

**The  
Journal**  
...reason, truth and equity

VOL. 4 30 AUGUST - 6 SEPTEMBER 2020

**THE POLICE AS POVERTY**

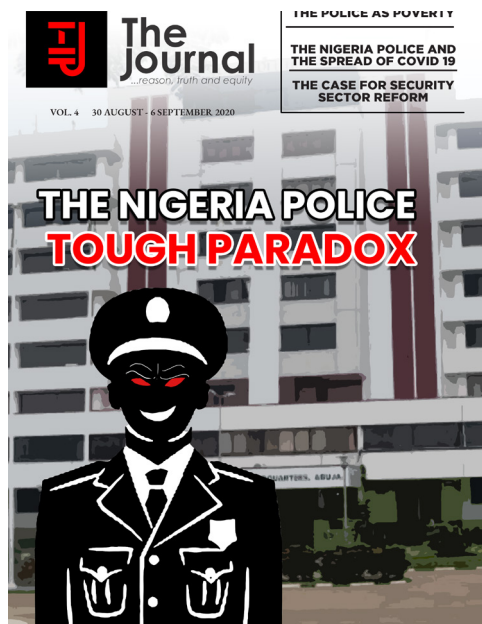
**THE NIGERIA POLICE AND  
THE SPREAD OF COVID 19**

**THE CASE FOR SECURITY  
SECTOR REFORM**

# **THE NIGERIA POLICE TOUGH PARADOX**



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The Journal is a Pan-Nigerian online newspaper that engages all segments of the Nigerian life. The Journal provides objective and professional analysis on national and international issues with a critical and progressive balance.  
The Journal is published by May University Press Limited.  
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## STORIES AROUND THE GLOBE

### NIGERIA

#### FEMALE NIGERIAN FOOTBALLER QUILTS PLAYING FOOTBALL FOR HAIRDRESSING JOB

Chinenye Okafor, a 28-year-old Vice-Captain of Pelican Stars in Cross-River State, resigned from playing football for a hairdressing job due to prolonged unpaid dues.

It was gathered that the Pelican Star Club usually pays its players \$78-182 every month, but stopped payment in June 2019. While the state's officials continued funding the men's team, food stuff were made available to the female players.

The Players have been left unpaid for 13 months by the State government. Many still bask in the euphoria of hope for payment as they hold the State's government to their word.

#### 75BN SPENT TO PRINT BANKNOTES - CBN

The Central Bank of Nigeria, CBN, has revealed that 75bn was spent on printing banknotes for year 2019, whereby 64bn was spent in 2018 for showing an increase of 11.5bn, with about 17.93%.

The bank stated that 'In 2019, a total of 206,651

boxes of banknotes of different denomination valued at ₦1.53 billion were processed, compared with 266,578 boxes of banknotes valued at ₦1.56 billion in 2018. This represents a decrease of about 5.927 boxes which is equivalent to ₦28.2million or 2.22 percent.'

#### PMB APPOINTS 12 NEW PS AND 2 COMMISSIONERS

President Muhammadu Buhari appointed 12 new Permanent Secretaries and 2 Commissioners into the Federal Civil Service at the presidential villa, Abuja, last week.

Dr. Folasade Yemi Esan, Head of Service of the Federation made a statement available to the media notifying them of the appointment of the new Permanent Secretaries, in the persons of Belgore Shuaib Mohammad Lomido (Kwara), Akinlade Oluwatoyin (Kogi), Ekpa Anthonia Akpabio (Cross-River), Alkali Bashir Nura (Kano), and Ardo Babayo Kumo (Gombe). Other appointed secretaries are Anyanwataku Adaora Ifeoma (Anambra), Udoh Moniloja Omokunmi (Oyo), Hussaini Babangida (Jigawa), Mohammed Aliyu Ganda (Sokoto), Mahmuda Mamman (Yobe), Meribole Emmanuel Chukwuemeka (Abia), and Tarfa Yerima

Peter (Adamawa). Idahagbon Henry was made Commissioner for Revenue Mobilisation Allocation and Usman Hassan was assigned to Fiscal Commission.

#### BANKS TO TAKE UP ELECTRICITY BILL COLLECTION

The Central Bank of Nigeria has directed the banks who have loaned and guaranteed the Nigeria Bulk Electricity Trading, NBET PLC., and the Transmission Company of Nigeria, TCN, through the Electricity Distribution Companies, DIScos, to receive payment on electricity bills from the DIScos in order to achieve a seamless debt management system.

Dr Bello, Director of Banking Supervision, CBN, made this known in a letter addressed to the banks.

#### CASTRATION IS THE BEST PUNISHMENT FOR RAPISTS - EMIR OF KARAYE

Alhaji Ibrahim Abubakar II, Emir of Kayare in Kano, has said that castration could be his last resort of punishment for rapists. The Emir stated that 'Castration as punishment for rapists will discourage perpetrators of such an abominable crime, who take solace in using their manhood to wreak havoc....'

He expressed his displeasure at the alarming increase of rape cases when Dr. Zaharu Muhammad, the State Commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Development visited his palace.

#### MAN COMMITS SUICIDE OVER FAILURE IN BUSINESS

Chinedu Ogwa, a 45-year-old auto-parts dealer and father of four who hails from Ebonyi State, committed suicide in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, over failure in his business.

According to the deceased wife, Mrs. Chidinma Ogwa, 'He wanted to drink poison because he was frustrated. He said his debtors were not willing to pay him, and he was also owing and that his business is not growing...'

### AFRICA

#### AFRICA IS POLIO FREE

Professor Rose Gana Fomban Leke, Chairperson of the Independent Africa Regional Certification Commission, ARCC announced that the World Health Organisation (WHO) rated Africa a polio-free continent.

In his statement, he said, 'Today is a historic day for Africa. The African

Regional Certification Commission for polio eradication (ARCC) is pleased to announce that the Region has successfully met the certification criteria for wild polio eradication, with no cases of the wild polio virus reported in the Region for four years.'

## **SMARTPHONES WITH IN-BUILT MALWARE SOLD IN AFRICA**

Thousands of low-cost China Tecno phones sold in Ethiopia, Cameroon, Ghana and South-Africa and other places, have been discovered to have malicious pre-installed software on them. This was made public by Secure-D, an anti-fraud platform. It was also discovered that the sum of 19.2million had exchanged hands in transactions from over 200,000 devices with the in-built malware since March 2020. Secure-D noted that 'Phone owners' airtime and internet data were used up faster than usual as they were fraudulently used to pay for services funneling money back to the malware's creators.' This built-in malware downloads unwanted applications and subscribes users to paid services without the users' knowledge.

Meanwhile, Transsion, makers of Techno claimed

that the malware affected only phones of the Techno Brands. The Chinese firm blamed the supplier of the brand and noted that it has since sent a patch to help resolve the malware issue.

## **MAURITIUS OIL SPILL KILLS 18 DOLPHINS**

MV Wakashio, a Japanese-owned cargo ship, is said to have struck a coral reef off the Indian Ocean Island and spilled more than 1,000 tons of oil. The spill has reportedly spread over a wide expanse of the sea thereby affecting marine life.

This ecological disaster is suspected to have caused the deaths of about 18 Dolphins washed ashore the Mauritius beaches on Wednesday.

The Mauritius Oceanographic Institute is however carrying out an investigation on the marine animals so as to determine the real cause of their death.

## **REFUGEES PROTEST AGAINST HUNGER AS EUROPEAN DONORS WITHDRAW**

About 17,000 African refugees in Kiziba camp, Rwanda, began a protest as the UN World Food Programmes (WFP)

decreased their rations by 30 percent. This reduction in food and grocery supplies to the Refugee camp was as a result of the withdrawal of several donor countries from the programme. The donor European countries withdrew their support as a result of the effect of the pandemic on their economies.

The protest has raised worldwide concerns as 11 refugees were killed when the Rwandan Police tried to quell the raging protest in the camp.

## **139-YEAR-OLD HISTORIC MOSQUE ON FIRE IN SOUTH AFRICA**

A large fire gutted a 139-year-old historic Mosque on Grey Street in the city of Durban, South Africa. The massive blaze that gutted the mosque was presumed to have been caused by an electrical fault and not any scheme or conspiracy.

The mosque which accommodates about 7000 worshippers has been described as one of the largest mosques in the Southern hemisphere.

## **UGANDA: LIGHTNING KILLED CHILDREN PLAYING FOOTBALL**

Josephine Angucia, Police Spokeswoman, announced

the death of ten children playing football in Northern Uganda. The children, aged 11 to 16, were killed by lightning while sheltering from the rain.

She further said that 'Deadly lightning is commonly reported in the East African Country during the wet seasons. We are urging children to avoid playing in the rain. It is advisable for schools to fix lightning arrestors, so that we offer protection to our children.'

## **68-YEAR-OLD CONSERVATIONIST KILLED BY LIONS DURING ROUGH PLAY**

West Mathewson, a 68-year-old South African Conservationist, was severely bruised and killed by two white lions during a morning walk on Wednesday.

According to the Police, Gill, his 65-year-old wife, tried saving her husband from the claws of the two 180kg animals, but injuries had already been inflicted.



## THE REST OF THE WORLD

### EU TRADE COMMISSIONER RESIGNS AFTER VIOLATING CORONA VIRUS RESTRICTIONS

Phil Hogan, EU Trade Commissioner, resigned after attending a Golf event at a hotel in Galway with about 80 people in attendance. He tendered his resignation letter after breaching Ireland's laid-down rules against Corona Virus.

The Commissioner in his statement said he regretted that his trip to Ireland had caused such 'concern, unease and upset.' He further stated that, 'he should have been more rigorous' in compliance to the COVID-19 guidelines.

### FLORIDA JUDGE FLOUTS ORDER TO REOPEN SCHOOLS

Judge Charles Dodson of the Leon County Circuit Court rejected the State's order that directed Schools in Florida to reopen for in-person instruction. The Judge considered the order as a disregard to safety.

The Teachers' Union sued Governor Ron DeSantis and Richard Corcoran, the Commissioner of Education over the order released, as it states that required school districts provide students the option to return to school in person by 31st of August or forfeit State funding.

### COVID-19: PATIENT IN NETHERLAND AND BELGIUM TEST POSITIVE AGAIN

A patient in Netherlands and another in Belgium have tested positive to coronavirus a second time.

One of the patients, an older man in the Netherlands was said to have contracted the virus the second time due to a weak immune system, while the second patient, from Belgium was said to have shown light symptoms the second time.

Scientists however affirmed to the expectation of reinfections, but raised concerns about people's immunity to the disease.

### GAZA FEARS A WIDER OUTBREAK OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The Government of Palestine imposed a two-day shutdown of schools, businesses, cafes and mosques following the report of four confirmed new cases of the COVID-19 virus. Prior to the emergence of the virus, Gaza was known for its poor health system, and power supply. Gaza Strip, a part of the Palestine pentapolis, has one of the densest populations on earth, with about two million people.

Ayadil Saparbekov, Head of the World Health Organisation's local health emergencies team said, 'We have been beefing up our support before this event by providing protective equipment as well as laboratory testing equipment.'



