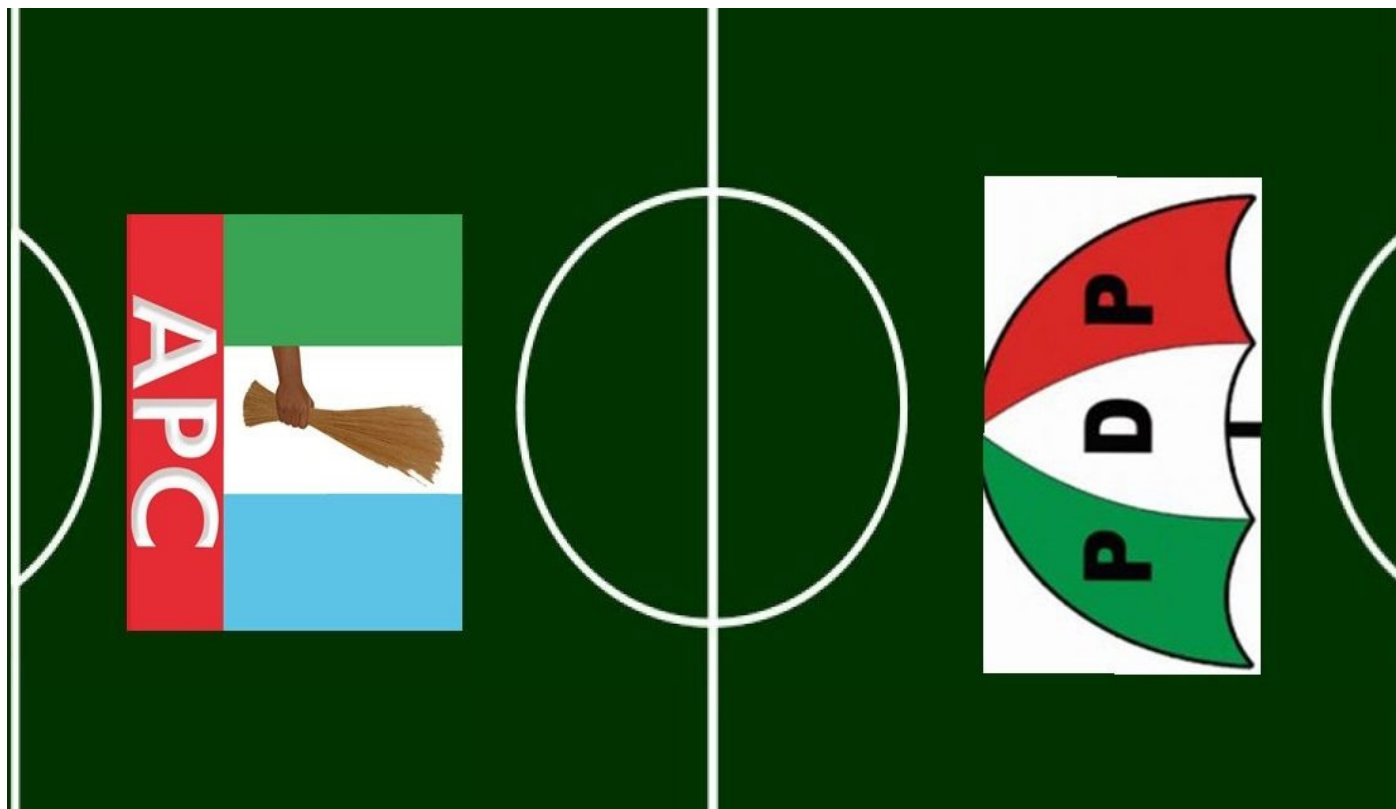
There are two approaches at solution: One, the international community, in the post-cold war era, must push Nigeria towards a left-of-centre leadership; and two, Nigerians themselves regardless of clan, ethnicity, religion, section, zone or region must rise up against their oppressors and enthrone a leadership in the left-of-centre tradition. This leadership must be situated within a system of governance that rewards correctness substantially and punishes corruption and crime severely.

Other than that, the Nigerian political economy becomes a factory churning out poverty and underdevelopment. It gives leverage to 'dirty rich' people, whom the manufactured poor depend on for either systemic 'safety nets' which, in any case, are not available or become useless, or philanthropy. A better society is one that has systemic equity and egalitarianism, and which makes safety nets and philanthropy irrelevant.

*Prof. Yima Sen
communication and development specialist.*

Critical Conversation

THE WAR AGAINST INSURGENCY, AND THE DYNAMICS OF POLITICAL ZONING



Professor Yima Sen, Director General of the Northern Elders' Forum, Nigeria, speaks on issues relating to the war against insurgency and insecurity in the North, and the topical question of political zoning in Nigeria, in a conversation with Udu Yakubu.

Udu Yakubu: *Recently, the Northern Elders' Forum asked President Muhammadu Buhari to dwell less on politics and pay more attention to security. Could you throw some light on what you think are the issues or distractions that may not be giving the Presidency the desired results in protecting the citizens and the sovereignty of our nation?*

Yima Sen: I'm not sure about the distractions. As you know, President Buhari is not your typical Nigerian politician. He made his entry into Nigeria's public life as a military person; as a no-nonsense military person. He was a military Head of State and it seems that it has

been difficult for him to convert into a typical Nigerian politician. So, I doubt very much if the statement by the Northern Elders' Forum saw politics as a distraction. As would be expected, he is the arrowhead of the security apparatus as Commander-in-Chief and President, and is primarily responsible for protecting lives and property in the country.

I think the Northern Elders' Forum, and many other concerned persons, have been worried about the degree of insecurity, its continuation despite apparent efforts to tackle it. I think there have been repeated statements from the Northern Elders' Forum about the President paying attention to insecurity. I don't know really whether there is a lack of capacity within the whole system, or whether there is a problem of commitment from lieutenants and those who have the responsibility of providing security in Nigeria. There have been talks of a change of the service chiefs, but I will tell you that I've personally looked at the service chiefs as part of the system. The service chiefs are at

the frontline of the machinery and if you remove them, if you are not sure of the next set of military leaders or security leaders, then you will not achieve anything.

The service chiefs are at the frontline of the machinery and if you remove them, if you are not sure of the next set of military leaders or security leaders, then you will not achieve anything.

So, I think there seems to be a fundamental issue, and we need to ponder on how or why the security problem has persisted. It was an issue during the regime change exercise in 2015. Many people felt that President Goodluck Jonathan was not doing enough maybe because the security challenges were not from his own part of the country. But in this case, the President is from the North and had his whole career in the military. So, we begin to understand that it is a lot more complex than we had thought. The direction of worry here would be at the level of capacity and commitment to these security challenges.

***Udu Yakubu:** When you talked about the level of capacity, what exactly do you have in mind? Does this have to do with funding, arms and ammunition of the military, human power in terms of the military strength?*

Yima Sen: Well, I don't think it is funding. As you know, we have had the Sambo Dasuki case, which is still pending, and what that tells us is that there has not quite been a shortage of funds for security work. Certainly, as Head of State, he would know the funding needs of the military. And really, we have seen budgets passed, allocating money for defence and security. Maybe it's a problem of what happens to those funds, then you can call it a problem of funding.

In terms of capacity, we have been with the military for a long time, and know a bit about soldiers' work. If we picked on any of the top military commanders, let's take someone like the late General Victor Malu. If they gave him an assignment to go and crush Boko Haram for example, unless he's not the Malu that I knew; if they said the terrorists are in Sambisa Forest, he would probably burn down the whole place and kill or smoke them out. There were so many other commanders who were involved in the Second World War, who we call

the no-nonsense people, and who delivered results. Yes, I have a problem with the capacity. I'm not a military person, but I suppose that these things are pretty well known. So, if you are a military tactician, you'll know how to deal with these challenges. We have the military of a supposedly powerful African state.

***Udu Yakubu:** You've made an illustration with the ruthlessness of a General Victor Malu. Recall how he razed the entire Odi community killing many innocent civilians. Don't you think that approach is extremist and comes with very fundamental problems?*

Yima Sen: I don't want to go there. I wouldn't want to go there. There are two major examples of military tacticians in history – Sun Tzu who talked about how you can actually win a war without fighting, and Carl Von Clausewitz who propounded that if you're going to fight a war, then you better fight it ruthlessly. I'm sure that officers are taught all these theories of war in the military academies. The American General Tecumseh Sherman was very brutal when he entered Atlanta during the American Civil War. He belonged to the Clausewitz school that says, if you are going or want to fight a war, you better fight it. During the Nigerian Civil War, we also had military officers on both sides, who had this Clausewitz approach. There was Benjamin Adekunle of Third Marine Commandos on the Nigerian side, and 'Hannibal' Joseph Achuzia on the Biafran side.

If we picked on any of the top military commanders, let's take someone like the late General Victor Malu. If they gave him an assignment to go and crush Boko Haram for example ... he would probably burn down the whole place and kill or smoke them out.

I know that General Malu, when he went to Liberia, he more or less ended the conflict there. From what I heard, when he was posted to Liberia, he called Charles Taylor and told him, 'Look man, I was sent here because some people don't like me in Nigeria and they sent me here to come and die.' But he told him that between Charles Taylor and him, Malu, if anybody was going to die, it was going to be Charles Taylor. So, he told him to keep about 50 kilometers away from Monrovia, the capital of Liberia. And, as they were speaking, a message came to Charles Taylor on his radio that General Malu's troops

were shelling the camp of Charles Taylor. If you want to end an insurgency, you will end it, if you want to play with it, you will play with it.

Udu Yakubu: *The President recently told the media that, concerning security in the Northeast, the current government was doing its best. What do you say to this?*

Yima Sen: With the situation lately, I don't believe that the security situation in the Northeast has improved. There could be an exception in terms of the occupation of some territories by the insurgents. The insurgents have been pushed back to the Sambisa Forest, or the border of Cameroon and some banks of Lake Chad; but the problem still persists. And, more than that, we have now seen other problems of a similar terrorist nature – from herdsmen operating deep into the South to sets of bandits operating in the Northwest. So, when you look at the reality on the ground, the effort is far from our best.

If you want to end an insurgency, you will end it, if you want to play with it, you will play with it.

Udu Yakubu: *Yes, you've talked about capacity, and then we see how the problem has gone beyond the Northeast into the herders' issue in the North Central and the banditry issue in the North West. Yet, we are talking about the same military, the same army, etc. Do you think that our military actually has the capacity in terms of human power, because that has been a major issue? You have the military involved in various crisis situations in over 30 states of the federation. Doesn't this throw into focus the issue of human capacity, not having a military that is numerically strong enough to protect the citizens and the sovereignty of the nation at the same time across the entire country?*

Yima Sen: Well, there's a problem of capacity, and we can define capacity in various ways. Also, it is problematic to narrow down the attempt to some of the security challenges to the military alone. Recently, I offered that perspective about how we need a holistic approach in dealing with the security challenges in the country. Of all the 774 local governments in this country, there are people in these local governments that are in a position to tell you what the security reality is in these territories. We have all these DPOs and the DSS operatives; we

have traditional rulers, local government chairmen, and numerous vigilante groups. These kinds of groups, they know what the security realities in their territories are.

What I'm saying is that, in any given local government, even from the lowest level of human interactions in the wards for example, you know who is where. You know who is a thief, you know who a pastor or the imam is. You know who the teachers are – primary school teachers, secondary school teachers. You know who is who in your community. So, if there's a security threat, there are people who know the sources of those threats. So, if you have a mechanism that fits into a central control system, you will be able to get the required information about security challenges in all the local governments in this country. You'll understand what the challenges are, and how to deal with them.

More than that, many of these issues are also tied to the various economic circumstances – the poverty levels, illiteracy, and ignorance. Why do we have people who can be easily mobilised or recruited into some of these terrorists' gangs? You want to deal with those kinds of issues. So, we have to look beyond the narrow approach of tackling security threats. We must appreciate the fact that, corruption for example can breed insecurity; the same way underdevelopment does.

So, I always shy away from a militaristic approach, even though it is very important. There should be the political commitment to get to the core of these problems and not to attempt to solve the security problem through the military alone solve some of these problems. We need a holistic approach at dealing with insecurity. This will include the military certainly, but will also go beyond the military and involve the communities and various stakeholders.

Udu Yakubu: *The Northern Elders' Forum has been expressing its criticism on some of these issues and there have also been responses from the presidential spokespersons, criticizing the position and statements of the Northern Elders' Forum. What has been the relationship between the government and the Forum lately and how has this affected this relationship?*

Yima Sen: Well, let me tell you that, personally, I've found those exchanges to be very unfortunate. I can be very uncomfortable with them and the reason is

simple. In 2015, we were virtually in the forefront of regime change, from President Jonathan to President Buhari. So, in a way, we could say that it was or is our government. So, if you have seen any exchange taking place between the NEF and the government at any level, it must have been out of frustration, at least on the part of the Forum. That would be frustration based on the fact that we helped to bring about this government initially, and we expected a lot from it. Some of the expectations have not been met. On the ground of some of the opposition to the government which was replaced, the new government came with the promise of improving security, fighting corruption, battling the economy in such a way that poverty will be addressed.

These three areas of focus of the government are inter-related. I believe that poverty can be eradicated, and like I said earlier, if you don't deal with the question of poverty very well, it will probably lead to the creation of what we call the youth bulge. Where you have a large pool of unemployed young people, they will become available to be recruited for all sorts of criminal activities, including insurgency. This has created a huge security problem for us. Thus, our problems become compounded. The relationship between the three areas is so intertwined that you have to deal with the three at once, decisively, otherwise, one will affect the other.

So, I think, the frustration from the Northern Elders' Forum has been mainly because of its perception that the government could do more in these three areas of focus that it promised Nigerians.

What is the current relationship between the Forum and the government? I can tell you that as the Director-General of the organisation, I would have loved to see that the Northern Elders' Forum is able to meet with the President as we used to and advise him on governance issues. I do hope that, that kind of relationship can be reestablished, and that we will not need to be talking to each other in the press.

Udu Yakubu: *Moving on to a topical political issue, Mallam Maman Daura recently made a statement on political zoning, and this has stirred some controversy. In fact, the controversy is still on-going in the public. Although, the Presidency has distanced itself from Mallam Daura's statement, the shadow of that statement is still very much around. First is to ask if there was anything amiss in what*

Mallam Daura said. And second, how much of political zoning at the level of the presidency have we actually practised in this country since 1999?

Yima Sen: Mallam Mamman Daura's statement clearly seems to be his opinion., except for the other sensitive area of national politics and governance. The principle of zoning and rotation in political offices at the federal and state level was something that was introduced into Nigerian politics and governance during the Second Republic, thanks to the paper that was presented in 1983 at the Institute of Administration, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria by the then Governor of Benue State, Mr. Aper Aku. The paper that he presented was later published as a pamphlet, and I had the privilege of writing the foreword to that paper. The idea of introducing six zones was based on the need to give the minorities in Nigeria a voice, and this seems to be an attempt to move away from what we may call the WAZOBIA arrangement of Nigerian politics, whereby you had to be either Yoruba, or Hausa/Fulani, or Igbo for you to be reckoned with in terms of power sharing in Nigeria. What he was proposing was that, if we had what we have now – North-Central, North-West, North-East, South-South, South-West, and South-East – you would have given three slots to the minorities, and it would be three versus three. As history will later come to prove, this is the same arrangement that enabled President Jonathan to emerge on the basis of the South-South geopolitical zone.

We can start with the South-East by saying, what do you people actually want? Do you want to be a part of Nigeria or you want to opt out?

This arrangement was taken from his own community, the principle of eat and give your brother. So, it had at that time been introduced within the NPN (National Party of Nigeria) as a policy of the party. Subsequently, the issue of zoning or rotation became an arrangement that political parties have used to distribute power or to share power in terms of who gets what.

What has happened is that, this arrangement has been seen as a rotation between the North and the South. And in looking at the North and the South, when it's the North, it is the whole of the North, and almost usually, it is taken up by the Hausa-Fulani bloc of the North which has been able to get the other northerners to tag

along on various issues of national governance and development since the civil war. So, that arrangement has continued to be an important factor in national politics and governance. So, at this point that you have a northern President, there's the expectation that the next President should come from the South. It becomes a very sensitive issue then. If it goes back to the South, and you're to rotate in the South, it would be the turn of the South-East, at least at this stage. We have had a South-West President, and a South-South President. You might argue that, well, Nnamdi Azikiwe was the first ceremonial President, followed by Aguiyi Ironsi. But, in electoral terms, you have not really had a South-East President. So, it becomes really sensitive that we do not deprive the Southeast of their chance.

But, on the other hand, there are more issues to just rotation or zoning when it comes to the presidency of Nigeria; electoral issues come up. MKO Abiola, I'm not sure if he was going to become president on the basis of rotation or zoning; he seemed to have just taken the country by storm. And many of us believe that at some point, this question of rotation or zoning will become a non-issue, and that we'll all be looking for competence and other attributes or qualities of a leader in the mold of the President of Nigeria. But the problem then is, when are you going to terminate the rotation or zoning of political offices and how are you going to do it? But, beyond the present arrangements and non-arrangements, are we going to base our considerations on the six geopolitical zones, or on the more than 600 hundred ethnic groups we have in this country?

Udu Yakubu: *Based on the idea of political zoning, and where the pendulum could swing come 2023, one would say as you have also said that no Igbo person has been president or Head of State since Aguiyi Ironsi. That argument has its own validity which you have also talked about. But it comes with its own issues. If we talk about zoning in the context of all you have said, how do you cater for the interests of other geopolitical zones, minority ethnic groups, especially those who have had deficit in terms of political zoning, not only the Igbos or the South-East. The agitation in the North that followed the death of Yar'adua was that the North had not completed an eight-year tenure. That same logic could be applicable to the South-South, which had only four years in office, or five as could be argued. Importantly also, if you're not going to regard the period that Aguiyi-Ironsi was Head of State,*

then the other parts that have produced military rulers like the North Central, can as well say that they haven't had a shot at the presidency. And then you know, we have several other minority groups outside of the major three that have not had a shot at the presidency and will likely not have one in the next 100 or more years. There are lots of questions and contradictions with the way things have played out over several years. How do you reconcile some of these?