## THE CASE FOR SECURITY SECTOR REFORM

Nigeria is no doubt in the middle of an unprecedented throe of security challenges. In the last one to two decades, the country has witnessed a spate of violent ethnic agitations and religious extremism that snowballed into the breach of peace and insurgency in parts of the country. From incensed Niger-Delta militant agitations, through MASSOB and IPOB insurrections, to the Boko Haram insurgency, the nation's economic and political landscapes have been extensively shaken like never before since the Civil War. The role of the Nigerian military and the other security agencies in keeping the peace, protecting lives and property, and keeping the country together cannot be downplayed in any sense. Nigeria is still a nation today very primarily because of the all-important role of our security agencies, but the demands on these agencies have multiplied in recent years. Tackling our current security challenges thus would require an overhauling of the security sector, hence the call for critical reforms.

At the centre of the quest for change and advancement would be such questions as: How well-fortified is the Nigerian military with respect to personnel vis-s-vis the nation's demand for internal security? What is the strength of the Nigerian military in terms of equipment and weaponry? How technologically driven and up-to-date is the Nigerian military, and the security agencies in general? How much of interoperability exists within the entire Nigerian security network? How effectively have the security agencies secured the borders of Nigeria, and what are the perennial or persisting gaps? How well motivated are the officers and ratings of the various agencies? These questions and more arguably contain in them the touchstone against which Nigeria's success could be weighed in light of her security sector.

To examine the Nigerian military, for example, all indices show that there are gaping lacunae in the personnel base of the services. This has to be assessed in direct relation to requirements in the theatres of war and various centres of intervention that continuously demand the presence of the army in various parts of the country. A



feasible reformation programme for Nigeria's security should produce a Nigerian military that is capable of reviewing, redefining and re-engaging its strategies in manners well-articulated and calculated towards an assiduous reinforcement of the number of footmen, fighters, shipmen, and enforcers. As earlier stated in our previous article, 'How to Defeat Boko Haram,' the Nigerian military needs '400,000 well trained active personnel' to completely kill off Boko Haram, banditry, militancy, and effectively secure the nation. The benefits of numbers cannot be underestimated because only an adequate personnel capacity-enhancement of the forces can position the nation at full strategic advantage against all forms of insurgency and aggression filtering in through the borders. Regardless of the size of the enemy's strength or strategy, the Nigerian security forces would have the precondition to capably engage criminals, guerrillas, and ISIS-backed insurgents.

A critical approach to the personnel requirements of the Nigerian Army, particularly in a war situation as it is presently with Nigeria, is to consider the practical dimensions of quickly transforming specific units of the Police, the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, and other paramilitary organisations into fighting soldiers who could be used as armies of occupation in threatened or recovered territories. It is instructive, for example, that the Nigerian Army has had to fight and capture Baga in Borno State at three different times. On each occasion, they move in, kill some of the insurgents and push out the others, and then move on to other areas where they are needed. The insurgents always seem to know when there is a vacuum, and when to make a return. With the background of the paramilitary personnel, six to ten weeks of crash military training will suffice to permanently station them in various places that require steady military presence.

Arms and ammunition remain nothing to reckon with in the present scheme of things, leaving the military in the dilemma of a paradoxical fight-or-flight contraption. The issue of inadequate funding must be painstakingly addressed in order to strategically elevate the status of the Nigerian forces in terms of combat readiness. Security sector reforms should necessarily incorporate how Nigeria could enhance the military's weaponry, especially state-of-the-art weaponry built for conventional and asymmetric warfare. The international dimensions of arms procurement have to be extensively reviewed with a view to pragmatically re-engage and re-aligned the nation's interests with our foreign relations and businesses. The processes and dynamics of procurement have to become more transparent and accountable within broad military and regulatory ranges that make for best practices, checks and balances.

There is a lot more to be desired in terms of interoperability among the various services and agencies. The security agencies should evolve into an efficient network of highly coordinated operations in various theatres, rather than the inter-agency rivalries that sometimes negate coordinated security engagements. A structure that would enhance inter-agency cooperation, establish processes of interoperability on a case-by-case basis, and significantly penalise failures in required responses would close up many of the security gaps plaguing the nation.

A common tale of the military is that very often when they apprehend criminals and hand them over to the police to be prosecuted, they sooner or later get to apprehend other criminals who turn out to be the same persons that were earlier apprehended and handed over to the police. Without doubt, such indicates that there are huge problems within the system, and much of these have to do with the police, the lawyers, and the judiciary. Security sector reform should necessarily take along with it a reform of the judicial processes and system. As long as the police and the judiciary cannot deal with their ends of the bargain, for so long will the nation's security problems persist.

The military has in the past and present shown examples of desirable cooperation in joint operations. But there are still lots of gaps waiting to be filled. Inter-agency cooperation should necessarily and effectively include the Police, the Department of State Security, the Customs, the Immigration Service, the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, and all other security and intelligence agencies. Cooperation, collaboration and complementarity should lead to reduced capital and operational costs, enhanced processes, and improved security outcomes in the country.

A redesigned reformation framework should define collective responsibility in a manner that places primary responsibility on individual leaders within the various services and agencies to foster inter-agency synergy. An effectively institutionalised interoperability system would adequately manage inter-agency conflicts of statutorily delineated jurisdictions, and clashes of personalities at various levels of leadership. Curbing these and other inhibitors will enhance the contexts of working in tandem towards common security goals and objectives.

To further strengthen the nation's security apparatus, provisions should be made for the installation of remote surveillance systems which maximise satellite technologies in monitoring and securing the country's borders. This ensures that effective aerial and panoptic views of the nation's borders are possible with more efficient physical protection of the borders. This way, a virtual wall, complemented with physical fortifications, should be erected to secure the nation's territorial space. The 'erection' of a virtual wall around the entire country implies that the Customs and Immigration Service would have the much dependable information-

technology and communication infrastructural base to track human traffic and activities across the borders. With the walls should come the establishment of a special unit of the military to protect the borders. Such frameworks would make it possible to monitor the entire borders of Nigeria, especially the crisis-torn areas. A technology-driven security architecture is the gateway to becoming masters of our national space.

Such technology arrangement should be well-tailored to purpose, but also futuristic. Richard Hundley and Eugene Gritton, for instance, have discussed promising military programmes such as the development of insect-size flying and crawling systems capable of a wide variety of battlefield sensor missions; the development of techniques from molecular biology and biotechnology to develop new molecular electronic materials, components, and computational architectures; the use of up-to-date microelectronic and information technologies as the basis for a new advanced-technology logistic system; the development of techniques and strategies to protect a country's cyberspace, and the use of a variety of technologies to enhance the survivability, mobility, and mission performance of individual soldiers. Nigeria needs an Institute of Military Technology that would combined and coordinate the bits and pieces of critical efforts in various parts of the country, and elsewhere, into what should become an alternative global hub for the development of military softwares, hardwares, and critical technological innovations. Yes, we can!

The development of such advanced military technologies will most certainly reposition the nation as a regional power to a place where it exudes a fearsome and formidable character that commands the respect

of other nation-states, and enemies. A grand strategy for Nigeria's immediate and long term security, the strategic implementation and monitoring of a military development agenda, funding of the military, community policing etc., are all elements that should be significantly considered and incorporated into the security sector reformation that the country badly needs.

The onus is on the President and Commander-in-Chief, President Muhammadu Buhari, to effectively and adequately empower the machinery of government across board for a comprehensive reform of the nation's security sector, and to ensure that this is done timeously. But there is also much responsibility on the service chiefs and other top brass of the security sector. These have worked with the President in the last five years in directing affairs within their jurisdictions. They have a thorough insider and near-omniscient understanding of the security sector issues in the country. It behoves on them to offer the nation as a joint legacy of their uncommon tenure the much desired security sector reform, and to redefine and raise the bar of performance in the sector.



Dr Udu Yakubu



## THE NIGERIA POLICE AND THE SPREAD OF COVID-19

*Abiodun Bello*

On February 27, 2020, Nigeria confirmed its first incident of the coronavirus, following the diagnosis of an Italian who had made an entry through the country's airport. While the country was yet to settle down to the reality of the novel case, a second incident was confirmed on March 9. By this time, the nation was beginning to awake to the emergency nature of the crisis at hand. Outside the country, debates, arguments and counter-arguments were already reaching higher heights vis-a-vis who must take the blame for the virulent outbreak: China or the US, or countries deemed 'careless' enough to have allowed their citizens make International air travels to other places, thus spreading the virus to climes that had not been earlier affected. The WHO indeed had its share of the blame for not being adequately proactive in its initial response to the public health emergency. There have been also a number of pharmaceutical sprints, by

different countries and charitable foundations, towards the development of clinically approved antiviral drugs or vaccines that are effective in fighting the coronavirus. This is how fatal the coronavirus as come across.

According to one media source, a complete critical assessment of police response across many affected countries indicates that policing the pandemic is an arduous task which is not unique to Nigeria. From an utter misreading and misunderstanding of COVID-19 lockdown rules to having to handle citizens who simply want to put the laws to test by breaking the new rules, to the high desire for the use of force by the police on any occasion, including in negligible offences, it was clear that many police establishments got into their new functions only in the spur of the moment.



In Nigeria, and among other institutions, agencies and parastatals working out short- and medium-term measures by which to navigate the difficult terrains of the novel coronavirus outbreak, the Nigeria Police had released a well outlined thirteen-point document to help its men handle the COVID-19 scourge. These guidelines were clear and included sections that required police officers to be vigilant, take protective measures; maintaining social distancing while working in police stations and offices; considering suspending the enforcement of minor offenses, and traffic violations, to minimise unnecessary public contact; considering measures in strict compliance with existing national legislation to prevent overcrowding in specific locations, such as clubs or sports stadiums, where the transmission of the COVID-19 virus might be facilitated.

Other components of the guideline also included considering providing a police escort for shipments of emergency supplies to healthcare centers, such as medical equipment, personal protective equipment, etc., to ensure it is delivered safely and without interference; limiting, as far as possible the number of individuals held in confinement, where they might be especially vulnerable to infection, among other things.

These regulations and guidelines had become significant particularly in the light of many government directives, which included shutting the borders between states of the federation. It was also important because the numbers emerging from the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control were significantly on the rise, and the numbers of reported new cases, deaths, and discharges were headlining certainly on a 24-hour basis, thus necessitating the announcement of the initial lockdown and border closure. The numbers that were headlining soon revealed one important thing: the Nigerian public must now begin to take cautious steps towards self-preservation and appreciate the rationale for the prescribed application of the non-pharmaceutical interventions such as social distancing and the use of face masks. The Nigeria Police, as the frontline civil enforcement agency had the immediate task of enforcing these directives, while keeping strictly to the working guidelines earlier provided by the Force hierarchy.

In no long time, and in an antithetical twist, men of the police force had, by contingencies or by design, compromised many of these standard and statutory guidelines. First were the restrictions of human and

vehicular movements, with exceptions being the movement of essential goods and services and essential workers. Soon after these announcements, it seemed, to the contrary, that a window had just been flung open, offering men of the police at the inter-state border posts the 'remote privilege' to extort legitimate commuters such as essential-goods transporters and leg-walkers, away from the watching eyes of the government and the Nigerian public.

Once successful at perfecting this money-making endeavour in clear and daring violation of the law, directives and guidelines of government, the police had graduated from roadblock extortions towards a more organised modus operandi in breach of the COVID-19 guidelines. In this new phase, Very Important Personalities (VIP), and indeed any person, who could pay the 'escort fee', could ride shotgun with the police from one state to another and regardless of travel distance across the country. The lack of a shamefacedness on the part of the police at this stage paved the way for more Nigerians, including persons who were asymptomatic carriers of the coronavirus, to move in higher numbers from one part of the country to another, in the process spreading the virus from an epicentre like Lagos to other places where coronavirus cases had yet to be confirmed. In many instances, such other places had no prior cases of Covid-19.

In May 2020, less than two months after the first lockdown was announced by the Nigerian federal government, the Inspector General of the Nigeria Police had occasion to withdraw the police escort of the popular business man, Emeka Okonkwo, also popularly known as 'E-Money', for 'abusing' officers of the police force whom he reportedly had engaged in domestic and menial tasks, amongst other tasks that were sharply against the ethics of the Police force.

Similarly, there had also been reports of human rights abuses by the police who violated a number of citizens in different states of the country during the lockdown. These were a sharp diversion from an earlier directive from the Inspector General of Police, who had warned his officers against making unnecessary arrests during the lockdown. The IGP had directed that only legitimate arrests must be made in order to curtail the spread of the virus. Ironically, in the saga that saw the court appearance of the popular actor and movie producer, Funke Akindele-Bello, the police had been seen to have

completely let down its guard by paving the way for men and women of the press to jostle and mingle in the course of ensuring coverage of the court pronouncement that sent the actor into community service for an earlier violation of the social distancing rule during a birthday party that reportedly held at her Lagos home.

On other occasions, when the coronavirus had been confirmed to have spread to some states in Northern Nigeria, vehicles especially trucks loaded up with cattle from these areas had been intercepted in several states in the southern part of the country, when inter-state border closures were supposed to still be in effect. Governments of Delta State and Bayelsa State, for instance, had intercepted livestock cargos in similar circumstances that pointed at the comprise, complicity and failure of the police in the course of enforcing law and order, which is its primary duty.

The police had also been found to have dented its public image for deliberately violating the curfew during the first phase of the ease of lockdown. Many journalists and commuters had, on one occasion, passed the night in Lagos traffic, while the police was supposed to have been doing its job of enforcing the curfew. Persons suspected to have fallen foul of the rules of the curfew were arrested in groups and hurled on to police pickup vans in manners that also made social distancing impossible as arrested persons were held tightly together on the deck of the police vehicle.

Having highlighted these critical instances of, mostly, deliberate subversion of state laws and public health emerging regulations by the Nigeria Police, the fate of Nigerian public, and by implication the government, remains highly uncertain in the face of a ravaging pandemic owing to the (feigned or real) ineptitude of the police or a premeditated violation of executive orders made in public interest.

More critically, inflation in food prices and other consumable goods have recently risen but economic analysts tend to miss the point that prices rise during the Covid-19 experience in Nigeria because 'police duties' as against 'customs duties' were paid on consumer goods transported across state borders and, if the rules of economics are anything to go by, such 'duties' paid

could only reflect on prices so that traders make up for the margins of costs rather than go at losses due to the police's interruption of economic value chains.

At the moment, the latest COVID-19 statistics for Nigeria show that, as of August 28, 2020, the country has confirmed 53,477 cases of the virus, while having recorded 1011 death and 41,017 discharges. Perhaps these numbers could have been much lower if the Police had lived up to its duties and responsibilities to state. As the principal law enforcement agency, charged with the primary duty of upholding civil order and societal decorum, the Nigeria Police has the responsibility, both the government and the citizenry, to live up to this expectation. In times of a global pandemic such as the deadly coronavirus outbreak, much continue to be expected of the police as far the safety and protection of the civil populace are concerned. Across the world, police Institutions are facing some of the challenging times with respect to their capacity and capabilities to meet up with the demands of the pandemic as well as, in the insurance of the US, the ability to live up to the demands of sociocultural and racial equity.

Police forces around the globe have the eye of their respective publics on their moral, ethical and professional actions, more than at other times. In Nigeria, with an already long history of disappointment with the Nigerian public, the police Institution must effectively utilise the sobering moments which a global public health crisis offers as a good opportunity to redeem itself from a badly damaged public relations image. As the statistics continue to climb in some parts of Nigeria, many do hope that the police would fully appreciate the extent of its direct and indirect contribution to the spread of the Covid-19 scourge. Often, as history has shown, there are rarely second chances for ever making a good impression. While the police must come to terms with the fact of its moral and ethical compromises and unprofessional behaviour during the lockdown, the citizens have the opportunity to act within their civil rights and obligation to hold government to account and demand the very kind of police force that befits a new Nigeria that is genuinely transformed according to the vision of 'change' that it once campaigned and now profess.



## A POLICE IN NEED OF CHANGE

*Femi Morgan*

The Nigeria Police is meant to be deeply involved in the intricate security and well-being of communities. Its relations with security stakeholders and its posture to Human Rights and justice is expected to make every police station and every policeman a signifier of safety for law-abiding citizens, and a major threat to denizens of evil and criminality. The police are saddled by the law to protect lives and properties and to prevent crime and arrest situations.

The 2010 Police Act states that ‘The police shall be employed for the prevention and detection of crime, the apprehension of offenders, the preservation of law and order, the protection of life and property and the due enforcement of all laws and regulations with which they are directly charged, and shall perform such military duties within or outside Nigeria as may be required of them by, or under the authority of this or any other Act.’ The performatives of these roles show that the Nigeria Police fail to serve the citizens but continue to do the business of providing ample security to elite Nigerians

and not to the sovereignty of Federal Government, a situation which has a semblance with the colonial times. It has been revealed in the media that 40% of the Nigeria Police Force are assigned to serve as personal guards and protection to politicians and the Nigerian elite. This comradeship with the Nigerian political class and elite has made the Nigeria Police become an instrument of electoral fraud, violence and malpractices. A good example is the involvement of the Nigeria Police in the abduction and a coup against Dr Chris Ngige when he was at loggerheads with Chris Uba, his erstwhile political godfather. At this time, the South-South and South-East witnessed the unpalatable involvement of the police in political affairs. Electoral Agencies like the DFID, SERAP have in many cases accused the Nigeria Police of playing along with fraudulent electoral practices or actively using ‘federal might’ to scuttle the elections in favour of a candidate. This was also reflected in the leaks that exposed the involvement of the Nigeria Police in the electoral practices perpetuated by the Nigeria Police during the Ekiti State Elections in 2014.





In addition, many pundits say that, as long as the Nigeria Police remains on the exclusive list, and the Inspector General of Police, as well as all police officers are answerable to the centre alone, the Police Force will be used by the Federal Government to engage the temperaments, aspirations and desires of the Presidency. The Inspector General of Police would have no choice but to carry out the orders of the President directly or through the Interior Minister even if the orders would jeopardise the peace of the federation. This is a lingering shadow of the military years in Nigeria that is yet to be expunged or modified in the culture of the Police.

The Nigeria Police Force is not the friend of the Nigerian citizen because more often than not, Nigerians have experienced directly or vicariously the threat that the Nigeria Police poses to its fundamental liberties even when such limitations are neither backed by the same law nor the 2010 Police Act. While the Nigeria Police leverages on its constitutional role of being the force saddled with the protection of lives and property, preventing crime, physical and public harm, and protecting safety, the Human Rights Watch has stated that the Nigeria Police have constantly violated the rights of many Nigerians, leading to unlawful arrest, extortion, extrajudicial killings and torture. Many Nigerians have reported to the media several levels of police harassment, torture, unlawful detention and grave disappearances of their family members in the hands of the Nigeria Police.

These stories, which are published alongside the arrests of armed robbery gangs, rapists, amongst others, show that as much as the Nigerian Police is doing a tireless work of using its security intelligence to fight and win crime, the bad, untrained and problematic eggs in the force jeopardise these efforts by reclaiming its permanent bad image. A case in point is the complete detention, molestation and maltreatment of citizens without any ample evidence by the SARS. This led to the detention and death of Chibuike Edu in 2016, the handicap of Kester Edun in 2017 and recently the harassment and humiliation of an innocent lady in Ibadan in a publicised interrogation on social media.

Many citizens have accused SARS and other police officials of profiling its victims. This engagement of suspects without any evidence has led to many deaths, unlawful arrest – a man with a tattoo can be arrested for belonging to a secret cult without any evidence. Also, a

young man carrying a laptop bag could be arrested and labelled a member of an advance free fraud gang, while a woman returning from work late at night might sleep in the police cell because her movement is suspicious and she may be a prostitute. All of these add up and lead to the distrust, fear and disregard for the Nigeria Police. Freda Onaiza wrote in *The Journal*, Volume 2, Distrust and Apathy in the Nigeria Police about the experiences of Nigerians who have been unlawfully detained and extorted and how Nigerian youths have responded with #ENDSARS which the federal government has responded to, promising to reform the Nigeria Police.

Apart from cases like the Apo Six, where justice was served after many years, many cases of police brutality and extra-judicial killings remain swept under the carpet of memory. These unpalatable experiences are related and stored in the memory bank of many Nigerians who try as much as possible not to engage the police, seek redress through the police, inquire on any issue with the police or give any security information to the police. Many Young Nigerians have been molested by the Nigerian Police for having laptops, and many have been harassed and asked to reveal personal information or escorted to the ATM machines to withdraw sums for unscrupulous patrol officers for fear of being accused of crimes that they did not commit.

Also, while the Police Act stipulates that bail is free and that the accused has the right to engage a lawyer – within the time frame of the law – a person is expected to be charged to court within 48 hours of arrest. Unfortunately, this applies in police custodies where forthright policemen are in charge of the divisions. In most cases, the police investigators are only out to extort the family members of the detained by serving out judgement and terror therefore usurping the powers of the Nigerian court, as in the case of the arrest of Mr. Sylvester Ihejirika whose family members paid over 170,000 naira to investigation officer named ‘scorpion’ in Port Harcourt on a case of debt on a car. With many police divisions, you are guilty until proven innocent!

According to Filani Aderopo’s researched paper titled ‘The Right to Life in Nigeria: An Analysis,’ the Nigeria Police summarily executed 5,776 out of 24,941 armed robbery suspects between the year, 2000 to 2003. These killings also occur in ‘shoot-and-run’ circumstances at traffic checkpoints, during patrols and arrests, amongst others. The Nigeria Police was instrumental to the extra-

judicial killing of Mohammed Yusuf, the founder of the Boko Haram. At this time, the Boko Haram was a simple sectarian group but with the element of martyrdom. It soon became an insurgent group that now constitutes a threat to the sovereignty of the Nigeria.

Many civil rights activists and pressure groups see the Nigerian Police as a dreaded instrument of the Federal Government used to put everyone in order. There have been many cases of lawful protests that have encountered the brutality of the Nigerian Police. Although many public protesters would have informed the force of its intentions to rally the people to a cause according to the law, many of these agitators have had near-death experiences and, in some cases, outright death, in the hands of a police force that is quick to use the tear gas, the clobber and other means of physical attack to quell the protest. The protesters are also not spared as they are bundled like common criminals into the Black Maria for perhaps another round of physiological and physical torture.