Yima Sen: You want me to reconcile all these contradictions? Well, I'm not a magician, but I can, by way of analysis, say that the question of zoning or rotation of political offices is complex and has many dimensions. When you talk about catering for the WAZOBIA arrangement that recognises three majority groupings, or the six geopolitical zones, or the more than six hundred ethnic groups in Nigeria, then you know that you are getting into troubled waters. So, how do we handle this kind of situation? The North Central could say that they've not had an elected president, and the south-south could argue that their own rulership at the level of presidency was truncated. The South East could argue that they have not had a shot at the leadership of Nigeria since Ironsi. In any case, Ironsi was also a military Head of State and Zik was a ceremonial President. We have all these arguments, and we can look at the merits of the arguments.

Why do we have people who can be easily mobilised or recruited into some of these terrorists' gangs? You want to deal with those kinds of issues. So, we have to look beyond the narrow approach of tackling security threat.

We can start with the South-East by saying, what do you people actually want? Do you want to be a part of Nigeria or you want to opt out? The reason would be simple because they actually fought a war which was about secession. And then you have the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) that are still clamoring for a state of Biafra and young people in the social media have been very wild in the ways they have engaged other Nigerians, in most cases in very unsavoury ways. So, it looks like Mallam Mamman Daura has initiated a debate, and I hope that between now and 2023, we'll make a whole sense out of all the arguments.

But I can see that, at some point, political zoning is going to end and that may be better for everybody, since each group in this country will have a chance of putting

forward their 'competent' leaders at the federal, state and local government levels.

Udu Yakubu: *Talking about the interest of the South, we have politicians from the area positioning for the presidency. To what extent would you say that the interested parties have been building bridges with the rest of the country? Because one thing is definite, the North could not single-handedly produce Buhari as President. No part of this country, as it seems so far, can singlehandedly turn out one of its own to become President without the support of some other parts of the country. Would you say for example that there is serious building of bridges across regions by interested parties, especially those from the South-East?*



Yima Sen: Well, let me tell you something. This thinking that one section cannot produce a president single-handedly is not correct. One section can, and I'll tell you why. You require a spread, a certain geo-political spread of votes in the country to win an election, right? Failing to produce that, what happens next? You go into a bye-election. And what are the requirements for a bye-election? Simple majority. That means one vote. So, you cannot say that one section of the country cannot produce the President. Majority vote in a bye-election means only one vote.

Udu Yakubu: *Which means power could just stay for as long as the North wants it to stay with it?*

Yima Sen: I will tell you that the confidence that has remained in the North now about its power in Nigeria is that it can always win a presidential election whether we

have the South with us or not. That could have happened in the case of Buhari. If it went into a bye-election, he was only looking for one vote. If you look at the pattern of voting in 2015 and in 2019, Buhari was in a position to have won the election, because one vote would have been enough.

Udu Yakubu: *Your analysis is correct. But that hasn't happened in our experience before.*

Yima Sen: But it could happen, right? In other words, we could move from hypothesis to reality?

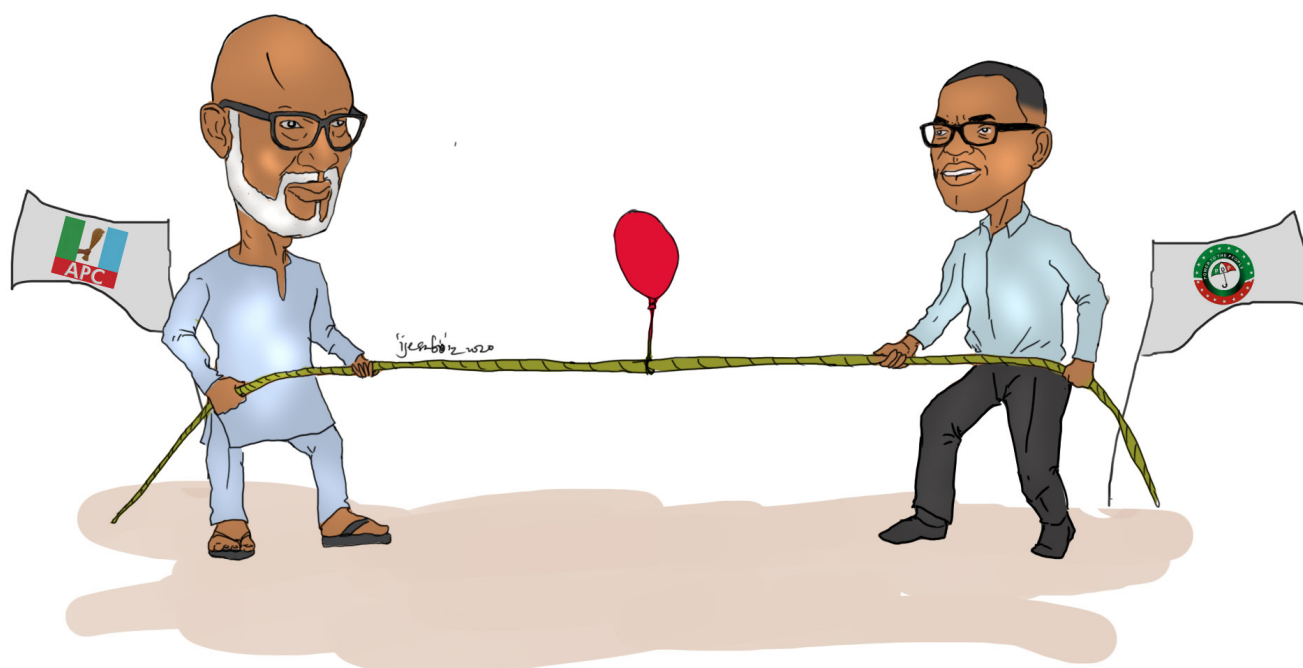
... the confidence that has remained in the North now about power in Nigeria is that we can always win an election whether we have the South with us or not.

Udu Yakubu: *Yeah. So, could this have informed the reasoning in some sections of the North that there should be no zoning, even though the whole idea of zoning itself is questionable in terms of practice? I mean, apart from 1999 when it was a military arrangement in favour of the Southwest, we haven't really had at the presidential level a uniform political process across parties critically founded on the principle of zoning. We've always had contestants across regions challenging one another for the office of President. Only in 1999 did the military force a choice on the country. It was fait accompli. 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, and 2019 all had question marks around them.*

Yima Sen: What was done in 1999 was a concession to the Southwest because of the annulled June 12 Presidential election. But that didn't become the starting point of the zoning formula. Remember that Buhari contested against Obasanjo in 2003. But, after that, the North reclaimed power. President Obasanjo had done 8 years from the South; so, let the North take its own 8 years. In some ways, I'll say zoning has been operational at the party level.

I don't think you can say that what Mamman Daura said is a reflection of Northern thinking. I'm not sure I would say that because anybody could be a beneficiary of zoning and rotation. It could be an Igbo, Ijaw, Kanuri, Tiv. It could be anybody. Anybody could also be a beneficiary of a system based on competence. But, like I told you earlier, I believe that political zoning and rotation is going to die; but I don't know when that would happen. □

ONDO STATE: JOUSTING FOR THE GOVERNORSHIP SEAT AT ALAGBAKA



Ondo State is a contested hotbed of political campaigns. It is the only oil producing state in South West Nigeria. This means it receives the revenue perks and derivatives that is accrued to states in the Niger Delta region. No wonder many have jousted to become the party flagbearer of the prominent parties in the state. The searchlight is beamed on the two major political parties: the Action Progressive Congress, APC, and the People's Democratic Party, PDP. This does not deter from political surprises in the run for the coveted office in Alagbaka from other parties. Dr. Olusegun Mimiko sprung a surprise with the Labour Party, when he defected from the PDP to the Labour Party in 2017 and won the governorship election.

This time around, Barr. Rotimi Akeredolu, the incumbent, emerged winner of the APC primaries. He defeated Chief Olusola Oke, Nathaniel Adojutelegan, Sola Iji, Jumoke Anifowoshe and Akinsehinwa Awodeyi and others to represent the party at the polls in October 10. While Isaac Kekemeke; one of the aspirants who lamented that the organisers of the primary were scheming to favour the incumbent had cooperated with the electoral verdict, Mr. Nathaniel Adojutelegan, told Channels TV that the party election was fraught with bribery and irregularities.

Adojutelegan said he would contest the primaries in court. Akeredolu won with 2458 while Olusola Oke was came a far second with 262 votes. Isaac Kekemeke had 19 votes.

The PDP hopes to reap from the crisis bedevilling the APC. The PDP are a party to watch because they won the state for Alhaji Atiku Abubakar last year, and secured two senatorial seats and three House of Representatives' seats out of nine, for the party. The party welcomed Agboola Ajayi, the state's embattled deputy governor into the party hoping to gain traction from the crisis between him and Governor Akeredolu. Some of the party stalwarts were interested in making him the party flagbearer because he hailed from Ondo-South Senatorial District.

At the PDP primaries, Barr. Eyitayo Jegede defeated Banji Okunomo, Eddy Olafeso, Bode Ayorinde, Boluwaji Kunlere, Sola Ebiseni, Godday Erewa and Agboola Ajayi. He won with 888 votes while Agboola Ajayi came a close second with 657 votes. Consequently, the group, Ondo State Southern Senatorial Patriotic Movement, OSSSPM, urged the winner to choose Agboola as his running mate, in order to gain the support of the entire Ondo-South, to leverage on his influence and to compensate him for

decamping from Akeredolu's Camp.

It is going to be a battle of former Attorney Generals of the State. Akeredolu (SAN) was the Commissioner for Justice and Attorney General for the state when Navy Captain Anthony Onyearugbulem was the Military Administrator between 1996 to 1998. After an impasse, he became the President of the Nigeria Bar Association, NBA in 2008. His NBA Presidency was known for boldly challenging the government to hand over power to the Vice President Goodluck Jonathan to act when President Musa Yaradua was ill and absent. After his tenure at the NBA, he was the governorship candidate for the defunct Action Congress of Nigeria, ACN, in 2012. He lost at the polls to Dr. Olusegun Mimiko.

Eyitayo Jegede, SAN, the party flagbearer of the PDP, also served in the same legal capacity for the state with the Olusegun Mimiko government in 2015. Jegede is respected for his legal depth and experience in engaging election petition matters. He was a former Chancellor of the Anglican Communion of Jalingo, Taraba State. He chaired the implementation committee of the American University, Yola, and was a member, Board of Trustees, Elizade University, Ilara-Mokin, Ondo State. When Mimiko defected to the Labour Party in 2017, Jegede was the governorship candidate of the PDP. He lost to Governor Mimiko at the time.

The political sentiment of choice for the governor, and other political positions, seem to revolve around the principle of senatorial districts. This played out when the Akure Community Development Forum, ACDF, comprising of members of Akure South, Akure North, Idanre and Ifedore expressed their disappointment and demanded a review of the appointment of Chief Tayo Alasoadura, as Minister of State for Labour and Productivity in August 2019. In September 2016, the Ondo State Solidary Congress called on the APC Governorship Candidate, who hails from Ondo-North Senatorial District to choose his deputy from Ondo-South so as to stand a chance to win the governorship election at the time. Jegede's political ambition in 2016 was believed to have scuttled because he came from the same Ondo-Central as former Governor Mimiko.

Governor Akeredolu expressed confidence in returning to Alagbaka based on his exceptional performance in education, health, industrialisation, agriculture, job creation, economic recovery and infrastructural development. He hopes to use the good office to improve the lives of the people of the state by leverage on the potentials of the Deep-Sea Port, Bitumen and Ore deposits in the State. Akeredolu has been lauded for proactive steps in setting up a Palliative Committee to cater for the needs

of the people due to the global pandemic. He has also been praised for his invention on the major road connecting Afin and Eshe in Akoko North Local Government, which may be upgraded if he wins his second term campaign.

Recent flooding in Ese-Odo Local Government and nearby environs, and the showcase of gullies in the major roads in Ondo hinterlands by social activists present a contrary perspective. The protest of Resident Doctors who have accused the State of haphazard deductions from their allowances, of the non-payment of the COVID-19 Hazard and Risk Allowance and the non-availability of Personal Prevention Equipment have also dented the public image of the Governor. The Governor issued a directive to sack some of the protesting doctors in June.

On the Flipside, Eyitayo Jegede hopes to leverage on his track record of Governor Olusegun Mimiko as a contributor to the immense work done by the previous PDP government in Ondo State. This reportedly includes the implementation of a robust healthcare system, education advancement programmes, a celebrated industrialisation development, the improvement of workers welfare, and a foundation for independent power supply or the State. While Political analysts say that the political sentiment of senatorial district may stand in his way again, Eddy Olafeso, the national chairman of the PDP displaced this position by urging voters to consider values like competence, personality and integrity. Jegede hopes to grow the state through public-private partnerships, explore the tourism potentials of the state, support small and medium scale enterprises and provide free basic healthcare to pregnant women and children under the age of 10 years.

Kunle Ajayi, a social activist and a party stalwart of the African Action Congress criticised the governance of Governor Mimiko, and by extension, the governance style of Eyitayo Jegede when he told members of the AAC and the media that the Mimiko government could not sustain their laudable policies because they were not driven by the people of Ondo State. He noted that the AAC has a governance road map that would synergize the achievements and aspirations of the Ajasin government, mend the loopholes in the Mimiko government and resolve the problems created by the Akeredolu government.

The stage is set for the two major parties to engage the people of Ondo State in a far-reaching display of wits, presentation of political manifestos and public relations that may stir loyalty, love and votes for any of the aspirants that wins their hearts.

Femi Morgan

THE PUNISHING POWER OF PERFIDY

Where do words come from? I sometimes ask myself. My memory houses a lot but there are words lying deep inside that do not ordinarily come to the surface. They make their appearance in times unknown to me. 'Perfidy' is one such word. To assure myself that I know what I am doing I went to my dictionaries to tell me what is so terrible about perfidy that it escapes my usual usage. The Oxford English Dictionary, eleventh edition gives its meaning as 'deceitfulness; unworthiness'. The Webster's New World Dictionary tells me perfidy means, the deliberate breaking of faith; betrayal of trust; treachery. My saviour in times of literary trial, Rodale's The Synonym Finder, finds other meanings though closely related: faithlessness, unfaithfulness, disloyalty, duplicity, scheming, hypocritical and other similar words. I use all these words but cannot remember when last, if ever, I used the word perfidy.

Perfidy leads to broken homes, broken hopes; it causes foreclosures; it leads to ruin. It is an unforgivable social sin. Who will save us from the polluting perfidy in our lives – horri-

fying horrors of hunger; putrefying parlours of poverty; decaying dung-hills of disease, a life worse than death itself? I look around me and I trace our helplessness and hopelessness to repeated broken promises beginning as far back as the sixties, leading to the first coup in 1966, and running to now, in 2020, when we say and keep saying, never again a military government. Perfidy thrives on fertile lands, and in the desert sand. Its commanding presence rules history. I value companionship, friendship,



togetherness which all make conversations bubble and give us laughter and joy.

That was the story of our society. In the olden days of University College, Ibadan, in the fifties and early sixties, we would mix and chat and converse and agree and disagree, and shout and smile and laugh. Never did the banter degenerate into fist-cuffs or use of abusive expressions. You won your argument purely on reason or you would be branded a barbarian. And when you gave your word, it was your honour you put out, a

knight in armour defending your name. Trust ruled the day. This was our Nigeria, even during colonial times, perhaps because of colonialism, we had to show the imperialists we were as good as they were, if not better in any aspect of human conduct, and not just in bookwork.

When we speak of honour, do we speak of the past? When we speak of truth do we speak of the past? When we present ourselves with dignity, decorum, diligence and distinction, are we walking back to an abandoned age? Today, truth is a stranger in our discourse and honour has taken a backseat on our national bus. I have searched my mind to come up with what I would regard as a first case of treachery in my early life, especially in my days at University College, Ibadan and I cannot find one. I would have to come later, perhaps, to the first coup of 1966 to find a classic case of treachery, the betrayal of trust. That was when heavy rain started beating us, to answer Achebe's question, in our post-colonial times. Of course there were antecedents and several precipitating causes for this

gutting of our stern resolve. Nigerians welcomed the coup at its birth; unfortunately another coup was to come fast on its heels. More than a coup, there were pogroms of citizens of particular tribes and a civil war ensued not long after. Nigeria was in shreds. Can my country, your country, resurrect from such a bedgralled life?

It riles me that we do not trust one another with the truth of our life as citizens of one country because we do not believe we all belong to this country and

that Nigeria is one in fact. Perhaps, Nigeria is fake news awaiting a reconciliation. The first chance we get we want to escape.

The sad truth is that many Nigerians proudly returned to their country to serve with honour and distinction. If you take a calendar of the University of Ibadan today you will find that most of the staff earned their master's and doctorate degrees from Ibadan or from one other Nigerian university. Some departments in our universities do not have staff with doctorate degrees: their case is dismal, and yet they call themselves uni-

versities turning out degree holders. Perfidy increases and stimulates mediocrity. A different kind of rain has started beating us, one soiled in our unquenchable lust.

I came to University College, Ibadan, in September 1957. Later that year, we broke iron netted fences erected on the ground floor of all halls of residence. The iron nets were erected by the management of the College, with the clear purpose to prevent students from gaining entry into the Halls without duly signing the visitors register if one was a male visiting the only female Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, or vice versa. We saw this as a clear affront on our integrity, freedom and prestige. We expressed our dissonance to the College authorities but redress was nowhere in sight...

The fence-breaking episode was a landmark event in my life at College. All I remember about it was that I was awakened in my sleep by a fellow student who said, 'wake up wake up, we are going to cut down the fence'. I got out of bed and was given two large pieces of metal, sharp at one end. With these, we joined a large number of students and went from hall to hall, and in less than an hour the fences were all cut down lying morbid on the grass. I quickly went back to sleep, a broad smile all over my face, sweat pouring down. Who were the ring leaders, I did not know: I was a freshman, new to university life. We later learnt that a meeting of The Students Union had been called, moving speeches were made, then one of the leaders shouted, 'Down with the cages.' This act to me compares with Mark Anthony's speech after Caesar's assassination: 'Now let it work. Mischief thou art afoot, take thou what course thou wilt.' And the citizens ran out to deal a blow to the miscreants, seeking Brutus and Cassius.

As no one came forward to own up to the offence, as required by College, the university was closed, and all the students rusticated. With all its sophistication and style, the college was intimidating, issuing challenge after challenge, the like of which mere mortals could not meet. I wondered why the stalwart ringleaders, the indefatigable firebrand radicals caused the fence-breaking debacle and led students to their rustication with much enthusiasm did not come forward to own up to their noble acts.

Why did they not come forward?

I had expected that one would be sufficiently bold and, armed with fortitude, own up to whatever it was one did rather than have innocent people victimised on account of one's action. Most students did not participate in the fence-breaking episode. I wondered; would we, members of the Students' Un-

ion, not have opted to be rusticated rather than have whoever our leaders sent out of the college? I would vote that we all suffer rather our leaders for an act we would have approved of and in which a good number of us participated... Yes, I would have voted for the fences to be torn down if there was a referendum on this question.

I now wonder: can this be considered the first act of treachery in Nigeria? Of course not: the students acted against the Matriculation Code that required us to obey all College regulations and disobeying the regulations cannot be regarded as treachery or perfidy. If you consider the Matriculation Code as analogous to the Nigerian Constitution, would a military coup be treated as perfidy? A military coup is an act of treason punishable by death. Disobeying college rules was not an act of treason and the punishment awarded was rustication, not death by the firing squad.

Our Constitution has been violated and butchered over and over again, in one coup after another, with complete abandon. The season of perfidy arrived a long time ago and seems to have metamorphosed into a word we use heedlessly; corruption. Corruption is a break with faith, a break with the truth, it is treason, it drives us against one another in a war where poverty is pummelled and avarice exulted. Corruption must die.

The revelations we are reading about the Niger Delta Development Commission tell us that perfidy is charging to the front, drawing all of us with it. The legislative arm is controlling the chariots reining in the horses when they dispute the journey being undertaken; where the windfall is small. We learn that a man said he took 1.35 billion naira (not 1.5 billion, as was alleged) as palliative in the COVID-19 pandemic. I shudder to think what he would take as treatment and cure for the viral attack, when he gets one. Perfidy survives in our lust, and has been given a new life in our diversity, in our ethnicity. It must die. It must face the firing squad.

Prof. Mark Nwagwu
Retired professor of Zoology, a poet, novelist

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STAMP DUTY: A LOOMING TENANCY CRISIS?

Nigerians are concerned by the increasing collection of taxes in the country amid the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic raging across the world. The pandemic, according to available reports, is currently forcing some countries into economic recession. Many Nigerians are trying to unravel the rationale behind the recent increase of Value Added Tax, VAT, from 5% to 7.5% earlier in the year, the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) decided that landlords and property agents should pay 6% stamp duty on tenancy agreement. Certain business owners have had to shut down their businesses or ventured into an entirely new line of business due to the prolonged lockdown. Employees, on the other hand, have had to take temporary pay cuts, granted furlough by employers or laid off altogether.

The problem seems to be in different folds. According to a survey conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), about 43% of respondents were reported to have lost their jobs whilst over 50% have difficulties in supporting their families.

The government is also perturbed about the dip in the country's finance, which stems from the huge investment in curtailing the spread of COVID-19, spending on various stimulus packages, and grappling with unaccounted funds due to corrupt practices in some government parastatals among others.

While Nigerians have continued to develop strategies of adapting to the current challenges, the government devised means of generating funds to sustain the economy, an economy predicted to face the worst recession since the 1980s, according to a report by the World Bank Nigeria Development Update.

The report also revealed that, COVID-19 shock could push about 5 million Nigerians into poverty in 2020, pegging the poverty rate at 42.5% from 40.1% in 2019.

In the wake of this, the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), instructed landlords and property agents to charge tenants a 6% stamp duty on both tenancy and lease agreements. Speaking on this, the Director, Tax Policy of the FIRS, Mr. Mathew Gbonjubola explained

that; 'The 6% stamp duty is for tenancy above 21 years, while 7 to 21 years lease or tenancy attracts 3%, and less than 7-years tenancy is below 1% (0.78%).'

Recently, some panelist during a virtual conference also stated that, 'Nigerians should accept the fact that the country can no longer rely solely on revenue accruing from its natural resources to fund the budget, hence the need to embrace taxation as the new normal of national fiscal policy.'

The Trade Union Congress of Nigeria (TUC) and the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) have condemned the move by the government as being ill-timed. They have also called on the government to postpone such move. Social media also went agog when the news broke with a lot of criticism. Many labelled the government as one indulging in a give-and-take system.

Considering the cost incurred by tenants before and after moving into an apartment, which includes but not limited to actual rent fee, agency and commission fee, damages fee, utility bill, security bill and other miscellaneous fees. An addition of stamp duty on new agreement, however little, may be an extra burden for a tenant who has been laid off or is trying to revive a business.

Also, there is a need to sensitize tenants and potential tenants on how and when the stamp duty is paid to avoid being exploited by unsuspecting agents and landlords.

According to the Coordinating Director, Tax Operations Group of the FIRS, Femi Oluwaniyi, 'If a new agreement is drawn up at renewal, that document should be stamped, just like (the) initial agreement. If, however, the renewal terms are already in the initial agreement, such that no new document is prepared, but just payment of the rent for renewal, then no stamping is required.'

Speaking to Ms. Faith a resident in Lagos, she disclosed that 'It is inconsiderate and wicked on the part of the government to implement such at this time.

'At the moment I have not been earning an income as a private school teacher due to the pandemic, I can barely feed not to talk of paying up my utility bill and I have

cont'd on pg 15

AFRICANS MUST HOLD FAST TO THEIR VOICES



One wouldn't be denying the truth that being a dedicated Africanist and African writer is a privilege. And it sure has its perks, the major one of which is the pleasure you get from promoting in your own way, the voices from your home. It's an exciting and heady feeling to spill your creativity in the warmth and freedom only home offers.

There is a freedom that comes from being able to soar in spaces known to you, your wings being carried by the same air you breathe. It is the freedom that comes from writing about the people and events you see every day or have witnessed when you lived here. It is the freedom a proper Lagosian in Nigeria or Ghanaian feels writing of the aromatic flavours of ewa agoyin and kenke, agbo or akpeteshi than of burgers in MacDonalds and coffee from Starbucks. There is the need to reiterate that African writers think about the beauty of home, because home is a beautiful place. What is better than thinking about home than writing about it?

One wouldn't also deny the obvious truth that is evident in our habit of promoting African literature. In holding on to one, we usually neglect, quite naturally, the beauty entrenched in other literatures of the world. In a sense, you would have once or twice been labelled as an adherent of literary bigotry and prejudice. I'm a member of this quasi-minority party. Many would ask what is the use of art when

it is limited to a particular continent. Indeed, literature, and art in general, is a monolithic structure that should not be broken into continental divides. However, 'what is the use of art if it doesn't speak of its own experience?'

Literature, like language, exists within the society that produces it. Oral literature, myths, rituals and dances all join to build the tapestry of the literature of a society. What, is the benefit of literature when it doesn't speak of its creators? Would it not be problematic to bring in a stranger into our own ilo to play the ogene they never knew, to soothe ancestral masquerades of whose powers they have never heard about? We believe no one would be able to tell our stories better than us. We are the only ones privy to the keys of our broken pipe, and we know the ways around it to produce great music.

Can we be literary 'racists'? What constitutes the laws that proposed an artist should be only one of the two; of the world or of his own people? What law prescribed that we cannot be on both sides and yet lean more heavily to our own voice? Where was it written? The artist is empowered to tap into the resources of the world in his works, but he or she is let off in his choice on how he wants his stories to be told, of who or what he wants to tell his story.

It disturbs my being when African writers, preservers of their people's culture, find it difficult to love African writers. Rather, many which I know quite personally, feel safer with the words of Chase, Rowlings, Sheldon, Clarke, and others who, in many cases, know little or nothing about our own culture. While I feel, on one hand, that it is not in my place to choose what literature a person should naturally enjoy, I feel it's in my place to express the need for us to do better as writers from Africa. Chinua Achebe, in his 2012 book, *There was a Country*, stated directly, and I paraphrase; that as writers, African writers as it were, our job is not to be standoffish and aloof to the problems of our people, but to be active participants in it. The African writer is identified as a torch bearer for his people. He or she should be a nationalist who should not stand on the sidelines of his people's problems, but to address it by entering headlong. Achebe further advises that this is not the time to talk about flowers and rocks and love and all, but the moment to address serious issues.

I personally respect African writers. I see them as preachers of a gospel many are scared to engage. The African story must

be told. The African writer's decision to not talk about the problems of his people is an internal problem; a problem of self. Our story has long been kept in the dark, and our people are afraid to tell it. It's amazing that while we are afraid to speak of the demons we know right in our own evil forests; we feel comfortable in describing the feel of a MacDonald burger. What has blurred the vision of the African writer to his own story? What has stolen our voices? The answers can be found quite easily these days, and I daresay they are answers that are quick to see. An investigation of the psychology of the African reveals a disgusting plethora of truths.

The African story has long been darkened and almost demonized. Toni Morrison's 1970 novel, *The Bluest Eye*, opens further these startling revelations when the protagonist herself, Pecola Breedlove, experiences the ugly black and white relationship in 1941 America. With the recent global outburst of the BLACK LIVES MATTER movement and other racial derivatives, such as 'Asian Lives Matter,' 'Jewish Lives Matter,' which arose quickly by the brutal killing of forty-six-year-old George Floyd by three policemen in Minneapolis, United State of America. The revelations raised by the killing of George Floyd has opened ancient wounds concerning race, slavery, lack of equal opportunities, discrimination and developmental segregation. However, to state clearly that this is a white-black problem would be understating the point here. The evil of racism has transcended white-black relations. It is no longer a problem of blacks and whites and the usual racist dynamics.

The problem has ceased to become an issue of colour bars, it has now become somewhat familial, and internal. In Richard Wright's 1968 novel, *Native Son* and Ngugi wa Thiong'o's 1976 protest play, *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, we are indeed appalled to experience black inhumanity to black, or at least black disbelief in the worth of their fellow blacks. For instance, in Wright's novel, Bigger Thomas's relations with his "black clique" made up of Gus and the other young folks, and his relation with the older Daltons blurs the line between this black and white reality. The psychology of many blacks has been tuned to filtering between shades of black. Black is not black anymore. We'd be damned to believe there is only one shade of black. Comparing the blackness and social realities of George Floyd, a black American living in America and the blackness of a Nigerian living in Nigeria would be understating the problem.

It's a sad reality that many blacks have become 'white' in the mind. It is a shame in the first place that I allude to racist tendencies in my description of white. In the first sense, there

should be no white or black, but one people, one human group. However, that would be retracting the clear racial realities. Even in Nigeria, there's the evident shades of 'racism' which many choose to call it 'ethnicism.' In order to resolve the white-black problem, each racial group must come to terms with their unique racial and cultural differences. If we must accept racial divides, there should be no middle grounds. Ibrahim Xolani Kendi in his 2019 autobiography, *How to be an Antiracist*, proposes that we can only be either racists or antiracists. We cannot be both. I believe that if there must be a need for a double standard, there must be a corresponding degree of absoluteness. This is what accounts for the fact that after the death of Floyd, following world-wide protests, many African nations and African organizations never took a stand against Floyd's killing. Save a mumble here and a grumble there, there was not any extensive, definite, aggressive stand taken by African communities outside America to condemn the Minneapolis tragedy. Even the African judicial system itself seems to be having a field day over the death of a fellow brother who lost his life to racially-spurred police brutality.

There seems to be an odd reversal at play. We never take ourselves too seriously when we should, and when we shouldn't make any move to address issues, we come up with set plans all ready to misplace priorities. It all boils down to our impression of ourselves and in the quality and worth of our humanity. The average African sees himself only in the light of how he is viewed by the West. The average writer judges himself based on the criteria laid by Europe and America. We view ourselves only in the way the whites see us, all because we have been taught to believe that they are the signpost of rightness and flawlessness. For instance, we debunk our age-long religions to take on the belief systems brought by the West. Unfortunately, we have been made to believe that Christianity is the only way to God; and anyone is free to offer a rebuttal here. We have embraced religion, while we neglect the content of our hearts, which is the primary purpose of our faith. We forget that Christianity is not salvation. We forget that it is simply a religion, pointing the way of its adherents to their individual salvations. We need, in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's words, "A decolonization of our minds," and not be clouded and deluded by baseless, simplistic spirituality.

We must understand that by our actions and inactions, we only testify to the quite obvious truth that colonialism never really ended with the departure of the colonisers. Colonialism lives still in the hearts of many. We have become willing slaves, mental puppets, dancing to the tunes of an unknown visitor. This explains why in these times, writers treasure the Pulitzers and Nobel prizes in literature far above our indigenous literary

prizes and honours. We no longer see the worth of our craft until it is vetted, acknowledged and praised by the West.

Even in our music, we imagine an album would be great because our own artist featured a 'white' counterpart. To us, whiteness has become the golden symbol of high achievements. What is deeply sad is that the West is fully aware of this mental frame. They exploit this knowledge in the best ways they can. 'White' rice equals better rice, 'white' soaps equal better soaps, 'white' lotions equal better skin, 'white' movies equal better movies and beat off our home videos; 'white' schools have become the best ones for us. 'White' and 'West' have become paragons of superiority, excellence and class. This plays out a nauseating continuity.

The African languages have not been left out of this abnormality. Europe and America have not ceased in their linguistic efforts to dominate African societies in the 19th to 20th century but to foreground their powers after independence. There seems to be a linguistic imposition by the West in order to weaponize the language to win political and economic laurels for themselves. The English language is possibly the greatest, widely spoken and accepted language of the world with a linguistic system which I use. I do not regret I studied the language in the university. Any trained linguist is very aware of the relevance and the currency of the English language. So, it would be almost slavish and illogical of me to state that the English language should be taken off as the language of global communication.

However, following Ngugi's arguments in his 1986 book, *Decolonising the Mind: the Politics of Language in African Literature*, and of course going by his motivation for writing the book, we have little choice but raise our eyebrows when foreign students in some universities and colleges in Europe and America are prohibited from speaking their native languages in formal gatherings. In some schools, it is written down as a law for non-English students to stick to the English language. If all languages, truly, are equal, what judicial wand has been waved to compel English to be more equal than others? This is a question we need to ask. It only goes to subjugate another language when a speaker of Igbo is derided because they cannot speak the English language. It leaves me to wonder when language became a yardstick to judge intelligence.

We are therefore stuck in quick sand, or so it seems. Or are we simply willing slaves to a now unwilling master? We now appear to be our own colonizers, the puppets pulling the same strings once held by our colonizers. This was Chinweizu

Jaime's stance in his 1983 book, *Towards the Decolonization of African Literature*. Africans need to be set free, and also set themselves free, from the cultural, linguistic and creative limitations that once stood as the rule. We need to set off the garments put on us by Western literary and political propaganda.

We have the English language as a gift for our creative expression. I mean, it is the world's most spoken language, and if you understand global economics, you will understand the need to write with the language. But then, should it be seen as the landmark of great writing? In any case, there is the need for the African writer today to express himself in the language that suits him, and when he does this, let it be without fear or favour. Of all things, language has no hold on the will of art to thrive. And this is my singular grouse, and at the same time, praise with Amos Tutuola's novel, *The Palmwine Drinkard*. Perhaps, Tutuola's book would have made a more outstanding progress had it been first published in the author's mother tongue, Yoruba. I praise D.O Fagunwa's 1938 work, *Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmole*, later translated by Wole Soyinka in 1968, for writing it and published it in Yoruba.

While we understand the place of the rules placed on us, Africans cannot afford to be afraid to explore the world beyond their chains. It's time that African creatives rise up to the task of engaging the world they know and the world they were born into. While, once again, it's not in my place to be prescriptive, I can't help but feel bothered. My bother stems from hearing writers and creatives worth some onions making bold to write about a world they have never lived in; about people they have never met. What is the sense in writing odes to snow you have never touched when we can as well sing to the skies, oriki to the Harmattan? What is the worth of being African when Ogun, Amadioha and Yemoja remain veiled in the dark crypts of your creation? African writers are to push forward the gospel of our own stories. While I would commend Taiye Selasi's propagation of the Afropolitanist doctrine with its advocacy that Africans and African writers are citizens of the world, I must also reiterate the need for writers to give greater thought to the development of our own unique stories. We must be intentional about our people, and we must write about our realities in our works from every corner of the world, and in whatever language of the world we choose to use.

African writing should become a testimony to the boldness and creative maturity of the African. We must begin to hold our voices with a deeper certainty to speak of the ills of the world. We must take the time to catalogue our own stories to present our timeless effort at growing.

In a phonology class in Level 3, about three years ago in

2017, while I listened to Professor V.O. Awonusi's lecture on Intonation, I grew livid and was compelled to pose a question to him in the 200-plus-man class. It was more of a challenge to him than an actual inquest. I still fail to tell where the bravery came from.

'Do we have to use this when we speak?'

He was silent a moment before he replied. I cannot readily remember his retort, but I was glad it was not a confrontational encounter that day. I believe he got my point. If I could risk forfeiting a good grade in the course, I would have told him this: every geography in the world is blessed with its own peculiarities and impediments, and these differences define their uniqueness. Every nation is unique in its own ways. It is in our peculiarities that our beauty lies. This cannot and should not be changed.

I would relate this to language. My conviction is simple. In my opinion, and I believe others, too, it would be disrespectful and over assuming to attempt to impose the accent of the British or American, as the case may be, on us Africans. We are bound to the British only by linguistic and cultural ties such as in their ways of eating, dressing, among others. However, we are Africans, bound by the same ancestral blood, pain, colonial torture and exploitation; slavery and oppression. I could recommend that Africans 'swap' accents on an annual schedule. To the English are we bound by a history of colonialism only with its several exploitative angles. It is disheartening that a host of Nigerians, Angolans, Ghanaians, Zimbabweans, have not yet accepted this reality. Sadly, we are still bound to the past, Ghana to 1957, Nigeria to 1960. It is rather unfortunate that we have begun to believe that the accent of the British is superior to that of Nigerians. I would not be myopic, anyway, to ignore the fact that this nuance is borne out of the age-long colonial 'supremacy' that has now become ingrained in the fabric of our existence.

I taught English phonetics and grammar in schools for more than five years. I hope to one day teach Igbo Grammar, too. I'm proud that the Igbo language is beginning to gain access into distant territories outside the Nigerian shores. In one of those schools, the teachers were wont to teaching their pupils the doctrine of speaking like the Englishman! It particularly irked me when they recited the national anthem, punctuating every word with needless stresses, their young, impressionable voices breathing a corruption of the English tongue!