The Save Nigeria Group, the Revolution Now Group, the IPOB, the Islamic Movement of Nigeria, and others have witnessed the high-handedness of the Nigeria Police in many of its peaceful protests. The Human Rights Watch has expressed dismay not only in the character of the police to engage protests but also in its practice of eliciting information from detainees. The NGO stated that the Nigeria Police is known to rape its detainees, to beat them with metal rods, to hang them on poles, to attempt to castrate them amongst others. What the Human Right Watch implies is that the Nigeria Police is mostly and unfortunately in the business of unlawfully breaching the fundamental human rights of the Nigerian citizen.

The Nigerian populace do not even trust the police to provide ample security for the environs. So, they form pseudo-governments, community development associations in order to engage local vigilantes to provide ample security for them. This was even more pronounced during the COVID-19 lockdown in Lagos, where many communities involved the services of the Oodua Peoples Congress to stem the tide of the One Million Boys, who were marching into streets, harassing and raping women, robbing homes and maiming people. Most Nigerian communities did not involve the Police because of the distrust built over the years between communities who the police have failed and

the Police who have distant community relations with the communities. This is in a way a response to the unavailability of a well-equipped, well-populated police force. In the absence of National Security for the nooks, crannies, streets, towns and metropolis, the mantra 'everyone for himself, God for us all' becomes a truism. The current outlook of the Nigeria Police can be linked to the challenges of the force. The fact that the Nigeria Police have been underfunded by the government with meagre salaries for Divisional Police Officers talk less of constables (who earn about 39,000NGN according to current salary scale) contributes to its culture of erecting road blocks and carrying out extortion to keep the business of policing afloat and salvage the lifestyles and societal expectations of police officers. The arrest of the former Inspector General of Police, Tafa Balogun, revealed a deep-seated corruption that trickles down to the constables and sergeants. This systemic corruption also affects the availability of armoury for the force, the maintenance of police buildings and the motivation of police officers.

Recently, Transparency International Defense and Security (TI-DS) and Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC) report titled 'Camouflaged Cash: How 'Security Votes' Fuel Corruption in Nigeria' revealed that a sum of N241.8 billion (\$670 million) is being spent annually by the Federal Government as 'security votes' in a most untransparent manner. In addition, the report revealed that, while the 2018 defense budget is estimated to be some \$1.2 billion, more than \$670 million extra was being handed out annually without proper oversight.

As much as there remains in the force, forthright men and women who showcase an alternative outlook, the tide of negatives seems to overshadow the positives. This negative trend is also entrenched by the ineffectiveness of the Police Service Commission, a civilian regulatory body of the police in having a full grasp of the realities and ratings of the force. The Police has a poor database to checkmate crime and criminality. It has not upgraded its forensic skills across the board and continues to use unprofessional hands in executing the arduous job of securing lives, livelihood and property in Nigeria. Given the political interference involved in promotion and retirement of police officers, many police officers will prefer to become friends with politicians and public office holders than to provide the needed service and befriend the Nigerian people.

# THE GOOD PEOPLE IN THE NIGERIA POLICE

*Jude Nwabukei*

There is a healthcare establishment in the United Kingdom whose mission statement could be applied to the Nigeria Police. It reads: 'Treat a person as they are and they will remain as they are, treat a person as they could be and they will become as they could be.' The public perception of the Nigerian Police is laden with many negative views than positive ones. Remarkably, this is not just the case with the Nigeria Police but many other aspects of life. A Professor of Communications at Stanford University, Clifford Nass said, 'Some people do have a more positive outlook, but almost everyone remembers negative things more strongly and in more detail.' Nass goes on to explain that negative emotions generally involve more thinking and that the information is processed more thoroughly than positive ones because humans tend to ruminate more over and about unpleasant events and use stronger words to describe them.

If one takes time to brood over Clifford Nass' words, there will be a realisation that Nigerians have mentally dwelt more on the unpleasant experiences they have had with the Police than the positive ones. But this is not limited to Nigerians. As observed from Nass' study, it is a human phenomenon and there is no better example to cite than the recent case of the gruesome killing of George Floyd which was followed by mass protests that was calling for the removal of the Police in several American States.

Before pointing out the good sides of the Nigeria Police that have unwittingly been overlooked, it would be necessary to examine the Public Relations efforts of the Nigeria Police as carried out by the Nigerian Police Public Relations Department (NPPRD). A 2016 assessment of the NPPRD by Omolola Oluwasola, a Media and Communications Scholar, which was focused on the





Lagos Command, states that ‘there is a serious need to reposition the public perception and image of the Nigerian Police Force....’ The psychology of perception refers to the ways in which people experience the world around them. It also includes how people interpret and respond to sensory information like sight, smell and hearing. When it comes to appealing to these senses, the media readily comes to mind.

While most people will insist that the media has mostly portrayed the Nigerian Police as all shades of wrong, they may not be mindful of the efforts of the Nigeria Police to connect with the public through Radio and Television programs. Two examples will suffice to drive this point. A little over two decades ago, there was a popular TV programme called ‘Crime Fighters’. This programme resonated with the public at the time because, not only did it showcase the efforts of the Police at nabbing criminals of all kinds, it was also used as a means for sensitising the public on matters relating to personal and communal security. On the network service of Radio Nigeria, a programme called Police Diary is aired weekly. In this phone-in programme the Police PPRO and other high-ranking officers of the force interact with callers who often call in to make complaints or call the attention of the police to security breaches in their vicinity.

In comparison to other military and para-military establishments in Nigeria, the Nigeria Police has proven to be more media-friendly and approachable. Many Nigerians can easily recall instances of seeing Inspectors-General of Police, their Commissioners and PPROs on various media platforms. This is not the case with the Nigerian Army, Navy or Air force, who are compelled to make appearances in response to some crises or allegations. No matter how good any organisation is, if their good works are not visible to the public, their image will be adversely affected. Whether one realises it or not, Nigerians tend to fraternise more with the Police in many ways than they realise – from the civilians who dwell in Police barracks, to people who use them to settle petty quarrels that could be resolved privately, and those who have accounts with the Police Microfinance Banks due to the peculiar incentives that they offer to their customers. On a social level, most people would comfortably chat with a police officer over drinks, and if the officer in question happens to be a beautiful lady, her uniform assumes the function of a prop in the drama of physical attraction. Many Nigerians will recall the incident of a young man who ‘dared’ to woo a female

soldier because he found her attractive. What followed his ‘bold’ gesture was a litany of beatings and slaps accompanied with the traditional ‘frog jump’ that is aimed at breaking a person into submission.

Still on the media, the presence of the Nigerian Police on social media needs to be mentioned. In the ever fast-and-furious twitter ecosystem, the Complaint Response Unit (CRU) of the Nigeria Police has made significant impact. Their twitter handle, @PoliceNG\_CRU which was set up since October 2015 has a following of 144,000. For a government establishment, this is impressive because the social media accounts of many government agencies have little following. Beyond the number of followers, the engagement with the public can be rated as ‘very good’. Their posts are recent and their response to complaints are prompt. Tracking numbers are given to complaints that are undergoing investigation. This ensures that these cases are followed up and tracked accordingly. Again, the twitter account of the Nigeria Police Force, @PoliceNG which has about 1.4 million followers acts as a verified source of information for matters relating to security, such as crime news, recruitment of Police Officers, Community Policing and other adjunct duties that fall under the purview of the Nigeria Police Force. The mere fact that the Nigeria Police has more following than the Nigerian Army shows that the Nigeria Police is making concerted efforts to increase friendly relations between the citizens and the force. This should not be surprising because one of their primary functions involves maintaining law and order in the society. Present realities demand that the information network that social media provides is necessary if law and order must be maintained.

Nigeria is a country where the gap between the haves and the have-nots is constantly widening. This kind of scenario is bound to produce a society where people’s lives are ‘nasty, brutish and short’ as Thomas Hobbes puts it. This nasty aspect of the Nigerian society features crimes like advanced free fraud. The Police Special Fraud Unit which is a section of the Force Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department, has used their expertise in forensic investigations to unravel cases of financial crimes involving the popular 419 scam and yahoo yahoo imbroglio. While many people may rightfully disagree that the PSFU has recorded any significant number of successes, there are also some other Nigerians who will recall the heroic feats of the PSFU in helping them recover money that had been swindled from them.



Be it the case of paying rent to a fictitious landlord or caretaker or recovering funds stolen by employees of banks or corporate organisations, those who have been fortunate to retrieve their funds will think otherwise if they are told that the PSFU is not effective.

The Force Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department has also been effective in curtailing the activities of kidnappers and ritualists across Nigeria. In 2017, the media was awash with the case of Chukwudumeme Onwuamadike also known as 'Evans' who was apprehended by the Intelligence Response Unit of the Inspector-General of Police. Evans who was reported to have carried out kidnapping operations for five years met his Waterloo over his alleged attempt to kidnap the Chairman of a popular transport company in Nigeria. Many others like Evans have been stopped in their tracks by the police as will be attested to by Crime correspondents in many Nigerian media houses.

The involvement of the Nigeria Police in international peacekeeping operations dates back to 1960 when police officers were deployed to Congo, now known as the Democratic Republic of Congo. According to Okechukwu Innocent, Nwachukwu Tochukwu, Ugwu Christian and Obioji Josephine in their 2017 journal article titled 'The Role of the Nigeria Police Force in Peacekeeping Operations,' it was in June 2004 that the Nigeria Police deployed its first-ever Formed Police Unit (FPU) to the United Nations Mission in Liberia. The FPU was a special, fully armed and equipped operational contingent made up wholly of Police Mobile Force units. They stated further that Nigeria became the first country in Africa to contribute FPUs to UN peacekeeping operations. The exemplary performance of the inaugural Nigerian FPUs provoked the UN to demand the deployment of more Nigerian units to other mission areas. What this shows is that some of the limitations of the Nigeria Police are connected with inadequate funding and public acknowledgement of their contributions to nation-building.

Globally, murder cases are usually hard knots to untie. The perpetrators of this act always do all that is within their power to cover their tracks, thereby sending police officers on a wild goose chase. To buttress this point a bit further, a little digression into the make-believe world of movies will be necessary. A Nigerian film titled 1960 reels out a vivid narrative of a principled police officer, Inspector Danladi who was assigned

to unravel a case involving the killing and raping of women in a particular South-Western town set in pre-independence Nigeria. When the Inspector eventually discovers the perpetrator of these acts of rape and murder, he is unable to prosecute him because the person in question happens to be a prince and heir to an influential King. Eventually, an innocent driver is arrested and the real killer escapes arrest. The point of this narrative is that the police can solve murder cases if they get cooperation from the public and fellow officers alike. In a country where justice is only served to the rich and influential, there is not much that the police can do. With the exception of politically motivated murders, the Nigeria Police Force has its fair share of successes. Sometime in April 2020, the Surulere Police Station in Ilorin, Kwara State solved a murder case due to the information provided by an anonymous stranger. Another example that most Nigerians will remember was the role of the Nigerian Police in solving the kidnap and eventual murder of Cynthia Osokogu, a woman who was stalked on Facebook, lured from her residence in Abuja to a Lagos hotel and murdered. It took the investigation and intelligence of the Area E Command in Festac, Lagos State to nab the culprits.