The one thing I would not fail to tell my introductory classes right in front of those same teachers, in my usual revolutionary manner, was this:

'I would teach you how to pronounce these words correctly. But you must speak with the accent you were born with. The greatest African men and women did not take on the accents of the English but stuck to their own, only stealing their words. You are African, not English, not American. Speak with your accent and not that of a stranger!' I hope they listened to the last part.

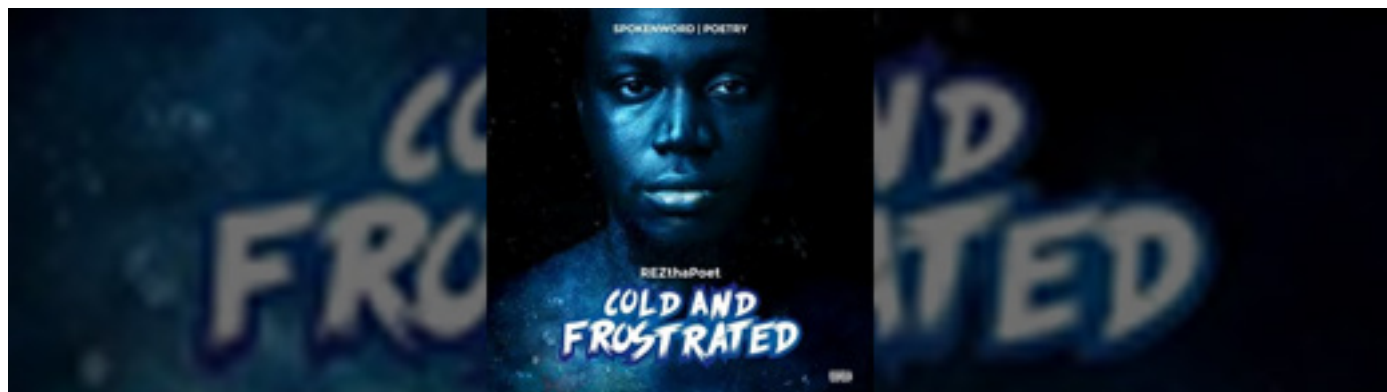
Africa's literary leadership, African writers and indeed the entirety of the African race must step up to a beckoning reality. While the obligation rests on the African governments to ensure that our products--literary, commercial, social, and others, come up to par as much as possible with those from our foreign counterparts, our creatives must make our literary output better. Many are doing so. However, there is greater work to do.

One slice of interest for me is in translations and transliterations. How eager is the literary writer to use speech nuances that are only native to his tribe? How does the writer use his English words? Does he, like Achebe posits, dip his words in the oil of proverbs and the mythoi of his race? Our writers should promote more of their languages in their novels, plays and poems. Literature allows for such practices. We are allowed to bend the language into our own, domesticate it and nativise it so much so that it reads like the author's deviant tongue. How much are we willing as writers to let foreign readers of our works go the extra mile to find out the meaning of the words we use? The big question begging for an answer is, really, how many African writers are willing to write in their local languages now? Save the pioneers of the practice such as Pita Nwana who kicked off the Igbo novel, D.O Fagunwa who wrote in Yoruba, Ngugi wa Thiong'o who started writing initially in Gikuyu, and a few others, how many more writers would dare to write a novel in Hausa? It was a big sacrifice that these writers had to pay in the form of relatively low sales of their books, but in the end, it is a sacrifice which if generally taken up by our new, budding writers, would yield great fruits in the long run. The African writer must begin to hold fast and true to his voice. In the end, our voices are the only weapons we have to peg down our realities.

Nzube Nlebedim

Fiction writer, dramatist, poet, critic and editor

THEMES AND TEMPO OF REZTHAPOET'S *COLD AND FROSTRATED*



There is no breaching the idea that Adebola Afolabi, commonly known by his pseudonym, REZthaPoet, is here to stay. The sheer consistency of spoken word poetry production for one, and the ambient consequence of his art for another. I heard of his new album to be on the 13th of July, 2020 and I made a mental pledge to listen to the material once it was out. In my modest consideration, it was a good investment of my time. However, *Cold and Frostrated*, proved to me again, how materials of such standing might never get quality commercial reach and success, owing to the climate in which it is released.

In the tradition of most arts that reflect the state of being per time—political, economic or otherwise—REZ follows the line of thorough activism knotted with rhythmic pleasure with his new spoken word album. This perhaps informed the first line of the first track: 'I have 60 years of rage is buried in my 15 years of age!'. In the same track, he takes his angst further when he threatens statesmen who are the obvious bane of our collective existence in the country: 'You shan't sleep easy!'. What is of most importance here however, is the balance in the faulting affair. The poet makes it clear that the finger-pointing business goes both ways, after all bad leaders come from an equally bad citizenry. This he bared when he said; 'The young Nigerian / a digital thief / Self-proclaimed Robinhood'. But it gets cyclical, as he comes back to the politicians, telling them: 'This is what we are made of / this is what you made us'.

The poet reflects the use of young people to perpetuate electoral violence and speaks for the youth when he said '.../I've been fighting for you/ one day I'll be fighting you!'. In the second track, the poet continues this daring advocacy,

only this time it is on account of the younger generation who wander in a country without a plan for their future. According to the statistics, there are 33 million Nigerian youths and counting. He makes it clear that we are sitting on a keg of gunpowder. And perhaps like most folks better cultured in their natal tongue than in English, he goes home with capturing the denial of the future by the present thus

...let's play the ostrich / e je ka ma gba penalty lo throwing.
By track three, REZ explains malignant patriarchy differently. While the philandering man in our parts is termed 'Community Penis', REZ fuses this into another concept of advocacy that borders on the feminist perspective. He calls on all 'Entitled Penis' to have a rethink by respecting women and doing away with their bloated egos.

—At birth the little prince is indoctrinated / you are the man / never see bobbies as the rival / they are the weaker sex.
—The only job he knows is to sow seeds / that million sperm cells like bullets that are sprayed from a rifle.

Taking a cue from human nature, Adebola takes a turn from his near-militant advocacy, so much that one begins to wonder how a person so impenetrable on virtues, can be the passionate lover caught in the thrill of romance in another poem. Nevertheless, Fela, Marley, Dube toed this line. REZ's Track four, which is probably my best of all the tracks:

—I want to hug you / hold your ends, and feel your skin / you have taken me on a mental travel without my approval
—You have chosen to whet my dreams / your attention has become my restoration
Wrecked from the elusiveness of this coy love interest, he continues to entreat her attention:

—Help me make sense of you
 —Baby be clear / be like daylight.

In *You*, track 5, REZ buckles in utter dissolution by professing his love to this same love interest. He expresses loneliness and longs for homecoming.

—You and me together / you bring me to better / you sing me the letters / and you make me these feathers
 —You are the sky / you make me fly / and win in this weather.
 And in track 6, *Home* is always you, he continues on his mystery and eulogy for this unnamed love interest when he says: Your pressing questions, pregnant with their own answers.

In the fashion of faithful poets, who despite the diversions of love and loving, REZ returns to his calling; committing to his mission of truth. Only this time, he is despairing. He makes it known that despite his artistic and activist inclinations, he lives in a material world, which makes one have needs that can only be fulfilled by money. A world that though espouses work as a virtue towards the green fields of comfort, but in a twist, portrays money and gains the wealth as the reward of those who are able to shortchange society.

They say time is money / it is why I'm seeking Benjamin's watch he says. And then he lets it known that evil however ugly it is painted, takes strength to resist: I've paid my dues / mourning tears for lost jewels / trying to resist yahoo.

In my opinion, Adebola loses savour and takes the graph to the lowest percentile by the eight track, which I think has no business in the album whatsoever. It stands there like a filler-present without purpose.

By track 9, *Black* is, brings back the fervent verses of the poet. Here he proudly displays the sheened feathers of blackness. Bringing to mind the negritude movement by the Martinique and Black French poets in the 60s. The musicality of this track must not be mistaken. It is a crisscross of Hop Hop and Jazz genres made to accompany his poetry. Both rap and jazz are rooted in the African-American enslavement musical history. Here he says:

—Black is the depth of blindness / the pregnancy of light / the acknowledgement of our own perception to all we know exists but haven't seen.

—Remember that black is the pupil in the eye of the world as we learn about our evolution.

Awani, track 10, has the poet extolling the virtues of his Yoruba heritage. One might even be tempted to he was even reciting panegyric of the entire Yoruba people. He starts with a bold metaphor that conveys the origins and the journey of the Yoruba people.

—We are the people who came to create a new Egypt.
 —Our dreams are captured in the essence of the Ooni.
 —We are the roots, fruits, branches of the tree known as Lamurudu.

And then in the Yoruba, he further extols:

—Yoruba lo l'aso / Yoruba lo l'asa

Lyricaly, I believe this is the most accomplished of all the tracks. Perhaps because REZ is more at home with the Yoruba language, and he is delving into a subject that is dear to him. He is able to invent usage with dexterity and imagine new ways of saying ancient verses with new impulses.

In track 11, REZ returns to the spirit of advocacy that he started with. Only this time, his poetry takes the form of the good old call and response practiced in the dramaturgy of ancient ethnic groups across Africa. This time, it is question and answers: one question, with several answers. He uses this track to explore the desperate urge for power amongst the Nigerian political class.

—How do you win elections in Nigeria? And he answers: —Be comfortable with blood.

Yet he continues answering this poser, because there really is no one way to it, no one way to evil:

—Love crimson / and be able to make any day valentine / be sure to be the antichrist.

—Be open to marabouts. Touts and men of God who profess lies from their mouths.

—Destroy education / and ensure pampering and tampering with censors / most notably, promote illiteracy / intimidate those who are carrying out their civic duties.

This builds up towards the closing track: *Greatest Nigerian* yet to be born. In the voice of a student union leader, he engages the frustrations of many educated Nigerian youths whose only hope for a better lease of life is to straddle foreign embassies and strive to escape an unbearable homeland.

—The greatest Nigerian is yet to be born / for the world today wouldn't let him come.

—This land is a cannibal / feeding on live dreams and making impotent memoirs of the carcass of the dead ones.

—The greatest Nigerian couldn't be born / as the lord of darkness, PHCN, / exercises might whilst the doctors was in the middle of an oxygen-assisted caesarean.

Structurally, the poet arranged the tracks in a cyclical manner, which is nothing short of admirable.

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Culture & Lifestyle

GOING UP NORTH

With the outbreak of COVID-19 and the lockdown rules in most nations of the world, Nigeria inclusive, the tourism industry has been one of the most affected. Many in the travel and hospitality business did not include the restriction on travels in their 2020 vision boards. They wished COVID-19 away when Nigeria's first case was reported in February. Unfortunately, the number of positive cases in Nigeria now hovers above thirty thousand. Unfortunately, too, travels can only be physical and it is obvious that going back to normal will take some time. I am a travel lover and writer known in the travel industry circles as Nomadic Natinee. I am one of the teeming number of people trying also to cope with the COVID-19 reality. At the moment, COVID-19 has disrupted behaviours and the activities we once took for granted. For

me, reliving those moments is one of the coping mechanisms in the new normal.

Never mind the simplicity and lucid nature of my language. I love that my readers get to experience, as much as graphically possible, the very same things that I got myself into while my travels lasted. I am a dromomania, always

looking for every excuse to hit the road. I infuse in my role as a youth 'champion for the Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs', with my love for travel. As I travel, I make sure I reflect the potent power of cultural consideration or integration at promoting peace and understanding.

This is my own way of embracing the 'New Normal'. I am reliving my trip up north. Sequel to the 4th National Family Planning Conference in December 2018, I decided to visit Kano and spend time with my sister. I departed Abuja very early on the 7th of December for Kano. As a frequent traveler, I knew that relying on the ATM in transit was a risky venture, as every attempt at withdrawal would most likely be met with looking queues. Lagos is about the only place in Nigeria where you can move about cashless. We left Utako Park at 10:15am and didn't get to Kano till about 4pm. There were stopovers everywhere drivers heard the "Adhan".

I enjoy stopovers on long road trips especially in the North because this presents the opportunity to stretch my legs,

and to take in my environment. Most times, I look forward to "Adhan" and get excited when it comes up. One other important thing I do when I travel is to dress the part. I like to look like the people and places I will be visiting. When I knew I was going to the North, I decided to adopt the (Muslim woman) 'Hajiya' look. On this trip, I had my scarf and my Abaya-like clothes on.

After two stopovers for salats, we got to Kano some minutes past 5pm. At this time, I was drained but the mosquitoes would have none of it. You run away from traffic in Lagos only to get to Kano and find yourself in an infested zone. Even the Air Conditioner did not help the situation. I left Abuja on the 7th of December. The National Family Planning Conference



City of Sokoto

had ended quite late on the 6th of December. My sister's birthday was December 8, so I thought we should visit the mall and just hangout. It wasn't my first time in Kano so I knew where to visit.

While in Kano, I uploaded pictures of fun times with my sisters and my niece with our

location on Facebook, and that was when the Direct Messages started coming. 'Come to Sokoto now, you will love the experience; you know you like to travel.' Sokoto is not far from Kano. It's like Lagos to Ibadan'. I spent another night under the mosquito net and decided that I could no longer bear being assaulted by mosquitoes. It helped me decide to visit Sokoto fast. I just wanted to get away.

You're probably wondering, mosquitoes in Kano? There are mosquitoes almost everywhere in Kano, but these ones are insecticide resistant. Before I visited, I used to hear the joke that when you go to Kano for the first time, the people don't ask how you're enjoying Kano. They ask how you're enjoying the mosquitoes.

I was excited and ready for my 'Lagos to Ibadan' kind of trip' by December 9, I woke up early to leave with the first bus till my sister assured me that Northerners are never in haste like Lagos people. I quietly screened my invitations again, checked for tourists and fun places to visit in Sokoto. I was pulled in

immediately I heard Goronyo Dam. It helped me decide to visit Sokoto, since ‘a Lagos to Ibadan distance kind of trip’ is almost no trip for a traveler like me. I travel on budget, so accommodation is a big deal for me. I found two hosts in Sokoto: the Corper’s lodge in Goronyo and Gidan Dare in Sokoto. I settled for Gidan Dare because it was a town.



Waziri Junaidu History and Culture Bureau

I got to the park at about 10:00am and heard that the cost of transportation from Kano to Sokoto was N2,500. The Lagos girl; the ‘Okada’ friendly nomad was further convinced it wasn’t a long journey. Through this journey, my co-passengers struck me like people that were unperturbed. They couldn’t communicate in the official language of their country. If you ever plan relocating to the North or you have something to do there, please learn Hausa. Unlike my brothers from the East who codemix, making their words decipherable, the Northerners are not ready to meet you half way. I tried making conversations with the persons beside me to no avail.

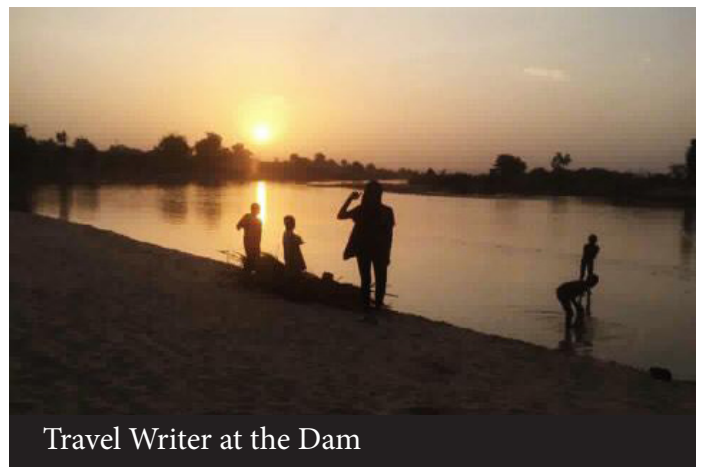
During the stopover at Zamfara at about 4pm was when I knew I had been misinformed. I realized we still had Birnin Kebbi before Sokoto. This trip had me seated for over seven hours with about two stopovers for prayers on a traffic free road. We kept going, tarred roads, arid land, camels, horses, almajiris, mud houses, and thatched roofs. We finally got to Sokoto at 6pm and I was traumatised. I knew I wouldn’t make it back by road. I started plotting how to go back to Lagos from Sokoto by air.

Sokoto welcomed me to the harmattan and I snuggled under the duvet for another 24 hours trying to recover from the stress of the road, while I consulted the gods of the trip for places to see in ‘Sakwatto’. Many times, I tried having interactions with people or do things unassisted; I got frustrated and went back home. I could not even buy groceries in the market without making phone calls to my host to speak to the person. All I knew was ‘Naira Deri’, ‘Naira Hamsi’ for the bikes that I took almost everywhere.

One of the many shocks I got in Sokoto was that about forty-eighty years after the civil war, like almost everywhere

I have visited in North, the average Igbo person is still being referred to as ‘Nyamiri’. I found a Nyamiri restaurant where I could eat food my taste buds were familiar with. De Favourite Restaurant on Ahmadu Bello Way, Sokoto. ‘Nyamiri’ is a corrupted Igbo phrase “Nyem Miri”, which literally means ‘give me water’.

I was told that during the war, many Igbos were famished, the first thing they asked for on encountering soldiers, who were mostly Northerners was water. ‘Nyamiri’ is a condescending way of reminding them of how vulnerable they were those days. I am appalled that this phrase has and is still being passed on from generation to generation. My host is ‘Wazobia’, an Igbo by origin who has lived most of his childhood and his life in the North. He has both linguistic and communicative competence in the Hausa and Yoruba languages.



Travel Writer at the Dam

Meanwhile, I finally made it to Goronyo Dam in Sokoto. It was really another distance; maybe that was the Lagos to Ibadan trip I was expecting. Sokoto to Goronyo took me about one hour thirty minutes from the Sokoto Central Park. My host at Goronyo was a Corps member or ‘corper’ as popularly called, so, the Corpers lodge in Goronyo was my first place of call. It was an abandoned local government secretariat without light, and water. I was extremely happy that I chose Gidan Dare over the place. In fairness to the local government, my corper friend told me they had other provisions for corpers, but they chose the current place over the other places, because of the location. The new lodge was close to the highway, away from the community. The corpers there would rather stay there than expose themselves to areas where they could easily be whisked away without being noticed by the villagers.