The Federal Supreme Court, High Courts and Magistrate courts across various jurisdictions in the country have records of murder cases that have been solved. The peculiarity of homicide cases is such that the victims and their loved ones do not like to relive the memories of the circumstances surrounding the death of their loved ones. This is especially the case in Nigeria where matters of death are treated as a private or family affair.

Are there good police officers? Even those who are quick to label the Nigeria Police Force as bad will acknowledge that there are good ones. They may also add that one or a few trees do not make a forest. True as this saying is, there are certain trees whose fruits produce other trees of their kind. There are many police officers whose exemplary performance and conduct have inspired Nigerians and given them a reason to hope for a better country. However, space and time will limit this discourse to two examples. For the sake of gender balance, a male and female officer will be profiled and brought to the fore.

**Muhammad Wakili**, a retired Police Officer and former Commissioner of Police in Kano State is

exemplary for his dedication to curbing crime and the abuse of hard drugs. This passion had earned him the nickname Singham, a name derived from an Indian movie character. All through his time with the Police, he earned a reputation as a no-nonsense man of good character and indomitable will.

*Josephine Okeme* is also a rare Police Inspector known for her exceptional performance as a traffic controller in the Yaba axis of Lagos State. This woman, who has graced the January 2018 edition of a magazine has been described by many Lagos residents as the 'Traffic Control Queen'. Her commitment and dedication to controlling traffic at the Sabo Yaba, a duty she carries out with smiles, endeared her to motorists and commuters who hardly drive past without giving her a wave or thumbs up. In addition, she has won several awards which include JCI-Lagos Awa Da, Metropolitan 2017 Toppa award and GTBank Nominate a Champ 2017 award.

While there are other officers who may not have been noticed by the public, these two officers are symbolic of the pride that can be attached to the Nigeria Police. They are good police officers who reflect the goodness and greatness that is inherent in every Nigerian. While this treatise does not aim to deny the shortcomings of the Nigeria Police, it aims at reminding the public that the police is like that friend that everyone runs to when trouble comes. Everyone can attest to that one person that everybody runs to whenever there is an issue to resolve. That person may not be described as a best friend but the person may have some level of influence that can mediate in matters of conflict. This is the position that the Nigeria Police occupies in Nigeria. If Nigerians take some time to think, they will realise that the Police have been a friend at one point in time or the other.

Nigerians must remember that whatever we call the police is what we really are. Every police officer is a father, mother, husband, wife, friend, uncle, aunty, boyfriend, girlfriend, fiancé, fiancée, and so on. They should remember that there are some spouses who sleep alone at night because their other half has to serve and protect other citizens. They must realise that when they feel the heat of the sun and the chill of the night, there are police officers at junctions, street corners and expressways bearing the discomfort on their behalf. Before a bad tag is append to the police, let us put ourselves in the position of their immediate and extended family members and feel the pain of being publicly scorned, disrespected or disregarded.

There are some police officers that the public will not notice. The ones who judiciously keep files and documents in the office. The ones who console sobbing women who have been victims of domestic violence, or the ones who have done heroic feats like fishing out pedophiles. Victims of car theft equally have stories of police officers who went beyond the line of duty to retrieve stolen vehicles that have been stolen, resprayed and refurbished. Little as these acts may seem, they mean a lot to the victims involved. The definition of a friend, for Nigerians, should not always be someone who smiles and makes merry with one at every given time. It should be a problem solver, who knows where the shoe pinches and how to save an honest Nigerian from a dishonest one, a law abiding one from a bully, and one who prevents harm before they happen to forthright persons in society.

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# NIGERIA AT WAR

Tade Ipadeola

*'...i held an atlas in my lap  
ran my fingers across the whole world  
and whispered  
where does it hurt?  
it answered  
everywhere  
everywhere  
everywhere.'*

– Warsan Shire

Worldwide, there is sorrow, tears and blood at this time. Fela Anikulapo Kuti sang the state of things best in his song of that same title composed with Nigeria and South Africa of the Soweto uprising of 1976 in mind. He could as well be singing of Nigeria today, a country seemingly at peace with her neighbours but at war with itself. Africa as a whole and Nigeria particularly has had an uneasy relationship with peace in the course of the past century.

To date, from Independence till the present, Nigeria has lost well over two million citizens to outright war and to various insurgencies. The rash of hostilities that broke out as pogroms in the North, 'weti e' in the South, uprisings in the Middle Belt and self-determination struggles in the Niger Delta, led

by Isaac Adaka Boro, all have a thread running through them – a festering discontent. Contemporary insurgents have since added religion to the already deadly mix of ingredients of discontent. From the Maitatsine uprising to Boko Haram to ISWAP and other spawn of intolerance, a fanatical load of gravel has been poured into the rapidly setting concrete mix that now paves the very roads Nigerians walk.

What was once managed locally by the police and the army is now the business of multilateral organisations sharing intelligence and warning Nigerians directly of clear and present danger. The Nigerian armed forces that worked for peace in Liberia and Sierra Leone, winning accolades in the process now needs AFRICOM. French military presence in West Africa no longer suffices in stemming the flow of insurgents and armaments from one country into another in West Africa. U.S. military presence in the Africa Command is increasingly felt in travel advisories, and open briefings in the age of social media, about the security situation. Nigeria is the crown jewel in Africa. Whatever happens elsewhere on the continent gains critical security mass if it happens in Nigeria.

What started as Boko Haram in the North East of Nigeria has, over the course of a decade, spread into the North





Central and North Eastern regions. Entire villages have been emptied of people in Zamfara by 'bandits' who raid and collect 'protection money'. Herdsmen on the rampage have attacked farmers wherever they have been able and farmers have retaliated when they could. The drought in the Sahel has forced droves of cattle down into the South of the country and the surge in numbers of new arrivals from all over the Sahel region has triggered skirmishes that now registers casualties in the hundreds.

The new fanatically-driven insurgents have not stopped the activities of regular kidnappers who have now formed themselves into organised units that operate throughout the country. These gangs possess hardware and software that are sufficient to defeat small armies. They collect bounties in naira, dollars and pound sterling. They sometimes collect ransom and still kill their victims. They are urban guerillas with bases inside cities. They own entire stretches of roads as well. With the police stretched to the limits and the military engaged in various theatres as well, vigilantes have sprung up all over the country often with an ethnic colouration that the initiators have not bothered to disguise. Of the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria today, there is no zone at peace. With constitutionally recognized military units apparently at their wits end, the constituent states of Nigeria are falling back on ethnic bases to raise protectors for themselves. It is not an exaggeration to say Nigeria is at war with itself.

Yet, it is wise to heed the warning about going to war especially against oneself. For as long as this country has existed, it has done so with one leg in belligerence of some form of the other. Frederick Lugard in *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* noted that the British stepped into unsettled and internally chaotic West Africa, carried out a campaign of 'pacification' in order that Britain may do business here. The British did not cultivate a democratic domain in what they referred to as tropical Africa, preferring to utilise a system of indirect rule which has served British and European interests well since. We do well to revisit this grave omission if we are to get a handle on this country slowly spiralling into chaos again.

Nigeria obtained political independence in 1960 but was embroiled in one of the bloodiest civil wars the world has known before the decade was over. It was predictable even if it was avoidable. The newly independent country, one of the most diverse in the world, would have done much better entrenching democracy, the Rule of Law and separation of powers. These were not prioritised. There was, instead, a scramble for advantage in managing the new country by

the competing ethnic blocs in the country. The country has gotten off on the wrong foot. Where citizenship and the rights of citizens ought to be the paramount consideration, tribal affiliation and sentiments prevailed. The national census results ran against known principles of demographic distribution of human beings which every student of human geography learnt as first principles of that discipline. There is no evidence even today that Nigeria has internalized that critical lesson of citizenship. An industrial democracy cannot be negotiated on the basis of 'tribes'.

Even with the availability of the technology to conduct proper census and to automate the process in such a way that government knows who is actually a Nigerian today either by birth or by naturalisation, the conundrum of our citizenship remains, flaring up at the most unexpected times and places. A governor here is alleged to be non-Nigerian and a presidential candidate there is challenged for being non-Nigerian even after serving the country for decades in uniform. The irony is that our neighbours in the region do not have this problem. A citizen of Niger Republic or Chad has proof of citizenship readily in government approved databases. A citizen of Ghana or Benin Republic or Togo has proof of citizenship readily.

It is not a wonder therefore that a country that has not invested in this most basic of functions has a real problem when it comes to resolving the most basic of conflicts. Instead of resolving issues of civic rights and responsibilities on the basis of the individual Nigerian, a willfully negligent succession of leaders have sought to resolve this problem on the basis of groups and this has not yielded any positive results. Much as Nigerians like to live in denial of this most fundamental of civic building blocks, the individual, their preferred lens, the tribal sentiments, have failed woefully to resolve simmering conflicts. Indeed, the embers of discontent receive fresh oxygen when the question of negotiation for power arises.

There is the almost imperceptible war of attrition by the various ethnicities. The common error is to somehow reduce these conflicts broadly into 'North' versus 'South', or to fall back on the cliches of Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba rivalries. Nigeria is a vast country of some 250 ethnic nationalities where the Ikwerre, the Iggede and the Igala count as much as the Igbo and the Idoma. The Chibok and the Gwari, the Jukun and the Bachama, the Fulani and the Tiv, the Nok and the Anang, the Yoruba and the Ibibio – all are equal stakeholders in the project of Nigeria. More important and more fundamental,



however, is that Nigerian citizen who should have civic rights and responsibilities. It is true that every Nigerian is born or naturalised into a family, a clan or a guild. It is also true that the Nigerian has a primary responsibility to Nigeria first of all. This is why the Nigerian passport is issued to individuals and not groups.

Whereas progress and development depend on peace, the emphasis has been on other things apart from this core ingredient. In one of the more telling episodes of misplaced priorities in Nigeria, government expended billions on prospecting for oil in the Chad basin at a time the Boko Haram insurgency was raging wild there. Some workers were kidnapped and some were slain. The pursuit of black gold, ostensibly to bolster the national treasury failed to yield any tangible results to date after billions have been expended. It is clear that a rethink is necessary in piloting the country out of the looming chaos so palpable and imminent.

If we may borrow some wisdom from mathematicians, we will learn that there is a difference between commutative and non-commutative phenomena. To illustrate in logical terms, a non-commutative affair is one in which it really does not matter in what sequence things occur. Wearing socks is an example of this. Socks can be worn in any order. On the other hand, pants and trousers cannot be worn in just any order. These two items of clothing must be worn in a particular order or the world will begin to wonder aloud if everything is alright. At the moment, Nigeria is like the man who wears his white trousers before wearing his green pants and who proceeds to mount the rostrum to address the United Nations.

If we begin with the Nigerian, the citizen of Nigeria, without any consideration for gender, religion or ethnic affiliation, we come closer to having a Nigeria that is free from warring with itself. Let such citizens be assured of fair hearing before a judiciary that is accessible and free from interference from 'the powers that be' and let the Nigerian state guarantee such an individual protection of his life and property as long as that citizen is law-abiding.