After the basic introductions and exchange of pleasantries, we made to visit the Goronyo Dam. About five corpers decided to come to the Dam with me. It wasn’t surprising to hear that some of the corpers at the lodge didn’t know there was a Dam in the community, talk less of visiting the place. That they were willing to join us meant company for me. It was a beautiful walk through the community and I must give it to the youths of Goronyo, those folks are soccer loving people. They seem

unperturbed by the lack of access to the basic amenities, as they simply focused on community football. Every available space was made a football pitch.

We got to the Dam and met its reclining water as it was dry season. It was breathtaking watching the sunset in December as I ticked Goronyo Dam off the list of places to visit in Sokoto. Goronyo is one of the places which have placed Sokoto on the map for tours and economic development, thanks to the reservoir created by the Dam. Constructed and completed in May 1984, the dam is the second largest man-made lake in Nigeria and it is used for water supply, irrigation, recharging of aquifer, flood regulation, fisheries and tourism in Sokoto and Kebbi states. It was built across the Rima River and located near Keta village. As I did learn, it was constructed and completed in May 1984.

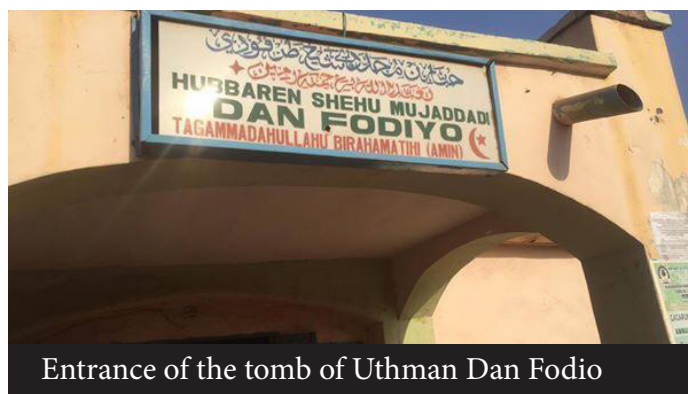


City of Sokoto

My trip to Sokoto got me falling in love with minarets, structures and trying to understand the dynamism of the Almajiri, a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the social fabric of Northern Nigeria. I left Goronyo at 7:00pm and got to town quite late. I went to bed charting the course for my next tour. For me, any visit to Sokoto as a tourist is incomplete without a stop at popular Sultan of Sokoto's Palace which was my next point to explore.

I look forward to visiting the Sultan of Sokoto's Palace in a more organised fashion. Prior to Sokoto, I had visited Kano on another trip where I went to the Gidan Makama - the Museum, adjacent the Museum was the Emir's of Kano's palace. My friends and I tried to get into the Emir of Kano's

palace and was barred at the gate. The men at the gate told us we couldn't get into the Emir's palace without an invitation. Getting to Sokoto, I had the Kano mindset and I took pictures at the arcade right in front of the palace, but I didn't attempt to make my way into it. At the Sultan's Palace, even the courtiers could communicate in English. When I got to the Museum, the Mallam at the Museum asked me if I made it to the palace and I replied him in the negative. He told me I should have visited, and explained that people there liked to show people around and share a bit of story about the throne with their guests.



Entrance of the tomb of Uthman Dan Fodio

Did you know that the Uthman Dan Fodio Hubbaren is like a Royal Burial site? The place is the final resting place of many Royal and powerful persons in Sokoto. It would interest you to know that many locals go to the tombs to offer prayers. I saw many of them keeping the sand on the tombs as a souvenir or as religious persons would do who go to sacred sites. My tour guides explained that many of them believe that those trailblazers buried there would act as intercessors to their requests and make them prosper.

I also noticed that the people are very big on oral history. Everyone had to take off their shoes to access the Hubbaren. I couldn't access some important places especially inside the room housing the Uthman Danfodio tomb because I was a lady. However, my curiosity won't let me be, so I asked my tour guides whom I had taught how to use my camera to get pictures of the place for me. I still encountered the language barrier as a challenge while touring this historical site. Perhaps because it was a spontaneous visit. Initially, I couldn't find local interpreters to conduct me round the tombs which were not labeled.

I eventually found a guide within the Hubbaren who took me round the royal resting place of past Sultans of Sokoto and many we could consider 'the who is who' in the Royal circle in Sokoto. From Dasuki to Wamakko, many big names and Royalties from Sokoto have their ancestors buried there. My tour guides took me round even though we had the

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Culture & Lifestyle

Film Review

DANIEL ORIAHI'S 'SYLVIA' IS A NUANCED TAKE ON MENTAL HEALTH

While it's fairly acknowledged in literature and film, the concept of having an imaginary friend is not one that is particularly well-received in a traditional Nigerian setting. Nigerians are aware of this because of the way Nigerians are tethered to religion. The idea of living in one's own head is largely alien to older generations, mentioning the existence of an imaginary friend would trigger more than a few alarms. The parents and friends of an individual who comes up with such would fear that they are exhibiting symptoms of madness, or worse still, that they have been possessed by a demon.

The same sentiment applies to the phenomenon that is a 'spirit spouse'. For many people in these parts, it is a dreadful thing that should never befall the ones they care about. Spirit wives are the subject of fasting programmes, midnight prayers and deliverance sessions.

Daniel Oriahi knows these things, and this is why he decided to create an experiment with his 2018 offering. He's no stranger to directing, having previously called the shots in *Misfit*, *Zena* and *Taxi Driver: Oko Ashewo*. But it was always going to be interesting to see how he would pull off something like this, especially in a time where

comedy films and rom-coms hold sway.

'Sylvia', written by Vanessa Kanu and produced by Ekene Som Mekwunye for Trino Motion Pictures, is a thriller set in urban Nigeria. The film stars Chris Attoh who acted as Richard, Zainab Balogun who acted as Sylvia, Ini Dima-Okojie as Gbemi and Udoka Onyeka as Obaro. It also features Ijeoma Grace Agu as Hauwa, Lord Frank, Bolaji Ogunmola and Omotunde Adebola 'Lolo' David.

It's the story of Richard, a man who from his childhood days has maintained a strong relationship with an imaginary friend named Sylvia. They communicate in Richard's dream state, and Sylvia helps him with everything, from school assignments to general life advice. The friendship grows stronger and more intense as the decades roll by, and they keep in touch even after the death of his mother.



Richard grows to become a successful corporate executive in the real world, enjoying the company of Obaro, his playboy best friend. He also enjoys being constantly hit on by his personal assistant Hauwa. One day at a restaurant, he bumps into a lady named Gbemi, and they instantly hit it off. The romance blossoms, and he communicates this to Sylvia, who expresses her displeasure. He severs his friendship with Sylvia, in spite of her pleas and reassurances of affection, on the grounds that she 'is not real'. Richard marries Gbemi, and things go smoothly, but one day, when he hits a brick wall with a sales pitch at work, he decides to reach out to Sylvia. She helps him once again, but her demeanour has significantly changed, and what follows is a turn of events that changes Richard's life forever.

The movie's opening scene plays out in a mental institution, and that pretty much sets the tone for the rest of the film. With a running time of 104 minutes, it dwells on the paranormal, exploring the idea of a friendship that exists between a man and a spirit, as well as that sensual cum erotic love that solely manifests in the ethereal realms. It also addresses the subject of mental health in a manner that has been largely ignored by Nigerian society.

There is more to mental illnesses than depression or anxiety, and other conditions like Schizophrenia or Dissociative Identity Disorder are simply not discussed enough.

One of the things that make 'Sylvia' work is that it can be viewed from multiple angles. When seen from the perspective of mental health, it flows like the Hollywood cult classic Fight Club. But if it were a romance movie, when seen from the perspective of spirit lovers and succubuses, it recalls memories of classics like Sakobi, Suicide Mission and Lies of Destiny.

Balogun's acting prowess is usually a subject of divided opinion, but she aces her role as the villain here, with eye movements, lip pouts and facial expressions that add more nuance to her character's personality. A lot of credit should go to her costumier too, as the wardrobe changes and choice of lipstick reflect Sylvia's changing mood. Chris Attoh puts in a very good shift, Agu's unsubtle flirting makes for a lovable watch, and while it appears that Dima-Okogie has little to do, her contribution is nonetheless valuable to the nuance of the movie.

The use of a red hibiscus as some sort of portal access between Richard and Sylvia appears cheesy at first, but it becomes clearer when it's revealed that the flower represents Kali, the Indian goddess of sexuality. One wonders, though, whether there was no Nigerian equivalent among the vast array of deities across the country's cultures. There is also the question of whether a long coma would have been enough to satisfy Sylvia's desires to be with Richard, and how Sylvia would assume the perfect human form to navigate her way into the real world.

The second act of the film appears a tad predictable – Richard's best friend had to be the one seduced by Sylvia's human form. But the pace of the final act makes up for that, and the closing scene where the nurse presents Richard with a red hibiscus, makes for a compelling conclusion. "Sylvia" serves up a story that is as heartening as it is different, and for the daring nature of its narrative, it deserves all the plaudits.

Rating: 7/10.

Jerry Chiemeke

award winning writer, culture critic and lawyer

THEMES AND TEMPO OF REZTHAPOET'S COLD AND FROSTRATED

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The arrangement of the tracks makes the verses leaked into his ideas, so that he talked about certain themes with artistic pomp. What bothers me however is ethos. This new SpokenWord album appears to be a material created for persons outside the art scene, who might not appreciate the depth of his verses or come to terms with the depth of his ideas. Although, not all of the ideas are not new to the average 'woke' artist in Nigerian music scene. Perhaps it is my proclivity for art that is for artists, but then again perhaps not. One thing I am certain of is that aside the use of language, there is perhaps no moral or philosophical learning curve for the common artist in Cold and Frostrated.

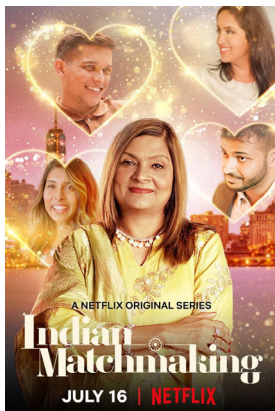
By Kelvin Kellman

*content associate, curator, editor, and
writer*

TRAWLING NETFLIX

WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DOING WITH YOURSELF IN THIS CORONA PERIOD? There is something for everyone to escape from the sad and bad news of COVID-19. NETFLIX, the international online movie streaming platform, brings to your digital television and mobile phones, movies, cooking shows, documentaries, movie series, Korean and Chinese movies, and cartoons. There's something for everyone. Let's explore some of the rave shows together.

INDIAN MATCHMAKING



Indians are big on arranged marriages, so it should come as no surprise that one of the first mainstream Indian shows on Netflix is about this topic. The show's description on Netflix notes 'Matchmaker Sima Taparia guides clients in the U.S and India in the arranged marriage process, offering an inside look at the custom in a modern era.' So, if you have ever wondered what a marriage arrangement looks like, here's your chance to find out firsthand.

SERIOUSLY SINGLE



This South African movie is the Number 1 trending movie in Nigeria for now. This is really a big deal because Nigerians love love. We are also critical of how we spend our time and money online.

The movie follows social media expert, Dineo as she goes through a publicly humiliating breakup. She live streamed the breakup. She then listens to the advice of her girlfriends and tries to do a rebound. There's just one little problem...Dineo is still stalking her ex-boyfriend online.

The series is a barrel of laughs and fun dialogues. It could easily be mistaken for a Hollywood movie. The cinematography is that good. You can't go wrong if you need a good laugh.

DOUBLE WORLD



Where are the Asian movie lovers? I have gist for you. There is a hot Chinese man involved. There are plenty of fight scenes, and some good old victory against the evil lords.

A young man is eager to bring honor to his clan by participating in a competition to reveal the best warriors, and his journey is documented as the movie progresses. Just give me some popcorn and a bottle of Fanta, place me on my comfy couch and turn on the AC. I have a date with a bunch of hot Asian guys. You want to join me? You can stream on NETFLIX.

SUGAR HIGH



Sugar High, anchored by Hunter March, is a competition-style show that follows several sugar artists as they compete for \$10,000 over two rounds of competition. Their task is quite simple: make the most amazing sculptures and confectioneries from sugar and candy. This show has received a cult following from many 'sugar blasters' and 'baking enthusiasts.' We watched Sugar Rush, Sugar Rush Christmas, Sugar Rush Extra Sweet, and we were still not satisfied. So, Netflix took pity on Sugar addicts and produced Sugar High.

IT'S HER DAY



We are seeing more and more Nigerian movies pop up on Netflix, and this is a very good thing. This movie is the Number 3 trending movie in Nigeria on Netflix. So, if you haven't watched it yet, you might want to do so to find out what the hype is about. A man promises his fiancé her dream wedding, and she proceeds to make his life hell by requesting the most outrageous wedding possible. It stars one of Nigeria's most foremost comedians, Bovi, so you can expect to have a barrel of laughs.

SHADOWHUNTERS: THE MORTAL INSTRUMENT



Checklist:

Demons? Check!

Angels? Check Check!!

Demon-hunting humans? Check, Check, Check!!!

There is a group of humans that have the blood of Angels, whose mission in life is to hunt demons. This show is the ultimate fantasy flick. Even better, it has four whole seasons waiting for you to binge on them. I recommend a weekend binge with plenty of junk food, and maybe a friend or two. Believe me, it's just what the 'doctor' ordered to get you ready for the next

Sensay Meenah

culture lover, writer, and editor

DONALD TRUMP: *MARVELING AT AMERICA*

cont'd from pg 54

We only hope that this opens the broadens their empathy to African nations while they engage Africans activists and leaders on how to subvert this awkward US presidency.

The fate of the USA is not sealed because of the fundamental governance structures that dislodge tyranny from the grasp of the president. The US Assembly and the US Judiciary, both entrusted to protect the interest of its citizens have lived above board irrespective of racial and ideological divides to make sure this paranoia for power, fame and control is guarded.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to overrule a President all the time in a Presidential system. The liberation of the USA which may help the return to normalcy in governance is the forthcoming presidential election. It is clear that the President is interested in extending his lounge in the White House under the guise that COVID-19 has taken several American lives. This empowered logic reminds a lot of Africans of the logic of Ibrahim Babangida's extended rule, the raison 'detre of Olusegun Obasanjo's Third Term Agenda, and the assertive enactment of a Ghaddafi regime.

It must be subverted by the American electoral structures and the American Peoples through the existing voting by postage and electronic voting system, which in many ways, will whittle down physical contact and disrupt the subtle the cancerous growth of tyranny. Civil Societies have been seen in most recent times to maintain a tenor that is highly and overtly conscious of systemic balance and ensuring the institutions live up to their statutory expectations.

But, if America must be rescued indeed, all political and institutional sections within the Union must play their rightful roles in all genuine candour, not only in a nationalist spirit of the traditional 'God Bless America' slogan, but with such political fairness that must unravel before the world's own very eye.

Suleiman Galadima

Public analyst

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language barrier to contend with; one of them understood the English language to an extent, but didn't have much knowledge on the "Royal Burial Sites", while the other one who had more knowledge couldn't communicate with me in English. I couldn't ascertain if the information was accurate since we had our conversations through an interpreter.



My custom of visiting the Museum wherever I landed saw me at the Waziri Jinadu History and Culture Museum amongst other places in Sokoto. I visited the museum late, till date, I regret not visiting the place before seeing other places in the state. I discovered the place should have been a compass to guide me round Sokoto. The curator of the museum was really friendly and he took his time to explain many things to me, especially about Jihads and other cultural beliefs of the People.

Another significant lesson from this trip is how inaccurate google maps could be, especially up North. Don't Follow google map without first confirming from the locals; they reside there and know the place more than an App. Get an interpreter if need be. This app almost got me missing in Sokoto on my quest to locate the museum.

This Sokoto experience won't be complete till I tell you about another local meal experience. One thing I try to do whenever I travel is to avoid eating local meals to avoid triggers. The Northerners are a people who love spicy meals. I wasn't too confident that I could endure the spice, so I tried to stay away. I always want to try local meals wherever I go. My best option in Sokoto was 'Nyamiri' kitchen. That morning, I walked past this woman and the urges were stronger, I finally got the courage to try local meals. The Massa was awesome and the Kunu was really good on my taste buds.

I had to leave Sokoto on the 14th of December, I would have loved to stay a bit longer and explore more, especially the Sultan's Palace. My attention was urgently needed in Lagos. I was disappointed when I couldn't find affordable flights, few

airlines ply this route and most times you would have to book on time, because they get sold out on time. Sokoto gets more flight for weekends. Many times, just one or two planes in one weekend. I tried all I could to book a flight from Sokoto to no avail. I knew I couldn't wait till the following weekend, so I had to fly to Kebbi. It was an emergency flight and it could have been cheaper if I had booked earlier. Christmas was fast approaching. More people would be traveling. I lost the entire zeal to travel. I could not wait to get to Lagos.

I started searching online for flights. Then I found a seat on Azman. I just booked it quickly and had to connect Lagos through Kebbi. I told you how I enjoyed the stopovers, these same stopovers almost cost me my flight.

My experience in Kebbi shows that Northerners are very hospitable people contrary to what the media projects. They're very welcoming and won't disturb you so long as you do not tamper with their religious beliefs. The only fear for migrants is that during any religious crisis, the same person that you were laughing with may no longer be your friend.

For travel lovers at this time, exploring nostalgia seems to be the only open and inexpensive option. No wonder many backpackers and corporate tourists are taking their time to relish the days where freedom of movement across Nigeria was based on safety and funds.

Stakeholders of the travel industry are hoping that the huge losses are nipped in the bud by the innate drive to live temporarily in other worlds.

*By Ennie Sophie Oluwa
lawyer, social worker and travel lover.*

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Education

COVID-19, FG & ASUU: Who wants to give Nigerian students Extra Year?

From its refusal to allow e-learning in member universities, to its prediction of a 2021 resumption date, the Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities (ASUU) seems to have put itself in an unfavourable position in the public's eye. The Union seems to be fast becoming a cog in the wheel of progress for students in Nigerian public universities.

Nigeria recorded her index case of the coronavirus disease on the 27th of February 2020. In a bid to curb the spread of this deadly virus, the Federal Ministry of Education ordered the closure of all schools in the country on the 19th of March, 2020. This directive led to an abrupt cessation of activities in schools nationwide, leaving stakeholders unsure of when things will return to normal.

Necessity, as they say, is the mother of invention, so it was not surprising to see that within a few weeks some state and private-owned primary and secondary schools had deployed online learning measures to fill the lacuna caused by the

closure of schools. Not to be left out of this innovation, the Federal government also launched a free e-learning portal for primary and secondary school students on the 24th of April 2020.

Perhaps thinking to consolidate on the progress made with the e-learning portal for primary and secondary schools, in April the Minister of Education, Mallam Adamu Adamu, directed public tertiary institutions to commence online lectures.

The National President of ASUU, Professor Biodun Ogunyemi, was quick to send a memo to member institutions, instructing them not to comply with the Federal Government's directive. In the memo, Prof. Ogunyemi was quoted as saying: 'lecturers must not engage in online teaching because without Senate's approval, a vice chancellor has no power to change the mode of lecture delivery'. He said: 'Therefore, do not obey any Vice Chancellor's call for online teaching under whatever guise. It is a blatant violation of the university laws. It is in the interest of our universities, our students, and our nation to resist any attempt to undermine the ongoing struggle'.

In an interview with the media, Prof. Ogunyemi added: 'Virtual learning will not work. Let's break it down; when you talk of virtual learning; practically online teaching and learning, I think the first question we need to ask ourselves

is, do we have the infrastructure for that? When you talk of infrastructures in the institutions concerned, do they have facilities and if you want to take it to individuals, can they afford it?'

With the above statements credited to the President of ASUU one is forced to ask who exactly is the union fighting for? Are they on the side of their members who have been on an indefinite strike since the 23rd of March, 2020, over non-payment of salaries or are they truly fighting for quality education?

Recent statements by Professor Ogunyemi may clarify the union's stand. Ogunyemi, in an interview with the media published on the 19th of July, said universities will not resume even if the Federal Government directs schools to be reopened. He said: 'Talking of universities, it should be noted that the

crises are beyond COVID-19. There are fundamental crises that will make universities reopening longer and impossible for now. We had long told government our position and until they meet necessary conditions, universities are not resuming even after COVID.

"There are outstanding issues and government is not ready to fix our universities and provide enabling learning environment. For instance, we are talking about revitalisation... if our institutions are well equipped, there is no reason why coronavirus

should stop academic activities.

'You cannot talk about social distancing in universities without talking about additional lecture rooms. So, we have two crises delaying resumption. The health crises and the refusal of government to make our universities standard,' he said.

Going by the above, it won't be remiss to ask if ASUU has considered the plight of millions of university students who may now have an extra year added to their academic calendars through no fault of theirs? Well, if no one will fight for them, the students are ready to take up the task.

A cross section of students from Usman Danfodiyo University, Sokoto (UDUS), and Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (ABU),



spoke to THE NATION newspaper and expressed their disappointments over the comments from ASUU.

One of the students, Shehu Shamsudeen Ahmad, a 200-Level student of Law at UDUS, urged the Federal Government not to pay attention to the advice given by the ASUU. Ahmad said: “Nigerians should accept the fact that this pandemic has come to stay with us for the time being, let us not use the pandemic as a cover to hinder the progress of our educational system. Our education is important and, as they say, ‘we are the future of Nigeria’ let our schools be reopened,” he pleaded.

Is ASUU talking from a place of expertise when the union declared that e-learning cannot work in Nigeria? Is it wise for them to be fighting for standard education now when the coronavirus has left everyone in a state of confusion? What does it take to have an operational e-learning system in public institutions? Let’s look at these issues a bit closer.

One of the points raised by ASUU’s President was that approval is needed from a university’s Senate before the mode of learning can be changed. Since COVID-19 has thrown everyone a curve, waiving this approval or granting automatic approval should be a no brainer. However, our universities are not known for their proactiveness so Prof. Ogunyemi can easily cite this as an excuse.

Another possible factor for ASUU’s unwillingness to take up e-learning is the National University Commission’s (NUC) mandate for universities to possess an Open and Distance Learning (ODL) license before they can operate Distance Learning centres. Of the 171 universities in Nigeria, only twelve have an ODL license. This has not stopped some private universities from teaching classes online.

The most valid reason ASUU gave for her reluctance to deploy e-learning is the unavailability of necessary infrastructure. ASUU complaints and strikes over lack of infrastructure has become a rite of passage that many an undergraduate in public tertiary institutions go through. This, however, does not discredit the point. But what do universities need to deploy e-learning?

There are so many ways that e-learning can be deployed, but I will dwell on only two of them. I will be drawing from my experience as a graduate of a federal university and a former staff of an online education company.

One way to deploy e-learning is to have lecturers schedule online classes using common meeting software like Zoom, Google Team, Microsoft Teams, and others. To do this, lecturers and students need reliable Internet connection and electricity. Anyone living in Nigeria will tell you that you need to have plans A, B, C, D, to cater for the glitches from your Internet service providers and electricity providers. It’s easy to foretell that weekly online classes can quickly become

cumbersome when lecturers have to keep repeating “can you hear me?” or in some cases lose and regain connection intermittently during classes.

Another possible reason why weekly live classes may be problematic is in cases where one lecturer is teaching about three or four levels across the department. Implementing this was hard enough when schools were open, I can only imagine how boring and monotonous it will be to do this online for the foreseeable future. This tedium will only be a challenge at the initial stage because universities are meant to create dynamic solutions to existing problems by upgrading and updating society with new and engaging ways of doing things. A second way of deploying e-learning is to have pre-recorded classes, where lecturers will have recorded their lessons ahead, prepared assignments, quizzes or whatever exercises they want students to work on, and then have all of these uploaded to a Learning Management System (LMS). What would then be left would be to give students access to this platform to take their classes. Best part of this is that the LMS can be designed in such a way that students can have access to their course lessons and other materials offline, which is what Lagos State University (LASU) has been able to achieve.

While option two is desirable and gives the best result in the long run, the initial costs, energy, and preparation needed to implement it is enormous and can frustrate the unprepared. Furthermore, the lecture delivery mode of most lecturers leaves much to be desired, and can be a problem in successfully deploying e-learning. I can remember the many boring monologues I endured in the name of lectures at the university.

The problems of internet facilities, smartphones/laptops, electricity will still arise, but they can be easily overcome with the cooperation of all stakeholders.

ASUU should be at the helm, championing proactive ways for the 2019/2020 academic calendar to continue running despite the closure of schools, instead of the pessimistic outlook and predictions they have been sharing. Let them follow the example of LASU who successfully engaged the Lagos State Government, the local ASUU chapter and her students and are now enjoying the dividends of an efficient e-learning platform.

A robust e-learning system is not an impossible feat in Nigerian public universities if ASUU can see reasons to cease positioning itself as cog in the wheel of progress of public university education.

Oriyomi Adebare

Education

WASSCE: SITTING A REGIONAL EXAM IN A PANDEMIC



The West African Examination Council, WAEC, was preparing for the West African Examination Council Examination, WASSCE, for secondary school candidates scheduled for April 6, 2020, when the Coronavirus pandemic struck. This led the postponement of the examination as the date by the exam body in March, 2020. The decision to put on hold the examinations led to confusion in the education sector in Nigeria as parents, teachers and other stakeholders expressed concerns over the progress of the academic years of their wards.

WAEC is an international body which conducts the West African Senior School Certificate Examination, WASSCE, the General Certificate Examination, GCE, which prepares students for the Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board, JAMB exams. WAEC has served the Anglophone West Africa since 1952, where it conducts both Basic, Junior Secondary School, Senior Secondary School, and other international examinations in those countries. With the outbreak of the coronavirus across the globe, as well as the sub-region, WAEC and the individual states have to negotiate the dates and method of conducting the exams.

In Nigeria, both private and public secondary schools had to close in accordance with the COVID-19 rules set up by the Presidential Task Force on Covid-19. While the fates of teachers and students remain in limbo, many schools embarked on online teaching programmes to continue to stimulate their minds. Many stakeholders lamented that although it is no fault of the Federal Government, the prolonged suspension of the WASSCE may lead to hugely distracted and unequipped students for exams, and by extension work life.

Mr Patrick Areghan, WAEC's Head of National Office has continued to work hand-in-hand with the Nigerian govern-

ment, while liaising with the HNOs of other West African states in other for the body to have a strong voice in considering the 'new normal' that has come to fore. In July, the HNO of Nigeria had occasion to address the Nigerian press. 'Gentlemen of the media, these are no normal times. The examination is going to be conducted under a very unfriendly atmosphere and conditions. I will like to use this opportunity to advise all schools and candidates to make the best use of the situation in order to turn adversity into success.'

However, stakeholders like Mr Issa Aremu, the former Vice President of the Nigeria Labour Congress, NLC, has called on the FG to negotiate with WAEC that exams should hold when the level of COVID-19 infections have reduced greatly. He insisted that schools should not be reopened without a systematic awareness programme, as well as the provision of all the necessary Personal Prevention Equipment, PPE to prevent the spread of the pandemic. He urged that government explore digital intervention to the education sector.

Mr Chukwuemeka Nwajiuba, the Minister of State for Education, who had been managing the deliberations on the reopening of schools, liaising across State education boards and institutions, as well as the Task Force, he said that the governors and the state commissioners have agreed that schools will open on August 3, in order to prepare for the WASSCE, while all exams common to all Anglophone West Africa will commence on August 17, exams peculiar to Nigeria will hold from September 5 to September 14. Mr. Nwajiuba said that Nigeria will work on domesticating its own exams timetable. As a whole, Mr. Nwajiuba said 'From the 4th of August to the 5th of September. Parents please take note. As soon as we conclude WAEC, we will take up NABTEB and NECO ex-

ams.’ He said that final year secondary school students have two weeks to prepare for their WASSCE. He urged those who had not concluded on the NECO registration to do so.

However, there seems to be an absence of harmony in the Presidency, especially within the Ministry of Education, as the Alhaji Adamu Adamu, the Minister of Education has reportedly noted that the FG may withdraw from conducting the WASSCE exams so as to pull all its resources behind the GCE, which takes place in November. He also said Unity Schools would be withdrawn participating in the WASSCE exams. He asked the state governments to renege on their decision to allow for the exams to be conducted in their states.

In response to this alarming intervention by the minister, the House of Representatives lent its voice to the WAEC exams during a plenary session on July 13, that it would be to the detriment of the country if it considered stopping her students from participating in the globally recognised exams. The law-making body said that the exams should be conducted as long as there is an adherence to the COVID-19 guidelines. They also noted that barring Nigerian students from writing the exams would send a signal of incompetence to the international community, which would in turn affect the nation’s international finance outlook. The House resolved in a motion to ask the FG to halt from any attempt to withdraw WASSCE and other Common Entrance exams.

Mr Yinka Odumakin, Spokesperson of the Afrenifere, the Pan-Yoruba Group, has also faulted the government for its lack of harmony or integration. In a Press statement, he said that ‘It is not comprehensible that the PTF would go and announce that schools should go and resume without consultation with the Ministry of Education and that the minister will come on TV and be stamping his feet saying ‘nobody will tell us when we are to open until we are ready’. If we have an integrated government. We advise Mr President to manage his men so our students are not made to lose a session to ego fights of our officials.’ In similar vein, former Vice President, Atiku Abubakar urged the FG to seek better ways to allow WAEC conduct the exams. He said, ‘1.5 million Nigerian youths write the West African Senior School Certificate Examination annually. To abruptly cancel this examination is to set back our nation’s youth, and place them behind their contemporaries in other West African nations.’ Reno Omokri, a social media critic, said in a series of tweets, ‘How can Buhari say WAEC exams won’t hold this year, yet Edo and Ondo elections will hold? Which is riskier? Exam or elections? APC held a mass rally. Yet, they close schools. No wonder Nigeria is the world headquarters for extreme poverty.’

Mr Ben Bem Gong, Press and Public Relations of the Federal Ministry of Education, later clarified any misconceptions by stating that resumption of classes on the 4th of August, was strictly for graduating classes, in order to prepare them for their final exams. This was further to discard the rumours making the rounds that the resumption date was meant for students in Nigeria. The Ministry of Education met with the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control in order to draw up operational modalities for conducting the exams. The Chairman of the PTF had also asked the stakeholders to make their facilities available to students for revision.

The plan put forward by the Minister for State for Education was to allow all students from participating countries to write papers common to them while the Nigerian government would negotiate the dates peculiar to its students. ‘WAEC, unfortunately, is unable to wholesomely move the examination, but we have also worked out a negotiated timeline with WAEC on what we call peculiar Nigerian subjects which in the language of WAEC are subjects that are only held in Nigeria, such as Ibo, Hausa and Yoruba,’ Mr. Nwajuibai said.

Sonny Eloho, Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Education told the media that the ministry had received a feedback on the timetable from WAEC. On the heels of the feedback, Mallam Adamu Adamu, the Education Minister will be engaging other examination bodies in a meeting in July 28 in order to harmonise the examination dates, and to assess the level of preparedness of senior secondary schools to write the WASSCE. The meeting presided by the education minister will border on the new WASSCE timeline, and the timetables of other examination bodies; National Examination Council, NECO, Basic Examination Council, and National Board of Technical Examination, NABTECH.

Mr Patrick Areghan, in a recent media briefing with the media, said, ‘We have encapsulated all these measures in a pamphlet which will be circulated to all stakeholders for their necessary guidance. For the sake of emphasis, schools must provide wash-hand buckets with running water, soaps, hand sanitizers and thermometer hand-gun to check the temperature of all concerned.’ He said that the ‘new normal’ will incur more expenses for the exam body as it intends to use more invigilators, equip them with Personal Protective Equipment, PPE, and also provide adequate compensation to all examination officials. Areghan urged corporate and philanthropic bodies to deploy their Corporate Social Responsibility to the country’s education system at this trying times.

Suleiman Galadima
Public analyst

COVID-19: A SURVIVOR'S JOURNEY TO TESTING AND RECOVERY

Across the globe, testing and treatment of Covid-19 patients have become difficult with the rising cases. There has been reports of limited testing kits and shortage of bed spaces in many health facilities where large cases had been recorded, such as United States of America, Italy and Spain. The American business magnate and philanthropist, Bill Gates, had earlier warned about the devastating havoc that Covid-19 would likely wreak in Africa judging from the weak healthcare systems that are available in most parts of Africa. In a multi-country report on Healthcare Systems in Africa, published by the World Health Organisation in 2012, 67% of respondents in West Africa expressed their dissatisfaction

with the healthcare services which is beset by ill-equipped facilities, depleting medical personnel as a result of migration to economically-developed countries, lack of infrastructure such as power supply, bad attitudes of staff and unavailability of drugs.

In Nigeria, access to public healthcare facilities before Covid-19 had been tedious. Many spend long hours on queue and watch helplessly as newly arriving patients walk confidently into the consultation rooms

just because they are personally linked to the healthcare workers.

At the moment, an average of 4,000 tests are conducted in Nigeria. With the establishment of 58 testing centres in different parts of Nigeria, it is still a few drops in the ocean for an estimated population of 200 million. Lagos, which is the most populous city in Nigeria with an estimated population of 17.5 million is battling testing backlog. As international observers have noted, many governments are rationing the use of testing kits.

Recently, a lawyer, Nyma-Akashat Zibiri, who is also a co-host on Your View, a daily talk show on Television Continental, recounted her experience and path to re-

covery from Covid-19. She was away from the show for almost two months, taking care of her husband and herself after testing positive to the virus.

'I was contact traced on June 3 and I was asked to come to the IDH alongside my husband because he tested positive to Covid-19,' she began during her first screen appearance since her recovery. 'We went there with our children and that was a big mistake that I made. I was not allowed to drive in. I had to walk all the way with my children, 7 and 3 years old, into the facility. I thought they had a facility for the children. My trauma started when I saw my kids touching everything, mixing with people. I was una-

ble to hold them down in that setting that was totally disorganised for me. I can't blame the health workers. They stayed away from us. I didn't have any symptom. I was traced and I needed to know my status.'

The strategy employed at the testing centre was strange to her. Contrary to what is reported in Western media where drive-in tests are now available, many still have to wait for long hours to get tested in Nigeria.

'We needed to be up to 40 in number to get tested so I had to wait. They



Nyma-Akashat Zibiri

were done with the morning shift so I had to wait for the afternoon shift. After a while, I started to raise my voice. And one of the officials recognised my voice,' she recounted. Eventually, she got the needed attention and her samples alongside her children were taken for the tests. The results were supposed to be out in two or three days but that was not the case. It took nine days before the results came out.

'My two children tested negative. But my husband and I tested positive. I just decided to stay away from work while we awaited the test results. Meanwhile, we had packed my husband's things, thinking he would be isolated at the Infectious Diseases Hospital in Yaba. They told us to go home since the viral level was low. Unknown to

them, I had been treating malaria on my husband. He was very ill. He was so weak that he would crawl on his hands. I had a First Aid corner in the house and that was what I was using. We isolated the children and made sure we were wearing masks within the house,' said the co-host. Meanwhile, her husband's symptoms were increasing with time. Nyma resorted to the alternative medicine to treat Covid-19 symptom per symptom.

'My daily routine is lime, lemon, ginger and garlic. I do that every morning. I had to increase it. I added turmeric to it. I added carrots. My mother bought a bagful of herbs and I was cooking herbs every two days. I did steaming three times a day. I placed my children on Vitamin C,' she said, thanking her neighbours who were assisting her to buy things from the market, leaving them at the doorstep for collection.

A doctor was calling from the hospital to follow up on their health. Fortunately for Nyma, her symptoms were minimal and recovered very quickly. But she was exhausted from caring for her husband.

'My symptoms included fatigue. There was a night I watched my husband's temperature fluctuate. While I was watching him, I also fell asleep. He was worried. Dr. Fadare was always calling us to find out how we were doing. When my husband was at his weakest point, the doctor told him, 'Try and go out of the house.' My husband didn't want to go out and he didn't want to see people. But he needed to go out for the early morning sun. I lost my sense of smell and I got it back within a week. But he refused to go out,' she said.

To treat the cold and nasal congestion, Nyma prepared herbal tea that she and her husband drank repeatedly. Despite her circumstance, she made some effort to continue her advocacy work on rape and other human rights issues. 'I had a webinar during that period that had already been scheduled before my test result came out. I told them (the participants) that I had tested positive to Covid-19 and that's why I had been away from the show. People would like to create stigma around it and that amazes me. In my house before Covid-19, I didn't take visitors. You have to wash your hands and sanitize upon your arrival,' she said while explaining how much precaution she had taken to ensure that she didn't contract the virus. Sadly, she lost her dad who was deeply concerned about her welfare while she and her husband were battling Covid-19.