A feature of the insurgency in the North of Nigeria by both Boko Haram and the so-called bandits is the collection of 'taxes' from people in the areas these insurgents control in exchange for 'protection' and the provision of amenities like potable water. Indeed, before the insurgents began to unleash unbridled terror on their victims, they first started with the soft approach and began winning hearts and minds in the enclaves under their control. What if Nigeria treated

these people as citizens first? What if they had basic amenities that made it more difficult to conscript them into the folds of killers and marauders?

The country failed these citizens and so the most socially regressive elements found a foothold in vulnerable segments of Nigeria's population to our collective injury and hurt today? A country blessed with some of the finest minds in any discipline in the world became the object of pity among nations far less endowed. What if, from Independence, just 1% of revenue generated in each local government area was devoted to building public libraries for the people in these local government areas?

Legend says that Hannibal, that African of historical stature, urged the people of Carthage to arm themselves in readiness for any invasions that might come. Carthage did not heed their world-renowned leader and instead sank into the allure of easy profit, rent and prebend. The refusal of this nation to do the needful eventually led to its decline and fall. There is a lesson in this for Nigeria and Nigerians. We need to get the fundamentals right. When citizenship becomes paramount consideration, when each individual is armed with civic rights and each is enlightened enough to discharge civic responsibilities, the entire country will automatically begin to devote sufficient energy to building instead of tearing down. A sense of purpose is critical if Nigeria is to break free from the groove of self-destruction and emerge as a true giant of the world. The Nigerian must count on Nigerians will continually feel it necessary to organise themselves as 'tribes' and fight each other in that mode.

The late Nigerian author and Ogoni activist, Kenule Saro-Wiwa, wrote his account of the Nigerian Civil War and titled it *On a Darkling Plain*. The title was borrowed from 'Dover Beach', a poem by the famous English poet, Matthew Arnold. We do well to listen to both Saro-Wiwa and Matthew Arnold today if we heed the sobering call that thus renates:

*'...let us be true  
To one another! for the world, which seems  
To lie before us like a land of dreams,  
So various, so beautiful, so new,  
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,  
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;  
And we are here as on a darkling plain  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,  
Where ignorant armies clash by night.'*

– *Dover Beach, Matthew Arnold.*

# THE POLICE AS POVERTY

*Prof. Mark Nwagwu*

My father-in-law was a policeman, a fine policeman, from the forties. When his daughter Helen met me, we were completely lost in love and we felt the universe had a planet freshly created for us to live out our lives in unmeasurable splendour. My policeman father-in-law, Sergeant Anurukem, sensed this, and after a week of Helen and I roaming on this planet, he sent her back from Owerri to Emekuku, their ancestral home, ten kilometres away, with the instruction to his dear wife that if I should dare show up in Emekuku, she should shoot me! Well, she did not and I am alive to write this article.

Obviously, I am fond of the police and take advantage of this familiarity every now and then. On the highway, I can be difficult, in fact, intransigent to a fault. I do not like to be stopped and I do not like to answer questions. 'Wey your patikulas?' Helen would pull my trousers and tell me they want to see your papers. 'Thank you, madam, for helping us.' 'Thank you, officer, I am the daughter of a policeman.' He directs his next remarks to me, 'Oga, so you marry this fine policeman pikin. You lucky ooo! Policeman pikin all of dem good people. Oga give us something for Coke. Life too hard. See how we dey sweat.' Sometimes they get their coke. The journey continues. But when the request from the traffic policeman goes from my driving licence to my vehicle licence, insurance, and road worthiness. When the policeman demands proof of ownership and inspection of the vehicle, my veins rapidly fill up engorged with venomous blood. I

would step out of the car and begin the tirade, 'where were you in 1940? Where were you in 1950? Where were you in 1960? Where were you in 1970? Where were you...?' Helen, exasperated, would quickly exit the car and plead with the officer, 'please leave my husband alone; he is not feeling well today.' Silent but furious, I would return to the car and drive off, come hell come Armageddon! But it is not always like this: I can be quite understanding.

We were once travelling home to Mbaise from Ibadan for the Christmas festivities. We had passed through many police checkpoints and I let the police share in my joy. When we got to the Niger Bridge, we were stopped before we drove into the bridge at the Asaba end and again at the Onitsha end. I felt this was too much but I was still quite calm. 'Anything for the boys, sir?' 'I am sorry officer. I don't have anything left. All I have now is for my parents and relatives at home.' 'But sir, we won't be the unlucky ones.' I took another look at him and liked him for his response. No, they will not be the unlucky ones, I felt. I reached into my pocket and gave him a Christmas present. I have many personal stories with the road traffic police, the search and seize, or search and destroy officers. It is all a pathetic story.

The 1998 Winner of The Nobel Prize in Economic Science, Amartya Sen, makes the case for development in terms of the advantages that a person has, that is, the substantive freedoms



they have to lead the kind of life they have reason to value. Thus, he argues, poverty must be seen as the deprivation of basic capabilities rather than merely the lowness of incomes, which is the standard criterion for identifying poverty. Of course, he makes it clear that the perspective of capability-poverty does not deny the sensible view that low income is one of the major causes of poverty, since lack of income is a strong predisposition for an impoverished life.

Joseph Stiglitz, Nobel Laureate in Economic Science, has argued in similar vein on the broken promises of IMF and the World Bank and their corollaries that have made it difficult for Third World countries to have the freedom to choose the kind of life they want to live in the face of globalization. I stand with them and say we would like to have freedom from illiteracy, from poor leadership, from preventable maladies, like child mortality, deaths in pregnancies and child birth, etc. Many villagers suffer from income deprivation but more from capability-deprivation. I can write what I am writing now because I have WiFi to receive and send out mail using the web. If there is no WiFi available in Mbaise, or Owerri, but only in Lagos, I would have to go there to send my mails. We must not forget that we got mobile phones in 1999 when President Obasanjo came to power. If water supply is inadequate in Mbaise, my people would have to travel to where they can get water, though their incomes may be sufficient for their daily lives. The same can be said for supply of electricity. Should they spend their incomes on generators and fuel instead of providing education for their children? What of good education, where are the schools? Many parents in Mbaise send their children to the moribund public schools. To take them to better schools they would have to travel elsewhere to enrol them in private schools. I must say, however, that the Mission schools are quite good.

Where do the police come in all this? In the eyes of many Nigerians, the Federal Government of Nigeria that they know and see every day of their life, and interact with for good or ill is the police on their roads. If the people are on foot, they may just continue on their journey. If they have a big bag and the police suspect they may have some ill-gotten goods or human heads inside, they may be asked to stop and be searched. Multiple exchanges ensue and the individual may be required to part with some cash. Okada riders can be flagged down and be molested if they do not have a valid licence. Again, they will be required to pay up. Buses, danfos, boleka, with passengers suffocating in the heat of the congested vehicle are routinely stopped, may be searched, but more often than not, they are asked for regular 'tithes.' The police are forlorn and Nigeria with them, that is why I see the

Police as poverty. What the police we meet in our daily lives do, drives home the axiom that they are the face of poverty in a country of abundant natural resources, including oil. We cannot live the lives we have reason to value. Nigeria will not let us.

The Inspector General of Police (IGP) is the boss of the police. I shall never forget what the late indefatigable Dele Giwa said in an article, that Sunday Adewusi (IGP 1981-83) thinks that he is God but he forgets that God does not wear tribal marks. The IGP is like the god of the police and when he falls short on integrity and moral rectitude in his duties, he becomes the face of poverty. We are unable to live the kind of life we want even with satisfactory incomes. Godwin Sogolo in his article in *The Guardian*, of 12 September 1988, Confessions of a Policeman, gave credit to the IGP, Muhammadu Gambo, for his frank admission of the failings of the police under his command in spite of his efforts to effectively give Nigeria a Police Force to be proud of. The police man seems incurable in his pathetic thievery, giving us all the face of poverty. In one of the most celebrated trials in the country, former Inspector General of Police, Mustafa Adebayo Balogun, was arrested by Nuhu Ribadu, the EFCC Chairman, tried for about N5.7 billion of corruption and jailed for nine months, some of it spent in hospital for treatment. The ugly face of poverty stares at us with invidious ridicule. What of kidnappings and murder of innocent victims? What of killing of Christians? Where are the police?

Who watches the watchers? The IGP watches over the country to ensure we are all safe and secure to carry on our lives as hardworking citizens. If he should fail and there is sufficient proof of his corruption, EFCC steps in and takes him to court. But now, the Chairman of EFCC himself has been removed from office amidst allegations of corruption. The police remind us, if we have forgotten, that they are the face of poverty, in which circumstance even ordinary Nigerians cannot live the life they value.

It was not always like this. We have had eminent IGP's and the late Alhaji Muhammadu Dikko Yusufu was a sterling example of one on whose back we could ride to greatness. *The Guardian* in its editorial of Sunday May 3, 2015 doused our hopes that his death 'has further constricted the rapidly shrinking class of eminent Nigerian senior citizens who served the nation well.' My generation hugely appreciates his gigantic contributions to moral probity and propriety. The good times will come again, we hope, when, wherever we are in this country, we can feel we have the freedom to live the life we value.



## FANI KAYODE: TOURING NIGERIA WITH A 'SHORT FUSE'

*Suleiman Galadima*

Femi Fani-Kayode, former aviation minister is in the public space for all the bad reasons. The news of his 'short fuse' action against Charles Eyo, a journalist at a media conference in Calabar has gained traction for all the wrong whys and wherefores. Charles Eyo had asked him who was bankrolling his tours around the state and this had sparked an outburst of dehumanising insults from the former minister.

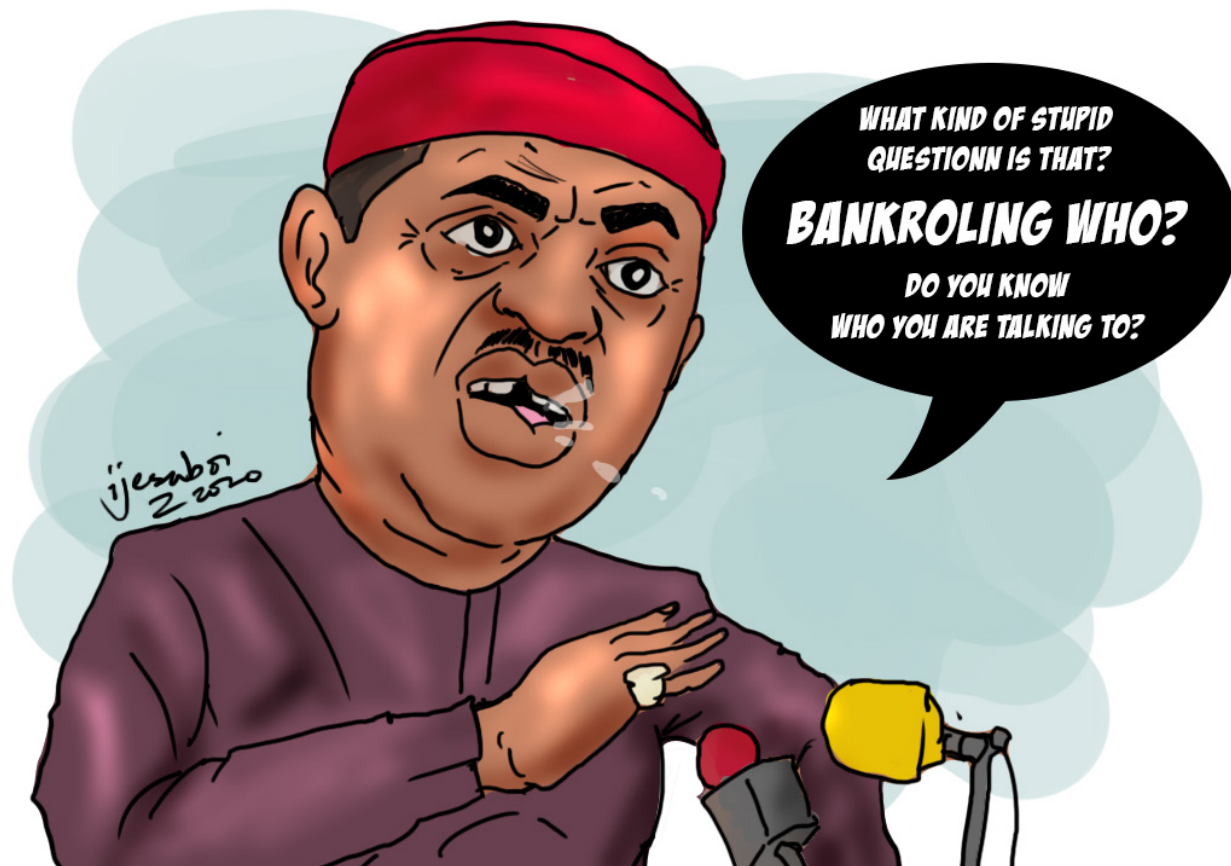
While the former minister has eventually apologised after harassing the hapless journalist, the journalist had also written a piece explaining the circumstances and forgiving him.