'He couldn't deal with it because he saw me at my weakest point,' she said, and for a moment, was lost for words.

For the second testing to ascertain that she was free of Covid-19, it was another roller-coaster of struggle. On June 24, she returned for another test.

'The crowd was crazy. The sitting capacity at the testing centre was not enough. We were to sit in twos. The chairs were not cleaned. The second day was worse. The numbers tripled. What is amazing is the number of people that called after I disclosed my health status on that webinar. A few of them admitted that they had lost their sense of smell and were just asking what I was using to treat myself. After I lost my dad and I had recovered, some of my friends came to visit and some of them still argued that loss of smell had always been associated with cold,' Nyma added, proving that many still have their doubts as to the reality of the deadly nature of Covid-19. As already explained by medical experts, the symptoms for Covid-19 vary from one person to another. While some may experience mild symptoms, others with underlying conditions may not survive after being infected.

'I was never feverish. You could put an infra-red thermometer to check my temperature and I'd have the normal temperature. But after treating my husband, I had a constant fatigue and I was always dozing. But my husband has difficulty in breathing. So, we did steaming together and that helped him to sleep very well,' she recalled.

Nyma's experience confirms the truth that many carriers of the Covid-19 may be asymptomatic. This is why it is important for people to wear their masks in public places as they may be in contact with infected persons who are oblivious of their status.

With the lack of adequate facilities to accommodate all infected persons, it is very likely that many are seeking alternative medicine to treat Covid-19. The cost of herbs, bitter cola, ginger amongst others had increased.

'Another thing I discovered was the increment in the cost of herbs. Lemon grass became very scarce. Who bought out all the herbs and kolanuts? Personally, I believe that we have probably surpassed the number that other countries had. Maybe our diet and lifestyle had worked in our favour,' Nyma argued.

At the time of this report, the global cases for Covid-19 has risen to over 15 million cases and about 700,000 deaths. The journey to global recovery is a long one.

Freda Onaiza
Media consultant

DONALD TRUMP: MARVELING AT AMERICA

Donald Trump, the President of the United States, is an interesting personality that is pleasing to the eyes; controversial, unpredictable with his many gaffes. He has become the unending stock of troupes for television hosts like Stephen Colbert, Trevor Noah and Ellen DeGeneres. It feels good for many liberal Africans to see America bungle so many things like democratic upstarts who are grappling with corruption, nepotism and all the normative that has bedevilled Africa. Africa had always borne the gaze of the West as men and women who do not know their right from their left. Now, a lot of educated Nigerians, and Africans are amused by the untrammelled and uncouth dispositions of the most powerful man in the world.

Apart from his brilliance in show business, the President of the United States thinks and performs his duty on twitter, loves to bowdlerise and insult journalists, yet courts the limelight of the camera by desiring to trend and win favours from the masses through his assertions. Trump reminds many Africans of Idi-Amin, an Abacha without the full dictatorial powers bestowed on coup plotters who abolish the constitution. What has

saved the USA from Trump are the strong institutions and the people who desire to leave a legacy in this trying times. Otherwise, any country already on the precipice of failing as a political state, must not wish to have at its helms such an imperious personage as Trump.

While liberals talk about the woolly-haired iconoclast at conferences, bars and events, a lot of people fail to realise that Trump is loved by the Evangelicals even when, indeed, his disposition to God is clearly lip-service. In Nigeria, many people have incredible love for Donald Trump. The predisposition of the liberals meets a wall when they meet people who say that Trump is not a politician; that he is not given to lies, and that he is the 'messiah' that the world needs at this time to help keep the same-sex loving, abortion champions at bay so that

morality and decency can prevail in the world. Donald Trump is simply a model caricature of stiff-necked troublemakers who do not believe in freedom and unity, but assert themselves under the guide of 'shaking tables' and shaping the world. President Donald Trump plays the divide-and-rule kind of politics. Our depressing realities in Africa have been a product of that style of rhetoric from colonial times.

The United States of America had become badly hit by the Coronavirus which our 'good friend' calls 'the China virus'. He calls it the China Virus because he knows that his republican friends can spin the narrative that China



is not in a cold war with America, but in an economic war with the United States. There is nothing wrong with the United States protecting its own interest but there is everything wrong with bullying, sullyng the common patrimony of nations by withdrawing from the agencies that have kept global peace and helped combat global epidemics.

Trump is, no doubt, taking the US to the folded ears of history where it may be ignored for another decade. For a President who thrives

on heresays instead of expert advice, America stalled on closing its border, perhaps expecting a miracle from Dr. Fauci. For a President who clamps down on global investments in order to promote American economy – that sounds to many Africans like the early verve of nationalism that threw African countries into a situation where there were a few thriving government contractors in a space where everyone was bowdlerised into poverty. Americans are familiar with Donald Trump's style of politics because they are acculturated with a leader who does not obey the rule of law, who ignores the protestations of racial injustice with a tweet, and joins in a social media bric-a-brac with Hollywood celebrities. Africans are familiar with this kind of leadership because we have lived with them all our lives.

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Great People

BABAGANA ZULUM



Professor Babagana Zulum is at the helms of affairs in Borno State at a time of despair. The dust of hate, terrorism and insecurity pervades the state. Professor Babagana Zulum is an exemplary leader who is building bridges, salvaging towns and setting dynamic governance standards inspite of unpalatable times.

What comes to mind when a lot of Nigerians speak of Borno is a dusty landscape close to the borders of warfare, and far from development. A few relate to the glorious Kanem-Bornu empire populated by the valiant peoples of Kanuri, Marghi, Shuwa Arab and others inside its walls. Borno morphed from a Kanemi Emirate into a part of a Northern Nigeria Protectorate in 1907. At independence, it remained under the influence of the regional leaders until it was made a state in the Gowon years. Borno State has now earned a reputation of an unsafe place. News of the presence of the Islamic State of West Africa, ISWA, a terror group known as Boko Haram, has become a dreadful staple in the consciousness of Nigerians. The heavy presence of the Nigerian military set to push Boko Haram back is felt by reports of its countering force. The shocks of the killings of 176 school teachers in 2011, and the kidnapping of the Chibok Girls in 2014 still resonate on a global scale. It is true that Boko Haram has ravaged Borno State espe-

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Professor Babagana Umara Zulum, the governor of Borno State has made the state a reference point for Pan-Nigerian governance when he appointed multi-ethnic special advisers. He expressed firmness and support for the Nigerian military at the forefront of quelling a guerrilla

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Professor Babagana Umara Zulum, the governor of Borno State has made the state a reference point for Pan-Nigerian governance when he appointed multi-ethnic special advisers. He expressed firmness and support for the Nigerian military at the forefront of quelling a guerrilla insurrection, while making critical development points and boldly calling soldiers to order at conferences and state briefings. He has also given vehicles to the military, the civilian Joint Task Force, the RRS and local vigilantes in order to prosecute the insurgency and protect lives and properties. This and many other interventions made the Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant General Turkur Yusuf Buratai to pay a courtesy visit to him in July 2019. General Buratai said 'I want use this opportunity to thank Your Excellency, most sincerely, for all your support to the Nigerian Army and other services, the Nigerian Airforce, as well the theatre of operation Lafiya Dole. Your support is quite immeasurable. We appreciate it and this has really made us to improve on our operations'. The Governor has enacted a robust and functional pension plan for 552 retired civil servants and the cash support of 23.5 Million Naira for 47 fallen soldiers has not gone unnoticed by the media.

The governor has also been swift to announce a lockdown immediately after discovering the index case of COVID19 in the state, in order to prevent the double tragedy of community transmission and the Boko Haram insurgency. He has also urged the Federal Government to empower repentant members of the group. Governor Babagana has also given out cash gifts, clothes and food to less privileged women and children ravaged by the scrooge of unemployment and malnourishment due to the lockdown and insecurity in the state. The governor is also finding ways to increase its internally generated revenue by renovating the Maiduguri International Hotel, the Borno Fertilizer Company LTD, NIETAL Shoes and Tenary Factory, Borno Steel and Wire Industry, and the Borno Supply Company.

Babagana was born to peasant farmers at Mafa, a small town in Borno State. He grew to till the soil. He was a student of Mafa Primary School in 1975 to 1978. He later gained admission into Government Secondary School Mungono in 1980. Young Babagana 'trekked 7 kilometres to school in Mafa town' and returned same distance on his legs to assist his father on the farm. He continued to pursue educational gains despite his circumstances, 'I paid my secondary education and National Diploma,

ND, fees and also sponsored my education' he told The Nigerian Voice. He later went ahead to earn a Bachelor of Agriculture from the University of Maiduguri in 1994, an Msc from the University of Ibadan in 1998 and a PhD from the University of Maiduguri in 2009.

He was a taxi driver, a truck driver, a grinding machine operator and farmer in order to raise funds for his education till he was employed as an assistant lecturer at the university. He rose to become Deputy-Dean and Acting Dean at the Faculty of Engineering in few years by getting involved in the daily administration of University of Maiduguri. He also helped stretch the frontiers of scholarship in his field in Nigeria. He was made a professor in 2014.

One can find a thread of resilience in Babagana Zulum's life from his childhood to his civil service years. He was an Assistant Technical Adviser in Borno State Ministry of Agriculture, after is Bachelor of Agriculture degree, in 1989. He was later deployed to the Unified Local Government Service as Senior Field Overseer and promoted to the position of Principal Water Engineer in the year 2000. His work as a Field Officer and Water Engineer may have brought him closer to the harsh realities of residents of Maiduguri who are faced with lack of basic infrastructure and state presence on a daily basis.

Professor Babagana Zulum was appointed by Governor Kashim Shettima as the Rector of Ramat Polytechnic while teaching at University of Maiduguri. He was made commissioner of Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Resettlement, RRR by the Governor. The Guardian noted that Zulum built hospitals and schools. He neither built a house nor bought a car for himself from the state coffers as commissioner of RRR. Jack Vince, a journalist based in Maiduguri said 'The Governor was the Rector of the State Polytechnic.

He transformed the place from a glorified secondary school to something one could call world class. The former governor was impressed. So, he brought him to government, made him commissioner of RRR (Reconstruction Renovation and Rehabilitation). Zulum did excellently well and became more popular than the governor. In short, anywhere you take him to, he regenerates the place'. The ministry of RRR built 10,000 houses, schools and hospitals in local government areas like Bama, Kaga, Dikwa, Gwoza, Askira Uba and others in a bid to resettle displaced victims of the insurgency.

The former governor, Governor Shettima found a loyal and rare leader in Professor Babagana Umara Zulum. So, Shettima backed Zulum to become the governorship candidate for the All Progressive Congress, APC, a new opposition party. This was at a time when the house of the ruling People's Democratic Party, PDP, was divided against itself. The PDP was embroiled in internal wrangling which led to parallel primaries. The opposition APC had a smooth ride to the Maiduguri state house where a political neophyte assumed office with a different orientation towards development and governance.

Governor Babagana Zulum is not prepared to rest until the end of his tenure. He has shown that the work of governance needs great mental alertness in the deployment of problem-solving skills.

A TVC special documentary said that Zulum was one of those who influenced the establishment of the North East Development Commission by the President of Nigeria. Governor Zulum also returned traditional rulers to their thrones by bringing desolate communities back to thriving normalcy. The Governor is building 1000 houses for Gwarzo and Bama localities along with police posts, places of worship and fire stations. He has upgraded the capacity of primary health care centres to cater for secondary needs while launching new ultramodern health centres, one of which is the Umaru Shehu Ultra-modern Hospital at Bulumkutu.



Governor Babagana Zulum has continued to ignore the gun shots from the insurgents whose slogan is 'Western Education is Evil'. He has opened the first state owned university and granted admission to over 400 students. He has also built more primary and secondary schools in all the Local Government Areas in the state. He empha-

sised on girl child education at the recent 1 Million Girls March to School Programme.

He promised that technical and vocational education will be made available for the girl child without abandoning the boy child. Some of these students will be going to school for the first time due to poverty or their unfortunate refugee status but the state government had made provisions for free school uniforms among other free amenities.

Governor Zulum in collaboration with the military and Joint Task Force, JTF, has reopened major highways leading to Dambawa and Chibok, former strongholds of the Boko Haram insurgents. Governor Babagana Zulum has been awarded the 'Personality of the Year' 2019 by MuslimNews, as well as the 'Most Promising Governor Award' by the Nigerian Union of Journalists, Borno Branch, for his meritorious service to the state.



Professor Babagana Zulum unveiling another New Infrastructure Project

The governor has given countless relief materials in the Mongono IDP camp, the largest IDP camp, and has distributed seeds and cash to farmers as a way of encouraging them to return to their farms. Last years, farmers planted more than 500 hectares of land despite the threats of the insurgents.

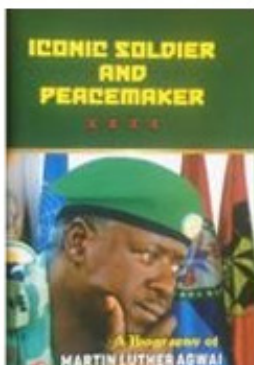
Ahmed Satomi, a Representative of the Jere Federal constituency has praised governor Zulum for the wide berth of projects he has embarked upon, he however urged President Buhari to support him by providing more resources. He urged the Federal Government to do more to equip the security operatives who are fighting against the insurgents so that the state can live by its slogan 'Home of Peace'.

Suleiman Galadima
Public analyst

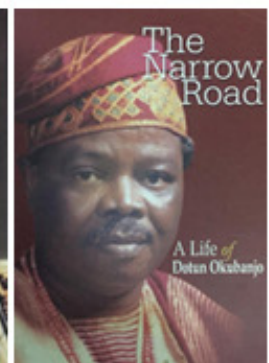
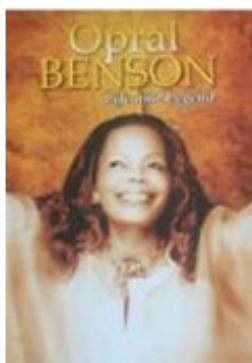
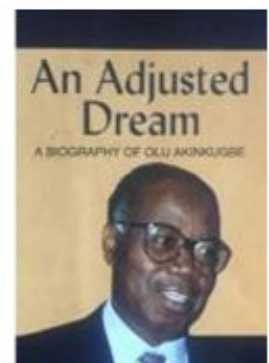
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AISHA MOHAMMED OYEBODE

From the fairytale life as the daughter of a top military officer, Aisha was thrust into a bitter reality when her father, then Head of State was killed in a coup attempt. In the aftermath, she experienced the irony of not getting needed assistance—unlike before. This lesson has shaped her adult life, and having attained the best of formal education could offer, she now coordinates the activities of a top NGO, the Murtala Mohammed Foundation, MMF, with particular attention to the ‘real’ needy. Aisha Muhammed Oyebode is also a renowned barrister with a repertoire of legal experience in international contracts, litigation, Commercial Law, Oil and Gas Law, and advisory.

I joined the reputable law firm of international lawyers, Ajumogobia, Okeke, Oyebode & Aluko, immediately after the National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) year in the Ministry of External Affairs in 1989. I serviced major international corporate clients at Ajumogobia, Okeke, and Co. My responsibilities there as an associate included providing advice, revising and preparing documentation relating to privatisation, commercialisation, foreign investments, international contracts, master and servant and litigation, primarily for the oil and gas sector. I also managed a personal case load of private individuals and corporate clients, specifically dealing with legalities of oversea joint ventures with local firms. I was there till 1991, when I teamed up with Asset Management Group Limited as the Executive Director.





The Asset Management Group offers financial and business advisory services, management and operations audits, venture capital and project finance, investment appraisals, business linkages, and risk and legal compliance analysis. My positions changed over time in the firm as I rose from Executive Director to Managing Director in 1993. I held this position till 2000 when I became chairman. The metamorphosis also influenced my business acumen because I handled a number of sensitive responsibilities. Prominent among these included the development of a profitable and credible business with acknowledged integrity. People were able to trust the organisation and what it stood for. Some of the activities we were involved in included Enterprise Africa, a project of the United Nations Development Programme, Niger Insurance Plc, Palms Mall at Lekki, and two residential projects in Lagos and Abuja.

Besides my involvement with the Asset Management Group, I have been busy with self-development opportunities. This is usually through advanced trainings and membership of pertinent bodies. In terms of training especially, I have given my resources to better myself, and this has seen me attending training workshops and seminars within and outside Nigeria. I am also a member of several associations and bodies here in Nigeria and outside.

A most challenging activity I am currently involved in is as the CEO of the Murtala Muhammed Foundation. The idea behind it began in the 1990s when the then MD of Daily Times newspaper started an annual Murtala Muhammed lecture. This has attracted top-notch experts from different parts of the world who come to interact with their African colleagues. The inauguration of the Foundation in February 2002 was set on a mission to sustain the lofty ideals of the great leader to the benefit of Nigeria and Africa, for which eminent Nigerians have shown great support. The inauguration was witnessed by members of the Board of Trustees led by former president Olusegun Obasanjo, General Ibrahim Babangida, General T. Y. Danjuma, and the wife of the late General Muhammed, Dr (Mrs.) Ajoke Muhammed, Mr. Risqua M. Muhammed, Dr. Onukaba Adinoyi-Ojo. Others included were a number of federal ministers, several state governors and representatives from international communities, non-governmental organisations and other

eminent personalities. Initially, the Foundation operated programmes that focused largely on engendering and supporting self-reliance efforts in major areas like housing, business development, the environment, displacement and resettlement, and disaster relief.

Shortly after a series of plane crashes in Nigeria, the Foundation took its Disaster Relief Service to the level of policy campaign, which heralded a new form of intervention. It drew national and international stakeholders in the aviation industry, disaster response agencies in Nigeria and around the world and the government to deliberate on global perspectives on disaster management. This led to what is certainly the most incisive reform in Nigeria's aviation industry. It explored the adequacy of our disaster management regime with the intention of developing and providing a holistic approach. The Foundation has since developed a draft Disaster Management Act. In addition, a robust disaster management framework on which the Act can function has been developed. We believe the Act and the Framework will set the stage for disaster risk reduction, risk assessment and vulnerability reduction as well as better support systems during and after disasters.