This character seems a great Achille's heel for Femi Fani-Kayode. Two previous videos where he had lambasted journalists for asking rare and bold questions had been released to the public domain. In the current trending video, he broke all forms of decency expected of a former

minister. He had gone on to debase and denigrate Charles Eyo, accusing him of being politically motivated to ask the question. He also insulted the journalism profession by calling him a 'brown envelope' journalist and, in so doing, using a single brush on all journalists in the country.

Fani-Kayode has always been a very privileged man. He was born to a Victorian-trained Nigerian. He is a son of Victor Adetokunbo Fani-Kayode, a legal luminary and former Deputy Premier of Western Nigeria in the First Republic. Fani-Kayode Snr. was one of the politicians who cross-carpeted from the Action Group to the National Congress of Nigeria and Cameroons which collaborated with the Northern People's Party to gain power at the centre in the First Republic.

Chief Adetokunbo was evidently born with a silver spoon and had enjoyed education abroad. He was a



prominent figure in the fight for Nigeria's Independence. It was also rumoured that he was the chief double-speak leader and rabble-rouser that engaged and entertained Nigerians during political and social discourses in the First Republic. When the military ousted the First Republic, Chief Adetokunbo willing surrendered to arrest without putting up a fight.

His son, Femi Fani-Kayode, was former Special Adviser to the President on Public Affairs, Minister of Culture and Tourism, and later the Aviation Minister under President Olusegun Obasanjo. He was 31 years old when he was made minister by Chief Olusegun Obasanjo.

Fani-Kayode had remained in politics ever since and had participated in national discourses, in many cases speaking tough on issues of governance, and raking up attention with conspiracy theories, especially if it relates to rousing Christians in the North, and exploring unknown stories on the Boko Haram insurgency. His time as an opposition member of the People's Democratic Party had made him a prominent voice against the Buhari and APC government. The opposition style of the former minister had also not come without his brazen double-speak, cross-lobbying and cross-engagements with the ruling powers.

A two-time former minister is bound to be under public scrutiny. His role in government and his contributions to national life will always be a reference of discourse within the timeline of his life and within the context of history. It is therefore unethical for a politician who is aspiring to statesmanship to deploy 'short fuse' strategies to engage the media. Let us assume that the journalist was bold enough to assert himself at the interview, the probability that the security details assigned to Fani-Kayode may be ordered to beat him up is higher than otherwise. This can be inferred from the vitriolic statements made by Fani-Kayode. Fani-Kayode may also use his versed networks of media owners, influential leaders and politicians to frustrate his professional career as inferred from the threats issued in the video.

It is however a thing of hope to see that the Nigerian Union of Journalists and the Management of Daily Trust newspaper have lived up to their expectations in putting paid to the brutal and unethical attitude of a former minister. They must do more than just deploy press releases. The NUJ must take legal action against the former minister for slandering the profession, while

creating policies that will protect professionals from 'short fuse' personalities like Fani-Kayode. They must also explore the Freedom of Information Bill and other legal frameworks to tell Nigerians who, and how Fani-Kayode is 'bankrolling' his travels. To let sleeping dog lie will soon lead to a repeat of such brutality against journalists.

It is within the rights of a journalist to ask hard-worn questions. A journalist, regardless of the platform should seek to dig deeper than the surface. A journalist should serve as a mouthpiece for the myriad of questions that people would have loved to ask political and social actors. It will take tact from both social actors to engage one another. It would also take maturity and depth for interviewees to find respectable ways of evading questions or rechanneling the questions into the straits of comfortable responses. This is always done during no-holds-barred interview sessions like CNN's Amanpour, BBC's Hard Talk and the rest.

Femi-Fani Kayode has absolutely no respect for Nigerian journalists and cannot be said to have the emotional intelligence of a leader. In spaces where true democracy is practised and true leaders are groomed, journalists have great freedom to contest, inquire, respond to political discourse in ways within the ambits of journalistic ethical practices and the law. While there are many ways to ask a question, there is nothing wrong asking direct questions. Nigerians are fond of bringing cultural expectations such as 'rudeness', respect for 'constituted authority' and the silences of oppression between the old and the young, and the rich and the not-so-rich into every discourse. A lot of Nigerians are living in a caste and class system retained in their minds from their historic and ethnic backgrounds, while they continue to live in a cosmopolitan Nigeria.

The implicatures of the statement 'who is bankrolling you?' is not far-fetched. Femi Fani-Kayode had a case to answer at the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission where he has been accused of misappropriation of government funds. He had also been arrested for money laundering and unlawful payment of funds in another separate case. In many of those charges, he had claimed to use his own money derived from investments to do lawful business. So, this time around, 'who is bankrolling you?' should have elicited a honest and polite response without handcuffs involved. Fani-Kayode is expected to be wealthy by

inheritance and by virtue of the government positions he has held to be able to travel without any qualms but simple economic principles and the actions taken during the tours do not coincide with the idea of tourism or vacation.

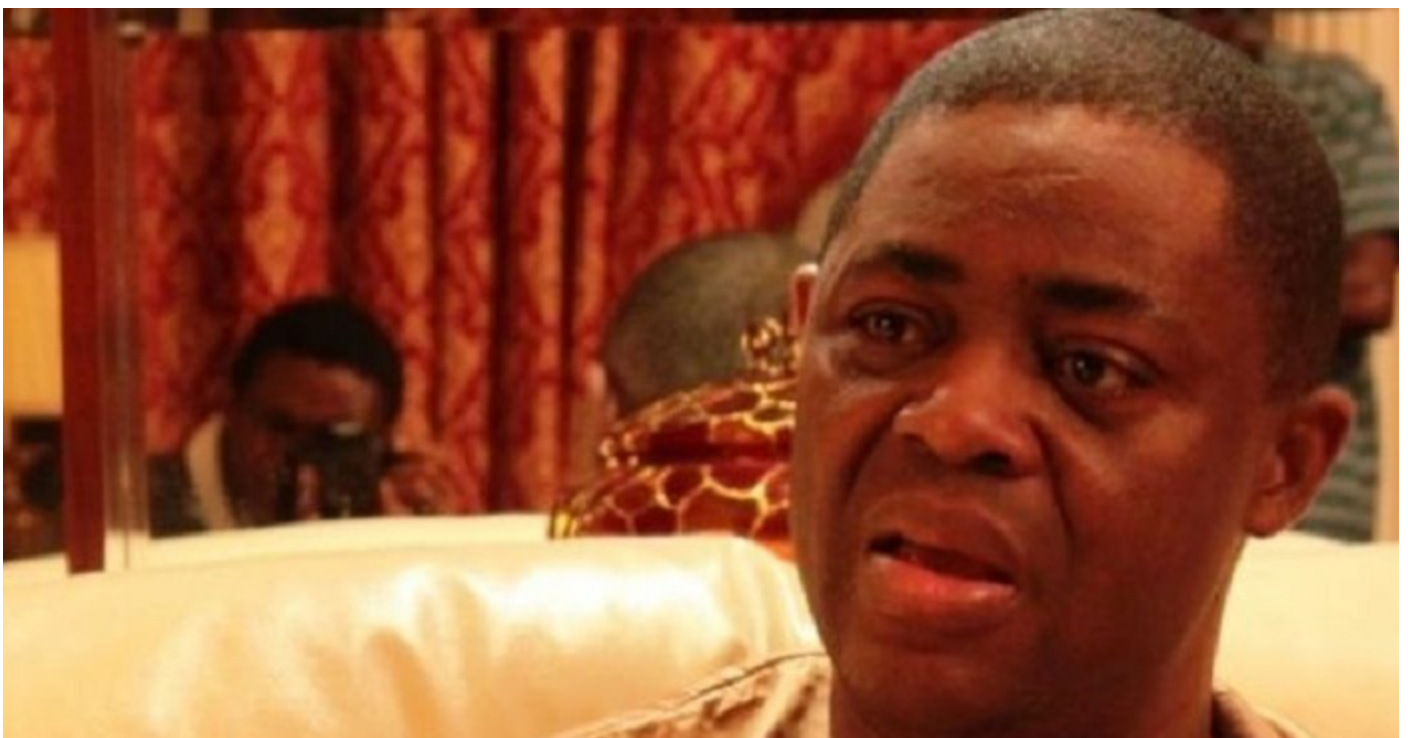
The 2023 elections are also around the corner and the interest of a bold journalist is pricked by the fact that the economic principle of using 'Other People's Money' to achieve shared political and social goals may be at play here. Fani-Kayode had visited and commended governors from both political divides to the confusion of many Nigerians.

He is not a statesman, at least he is not yet like Chief Obasanjo. Former President Obasanjo had publicly detached himself from being a member of a political party in order to engage the governance space as a true statesman.

For Fani-Kayode to accuse the journalist of being a stooge of his political and social detractors shows that he is conscious of the fact that his political and social affiliations matter in the course of touring Nigeria. No politician tours the country and visits governors without a motive. The Nigerian people are still asking Fani-Kayode the same question, Charles Eyo has asked, 'Why are you touring Nigeria at this time?', 'Who is bankrolling you?', 'We do hope you are safe because Nigeria's volatile security status should not be taken for granted at this time?'

For people like Kemi Olunloyo and other media agents who are trying frantically to manage the image of Fani-Kayode by accusing Charles Eyo of deliberately sparking controversy, I make bold to say that these are the people who entrench tyranny and inject Stockholm Syndrome into the veins of the polity. They do not care about the volatility of the polity, neither do they think that there is more to life than 'trending' for all the wrong reasons. A lot of Nigerian media personalities can defend anything as long as it pays the bills. Journalist are exposing themselves to ridicule by defending the awful and the most outrageous. No wonder Fani Kayode has taken liberties into his own hands to insult the profession. Fani-Kayode, who may have propagandists on his payroll would never have had the nerve to insult a journalist if he did not have his own minions within the profession.