The Foundation provided relief materials to the victims of the EAS plane crash, which occurred in the Gwammaja area of Kano on 4 May 2002. The northern coordinator of the Foundation supervised the distribution of bags of rice, salt, sugar, praying materials and water for over thirty days. The impact of the disaster caused untold damage, killed hundreds and rendered many homeless. In a bid to promote its medium-term disaster relief efforts and to improve the standard of living of the inhabitants of the Gwammaja, the Foundation has provided a borehole.

Sequel to the 27 January 2002 Lagos bomb explosions, the Foundation commenced short-term intervention for the victims within the cantonment. Meals were served to the victims twice daily at each point, and counseling was given to women especially. As part of its medium-term relief efforts, the Foundation also built a school, comprising 38 classrooms, ten administrative offices with toilet facilities and adequate playing grounds.

We also achieve our policy and advocacy drive through research, issue selection and prioritisation, stakeholder consultation, influencing government policy, annual lecture and conference, and agriculture-related business

development. The journey has been tough. The major problem Nigeria currently faces is infrastructural decay. For a Foundation like ours, the only means of survival is through funding, and we are grateful that our donors have always been generous.

THE VOCATION PATHWAY

After concluding my primary education at the Lebanese School, I gained admission into Queen's College, Yaba, in 1974. Life at Queen's College was fun until the death of my father in 1976 punctured my innocence. His death signalled a different period in my life and made me question the rationale behind my being shielded all the while. Life became rough, or perhaps I just saw it so. A major character that stood tall in my memory of my Queen's College years was our principal, Mrs. Efunjoke Coker. She was the archetypal educationist and took a genuine interest in her students. As a teenager, I learnt a lot from her and was especially moved by the way she conducted one assembly morning to commiserate the death of my father. But even when she knew I was the daughter of the Head of State, I can't recall being unduly favoured for anything. I had to get anything from the school like any other student. I finished from the school in 1979.

Unbelievably, there were suggestions from my paternal family in Kano about me getting married, which Mother sought a way to quickly put an end. Before it escalated, she got admission for me at Queen Anne's School, Caversham, Reading in the United Kingdom, where I did my A levels preparatory for further studies in the legal profession. However, my journey into law was never intentional. It happened during one of my interactions with Mother, who simply asked what profession I wanted to go in to. I told her I had not thought about it. But when she suggested law, it just stuck. Indeed, after several years in practice I don't believe I would have derived the kind of satisfaction I have in any other vocation.

I was at the University of Buckingham, UK, for my LLB (Hons) degree between 1984 and 1986, and followed it with a BL (Barrister at Law) at the Nigerian Law School, Lagos in 1987. During this period I was at the chambers of late Chief Rotimi Williams on attachment. However, I would say I enjoyed law more as a postgraduate student than as an undergraduate. I did my LLM in Public International Law at King's College, University of London.



I returned to Nigeria immediately to participate in the mandatory one-year NYSC service to the nation. I was posted to the Ministry of External Affairs as a solicitor whose responsibilities generally centred on writing legal briefs on international issues and consular disputes. We also reviewed international contracts and treaties in accordance with regional and international regulations. Although I did well there, I was not satisfied with writing briefs only – I wanted to be at the forefront, to be a barrister. I believe my being opinionated was a gift I should not neglect and therefore, I left the ministry after the service year.

A CASE FOR WOMEN

I believe that people's upbringing affects their outlook on women. Ours is a society where women are more restrained. When I was pregnant with child, I feared it would be a girl and would face the same constraints. Now, I have two girls and a boy and I can see the girls are more outgoing. My fears were baseless.

The bias against women is generic. Sometimes people make judgments based solely on one's sex. Personally, I have had instances where people refer to me as just a woman and, worse still, one from the north! It is as if anyone from the north couldn't do well – which is a myth. In most cases, I usually topped my class and it is something my children now emulate. I am also a hard working person, even though I am very relaxed in my work. I don't have patience for people who don't like

to work. There are instances where some people claim they have nothing to do but still won't work when it is offered to them.

One way I have been able to improve the lives of women is by hiring them as staff of the Foundation. The most important thing I believe women need is to have a voice in whatever life's circumstances may bring. With the aid of the Foundation, we have been able to touch more women through conferences. Other times, I employ personal counsel. I try to mentor people and reach them on a personal level. We also have a scholarship scheme through which we encourage them.

LIFE WITH TWO MOTHERS

In the Fulani tradition, a child is usually given to a member of his or her father's family. One finds that most children are not brought up by their real mothers, but by another woman in the family as a sign of respect. This was especially my own case – I was taken to live with my uncle's wife in Kano and I grew to appreciate her. Living with her was such a wonderful experience. Indeed, I have yet to meet somebody else with her kind of temperament. She was so gentle, so loving and so warm. I say this without any exaggeration. People generally testified to her behaviour.

As a child, I frequently visited Kano to spend some time with my uncle and his adorable wife – my second mother. Whenever I was to travel, Mother would pack my luggage, usually filled with mostly Western dresses

and a few wrappers. But as I got to Kano and began to wear them, it would become inevitable to tie a wrapper on a different top, which often made me an object of ridicule from the people in the compound. They called the style of dressing “cut, cut and join, join”. As a result; I would recoil into my shell and start to cry. Most times, my Kano mother would intervene by getting me a complete set from one of her wrappers. Indeed, those people knew how to mock one. They would tease that I had come to Kano in the boot of a car, when I expected them to mention the aeroplane! It was a memorable time, living and learning as I grew amongst my father’s family then.

My adopted mother was such a wonderful person. She had a strong capacity for endurance. With her, everything I did was okay. She taught me through reasoning. She believed in giving a child the necessary guidance that would help him or her make the best decision. Because of her approach one naturally wanted to do the right thing. Whenever I offended her I would sense the disappointment in her and apologize. I rarely repeated the same mistake.

She was a very traditional woman. She hardly left the home. She had four children – all boys – but I couldn’t relate much to any of them because they usually weren’t

around. They were with relatives in other parts of the country. Some of them were with my parents in Lagos.

My real mother was a different kind of person– a typical Yoruba woman, which is what we continuously tell her. She loved to enjoy herself and often brought parties to the house. Through her we got to know about Sunny Ade and Ebenezer Obey. She had a lot of friends even though she was a tough disciplinarian. She is a dental therapist by profession but she is a business woman as well. She trades in clothes. She is also a real estate developer as well as an environmentalist. Indeed, she is a lot of things packed in one. I am very proud of her.

Growing up was very tough because she was such a disciplinarian. She never spared the rod. On the other hand, Dad was more tolerant. For instance, if Father gave one of us money to buy comics and he or she bought more than was necessary, Mother would request for the balance. Even if one had given them out to friends, Mom would want one to get them back! I remember how embarrassing that could be. As a teenager, I became rebellious and began to assert myself. I saw that, being the quiet one in the house, I had been neglected and shown the least respect. This also made me hold on firmly to personal opinions, which people saw as stubbornness. I also had grudges with



a number of people – even when they didn't know it!

Despite my strained relationship with Mother, I had great growing years with my family, especially being the first child. I was generally well behaved, my major concern being to be the best in my class. I read a lot, with a bias for the classics. As a result, I was always among the best in my class. I remember I used to steal in to my father's cupboard to read some of his journals. Physically, there were so many things I detested about my body as a growing person. I was skinny, I had protruding eyes and I was very dark– indeed, the darkest in my family. I remember people used to call me 'Eyes Kongba' in reference to my eyes, comparing them to those of a crab! Also, they used to mock that they couldn't see me when in the dark because I would merge with the environment. However, I later met people in Britain who appreciated my attributes. I grew up to appreciate myself the way I am.

My parents had five other children besides me. My immediate younger brother (now deceased) was followed by a girl, Fatima, who was followed by another boy, Musbau (now in Abuja), and two girls, Zainab and Jumai, in that order. While we were still youngsters, I was more or less a mother to all of my siblings, and that I think, had to do with our culture. However, my immediate younger brother and I were usually at loggerheads, because he wouldn't want to accept my authority as the senior. We were really close, which made his death in 1994 such a sad experience for all the family. It was more painful due to the inexplicable circumstances surrounding it. Although we queried and questioned at the time, we eventually accepted it as the will of God.

THE SOLDIER'S DAUGHTER

I had a fantastic childhood. I was born on 24 December 1963 at the Lagos Island Maternity Hospital, the first child of my parents. My father was particularly excited because I was a girl. I was lucky to be in that family and life then was almost a bed of roses. It was such a secure childhood; we were never exposed to life outside the home. Both my maternal grandparents were still alive then, as was my paternal grandmother. So were several aunts and uncles, extended family members and relatives whom we frequently visited in Kano.

In those days, our average day consisted of the normal things: we woke up, got dressed, went to school and returned in the evening to attend Islamic lessons, after which we went to bed. During the holidays we usually

travelled to Kano. This was especially pleasant for my father, who loved to travel by road.

I was so shielded as a child that I could not go out without permission. Indeed, I knew little about life outside our home until the time I went for my secondary education in a boarding school. Then I began to wonder why my people had shielded me so much from the reality, which I was going to face any way. I thought, since childhood was such a short period, they should have allowed me to explore the different shades of life. In fact, the way I was raised later developed a kind of subtle rebellion in me. At a time, I wanted to start exerting myself, which many misconstrued.

On the other hand, I learnt to appreciate life on a different scale as the over- pampered daughter of a military officer. Although I had issues with the way I was being raised, I found it was with the best intention of my parents and guardians. I have also understood that there may never be a "best" way of raising a child. There are those raised with all the pampering and protection but who still grow up spoilt. There are also those who had a difficult childhood but still did not do any better as an adult. Parents can only do their best and hope for the best for their children.

My dad was a senior officer in the Nigerian Army, our world was full with military activities and peoples. A lot of soldiers lived and worked with my father as orderlies, washermen and other menial jobs. I grew up to know so much about how disciplined these soldiers could be. Anyone who was found wanting in his or her duties were punished. Most times, they were taken to the guard room and had their hair cut. They served their punishment without undue interference or favour. Sometimes, as part of their community service, they would come to mow the lawn. This was during the closing stages of the civil war, so the soldiers were more active than ever. Sometimes they would gather to discuss their individual and collective experiences in the war. I guess this was what made them have such a strong singing culture. They sang about virtually everything that happened around them.

Although I was still very young during this time, I remember it was a delightful thing to be in the army or to be related to those in the army. In fact, this was evident in my family as my younger brother joined the cadets as a youngster. We felt proud of him, especially when I saw him in his uniform. More so, my father later became a prosecutor, and although I didn't know much of what

this implied, I was nonetheless a proud daughter. We left our barracks abode at Point Road, Apapa, first to Bedrock Road and then to Second Avenue, both in Ikoyi. As kids, we usually strolled around Ikoyi. Since most of the place was still swampy then, we occasionally saw reptiles, which the officers often helped us to kill.

Father initially sent me to the Army Primary School in Yaba before an uncle who lived across the road introduced him to the Lebanese school his children attended nearby. When he was convinced of what they offered, my father got me transferred there, where I got to know several children from Lebanon, Syria and several East Asia nations. Indeed, as a child, I used to have odd feelings about the expatriate children. I sometimes wondered if they ever used the toilet!

Irrespective of people's opinion about my father, I knew him to be kind and gentle. I wouldn't know how he related with people outside but with his children he was the most desirable father. He believed so much in education and constantly told Mother to take it as a priority, whether he was around or not. He always wanted his children with him and it was difficult to part with me sometimes when I stayed with his family in Kano. The culture, I believed, hindered him from showing affection.

On Sundays, he usually took us out to the club house, and then to Royal Palace Hotel where we enjoyed swimming. Dad got a gramophone for the house and different kinds of toys whenever he was out of the country. There was such a strong camaraderie in my family then. Father was also very loyal and friendly. He was detribalised and had friends from different parts of the country. At all times, there were different kinds of people in our house. Dad just accommodated them. During the war, Father had to arrange to bring Mother's relatives from Port Harcourt. Father was also very opinionated, which is one trait I took from him.

A BLACKOUT AND A CRISIS

On a particular Friday, 13 February 1976, the principal of the Lebanese school, who was also a friend of our father, came to pick us up in a Peugeot car. She took us to one of our uncles who lived in Yaba, where we wouldn't be able to watch TV. Although, I sensed that something was amiss, there was no way I could confirm. As we got to the house, I saw my uncle's wife wiping away tears. When I asked she claimed to be removing

something in her eye. The puzzle remained until the evening, when I heard in the news that General Murtala Muhammed had been killed. Then I remembered that Father had gone out that day, and the reality that he had indeed been murdered hit me. My immediate reaction, I remembered, was to s-c-r-e-a-m!

Our mother was out of the country at this time, which compounded the situation for us the children. She couldn't get to us in time due to flight delay. I was already above twelve years old so I could understand what had taken place. My father, who had become the Head of State a few months before, had died! The effect on the entire family was devastating. My mind went blank for a long time afterwards and up until now I can't remember the subsequent events.

We briefly relocated to Kano. While a lot of people commiserated with us, some others mocked us, saying my father had also been involved in the assassinations of many people during the 1966 coup. My father's family thence forth decided we were going to be with them, which did not go down well with my mother. She explained to them that it was the agreement of the couple that, whatever happened to any one of them, the children must stay together. She emphasized the fact that it was my father's wish that we received the best education. My paternal grandmother especially felt slighted by Mother's insistence. She took it personally and afterwards refused to visit us whenever she came to Lagos. This almost created a crisis in the family. It took the intervention of other family members to quell any ugly incidence. My father's sisters, Hajia Modajia, who is a home maker, and Alhaja Mona, a prominent writer, were helpful in this instance.

Actually, the crisis made me grow up to appreciate the Nigerian situation better. This has made me become quite passionate about the country and about issues concerning it. Having lived in both sides of the Niger, I see our diversity as a blessing. Indeed, I am also from the two divides, being a product of a cross-cultural marriage. My father was a typical Hausa, while my mother is a Yoruba, although with a link to Fulani through her mother. She also has links with Rivers State through her mother's sisters. Initially, my father's mother didn't support the marriage and pressured him severely to get another wife who should be Hausa.

THE BITTER REALITY

Although I appreciated the sheltered upbringing my parents gave me, I also felt they should have allowed me to have a feel of reality. Childhood is such a short period. Thus, it was a difficult reality I faced after the death of my father. Beyond the reputation as the daughter of a former head of state, there was really nothing much to glory about. The family experienced some scarcity and the situation became really tough. Even to pay our school fees became a major problem, which wouldn't have been the case if Father were alive.

The family later got a pledge from the federal government that they would hence forth take charge of our education to whatever level. But it wasn't easy to get the funds. I remember we had to frequently visit the people saddled with the responsibility of disbursing the money. After a while, our means of getting the money was channeled through the ministry, where bureaucracy was renowned. Thus, several times we would have to go from one office to another in a bid to get the money released. We had to meet with several directors who kept referring us to one another. But we never gave up because that seemed the only option. More so, the thought of foregoing education because of the difficulty was never an issue for me – I didn't think it was a choice.

In essence, while I admit that my infancy and early childhood were rosy, the scenario changed with the death of my father. The period was a real learning process because it taught me how to push through when there is adversity. At that time, the only family car became so old that we dared not take it out because of the embarrassment. We preferred to use public transport instead. At a time, Mother had to sell her jewellery to fend for some of our pressing needs. One major lesson I learnt from her, which came in the form of a statement, was that what couldn't break one should make one stronger. We learnt never to give up when we faced setbacks.

Although I had always taken life as I found it, while also having the 'live-and-let live' mentality, I now understood I needed to show more love and concern for my family and relatives. This has subsisted till today, so much so that the problems of my siblings naturally become mine. In fact, it got to a time my mother reported that some people felt I was policing their lives. I am grateful to my Mother for teaching me the value of being content with whatever I have. This has helped me never to be greedy or envious of another person. I try also to impart these

values in my children.

Another valuable lesson I learnt was that people tend to gravitate towards successful people, or those they believe should be able to offer help when they need it. We understood painfully that only when one is relevant would he or she command the love and attention of everybody. In fact, I could say that I receive more now as a relatively comfortable adult than when I really needed assistance. This taught me, and has made me have the mind of reaching out to people around me whom I thought might need my assistance. I try to impact on those I actually see – my hairdresser or any other person doing menial jobs; who I feel should be better off.

However, some people were helpful during the turbulent period in my family. One of these was my maternal grandmother, Alhaja Sariyu Langba. She was an entrepreneur and I remember visiting her in what I knew then as 'fishing village' and helping her in her trade. She usually visited me in Queen's College, especially when Mother was out of Lagos, and she brought Cabin biscuits along.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Motherhood and family life have been fun because I am married to a friend. We were friends a long time before we cemented our relationship, which I believe is crucial to the success of any marriage. The couple should be able to know each other well and understand themselves before getting married. Although he is just four years older, my husband, Gbenga Oyebo, has a matured mind. Sometimes, we mock him that he behaves like an old man even though he is the last child in his family. He is an accomplished businessman and I'm very proud of him.

Although this isn't my first marriage, I totally savour this experience because of the man I married. He is very outgoing, he is an interesting person to be with. Little wonder why he makes friends easily. He is also very nice and I wouldn't say this if he were not. We enjoy travelling together. And I remember one of our trips abroad, in Japan, where all we ate was fish! At a time I could no longer bear it. Since my husband is a football enthusiast, I try my best to accompany him to watch matches. But I am not a follower of the game, and therefore the 90 minutes within which it is played seems like an eternity to me. I simply allow my mind to day dream. The success of any marriage, I have learnt, depends more on

the woman and I am willing to make a success of my home.

As a sign of being favoured, I have also been blessed with three adorable kids –two girls and a boy. Whereas the two girls are outgoing—a trait they took from their father, the boy is more reserved. He prefers to spend his time in front of a TV set, although we have devised ways to make him partake in more creative play. He is none the less a bright student, like his sisters.

My children are leaders in their different classes. In fact, I wouldn't know between their father and me whose gene is more responsible for their intelligence.

My children and I are friends, although this doesn't mean they can do whatever they feel like. There should always be boundaries. But I allow them to be children. I am free with them. I implement the upbringing I gained from my two mothers – the soft and the tough – and it works very well. Indeed, I would love to be remembered as a successful mother and wife, and one who contributed to change in her society.