Fani-Kayode needs to subject himself to anger management sessions. He urgently needs therapy because he must have gone through a lot which are bottled up within his egoistic frame. Witnessing the arrest of his father as a child, joining the NADECO during the military junta, waging the war of wits as a leader, going through three divorces and meandering through the strain of being in the opposition, may have put him on a perpetual defensive edge.





## THE MEDIA TRIAL OF FFK

*Babatunde Odubanwo*

The friendly media parley between former presidential spokesman and one-time Minister of Aviation, Chief Femi Fani-Kayode, and members of the press in a nondescript 5-star hotel in Calabar, the Cross-River State turned towards an abrasive end. In a viral video that surfaced online few hours after the coarse reaction between the Ile-Ife Chief and a certain reporter, the foremost Nigerian was seen throwing caution of the wind tongue-lashing the supposed errant journalist, Charles Eyo, who currently works for the Daily Trust newspaper. In what the former presidential aide considers an 'insult', Eyo posed a question about who was 'bankrolling' his road trips to some areas of the country being visited by the politician in recent, the purpose of which has remained unclear.

Since that incidence took place, the said journalist had written his own account of the story. Encouraged by supports from the leadership of the Nigerian Union of

Journalist and many who thought that FFK's action had gone a little 'too far'. Penning an article detailing his grueling encounter with the former minister might be considered as a way to mop up more sympathy or enlighten the public of the happenstances of the outburst. For the journalist to further drive home the point that he was indeed within his 'constitutional duties' to ask questions as it was deemed appropriate and, of course, as fellow colleagues of the Fourth Estate of the Realm, I could not agree any less with the latter position based on its legality.

Realistically speaking, journalists have always been victims of similar brushes with top-level officials in parastatals or personalities of huge influences in different climes. At a time, President Donald Trump had openly disgraced a reporter from CNN for asking him 'baseless' questions. In my own opinion, the logicity of what sufficiently defines the right question(s) to ask or not by



journalists is not just a matter of professional etiquette only. It should also be epitomised by good mannerism and the rules of empathy.

Enthused by the reaction of FFK on a day when he was given a detailed report of his trips to certain parts of the country on what could be naturally termed as Corporate Social Responsibility by a concerned citizen, I have decided to mirror in my own perspective the right questions that could have averted the public disgrace suffered by Charles Eyo while FFK on the other hand, suffering disparaging comments from sympathizers of Charles Eyo.

To start with, I shall be revisiting a quote by the former aviation minister when he wrote on his official twitter page: 'All those who can't manage their anger & who habitually fly into an uncontrollable & inexplicable rage at the drop of a hat should watch this & learn a thing or two! Moral of the tale: reign in ur rage, control ur emotions & think through the consequences of ur every move'. The post accompanied a video of an angry man who in the promise of throwing objects to an apparent foe mistakenly fell off a top-floor of a three-storey building. The man later yielded the ghost after all medical attention failed.

Can one say that the former presidential spokesman had a foreboding of what fate would befall him in the nearest future when he made such an important post on controlling one's temper in the face of whatever provocation? Inferring that FFK had thrown stones into his proverbial glass house would also buttress the situation between him and the journalist.

It should be noted that I referenced this quote by FFK not to take a swipe at him but to establish some degree of fact. Reading the quote, the anti-FFK group on this issue would have jumped off their seat and applauded that journalistic foray into the ex-Minister's past sayings. Let me be clear that I am not here to cast aspersion on neither FFK nor Eyo!

In the field of Criminal Law, his actions could be said to be one influenced by a negative stimulating factor. The Yoruba elders have a saying that 'Even if a child throws away a knife that had cut deep into the flesh of his hand, the harm has already been done.' In this case, standing as a jury in a case in which the 'defendant' has made a

public apology is completely out of place. I am only here to set the records straight.

Playing back the viral video where FFK made such verbal vituperations against Charles Eyo, I saw beyond the sentiments shared by my colleagues and other Nigerians both online and offline respectively. I am neither a lover of violence or a proponent of those who try to silence the media. I am just a Nigerian who believes that, if FFK was given a fair hearing on this, he might have a completely different opinion to substantiate the rationale behind his actions.

Channeling one's grievance to certain misjudged, misguided comment he made would only amount to such people falling in the pits of their wrong perception. Even when an accused is caught red-handed in a crime, decorum and judicial process require that he defend his case before the state eventually pronounces its verdict. You will agree with me that the period of 'anger' defiles all sense of right-thinking actions. Anyone could have reacted as FFK if they are in the same shoes.

FFK, the son of Chief Babaremilekun Fani-Kayode, a First Republic foremost politician, Lawyer and the last Deputy Premier of the Western Region also has a stake in the development of the republic. By the standard of his standing as a reputable politician, a former Minister and a Nigerian, embarking on such venture as the road tour should not have been tied to a political undertone. Before the stop-over at Cross Rivers State, FFK had visited some other states in the country including those that are governed by his political rivals. He visited them anyway. If the maxim, 'pictures speak a thousand words' is anything to go by, those State Governors had welcomed him in open arms. Suggesting either verbally or otherwise in politicising every motive by a Nigerian political elite should be merely dismissed as a puerile conspiracy theory.

If indeed FFK was 'bankrolled' by anyone as Charles Eyo had suggested by his question to the ex-Minister, would he had generously answered? Charles Eyo on one hand should be given a thumbs-up for trying to dig out facts for the purpose of clarity. Unfortunately, the hoe he tried using is a rusty metal. Again I asked, what was the objective questioning format or background research on FFK by the journalist to have prompted him to ask the question.

In the viral video, FFK is seen challenging Charles Eyo to go and tell those who sent Eyo that 'he got more than he bargained for.' What could have been an interesting intellectual engagement had turned 'bloody, uncouth and confrontational.' At this point, I turn over to the legal profession for some inspiration. Even when a defendant is standing in the dock for cross-examination, would the prosecution come up with an argument against the defendant without an informed base?

To term FFK as a villain in this case while Eyo walks about as a victim turned hero is not absolutely justified. FFK has come out to make a public apology stating in clear terms that he had withdrawn his brazen comments. In the light of fair judgement, Eyo being a professional journalist, should also be called to order.

It is easy to say that journalist suffer in the hands of some subjects. If you observe closely, you would observe the fatalities that journalists cause in the process of

discharging their duties. I recall that it was reported some time ago that musician Burna Boy walked out of an interview. Ask Burna Boy and he would have told you why he did so. Singer Omawunmi at a time slapped a photojournalist. I think the leadership of the NUJ should look into frequent human resource development for journalists in order to mitigate some of the errors that some journalists commit in the field.

By tendering his apology to the Nigerian media and withdrawing his statement, FFK had shown to the world what it means to be a man of integrity. Even though some persons argue vehemently that FFK has habitually insulted journalists, the same he repeated on the fateful day against Charles Eyo. The situation only reminds us all of conquering our personal demons as we climb up the ladder of life because there would always be more embarrassing questions waiting in the lobby of progress.

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## BAYELSA: THE MALICE OF TWO PARTIES

*Kelvin Kellman*

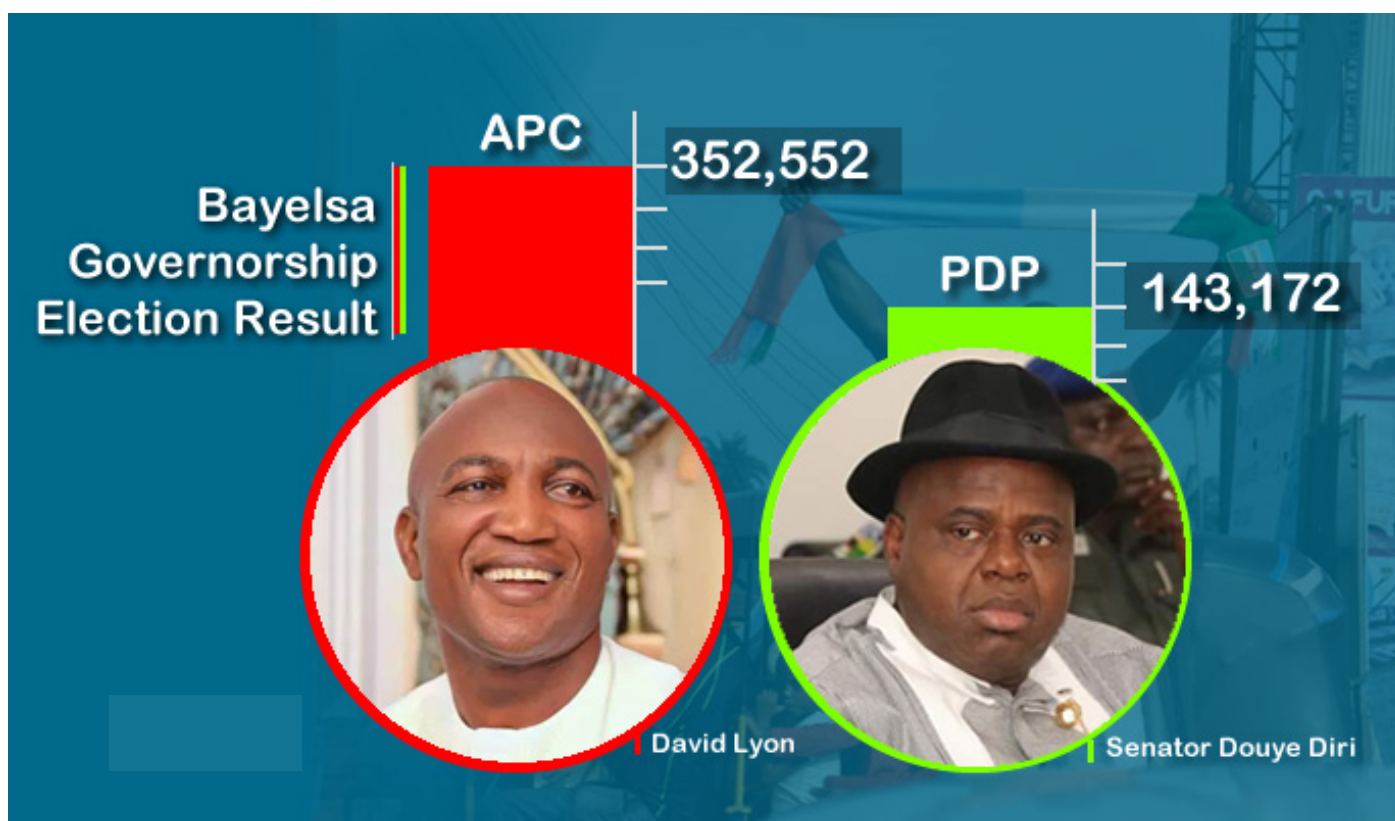
Like most oil-rich territories, the story and dynamics of Bayelsa is a delicate yet convoluted one. Created by the infamous General Sani Abacha in 1996, it is renowned to be the very first place crude was discovered in Nigeria in the 1950s. However, despite her wealth, the majority of Bayelsa indigenes dwell in poverty with the banal ambition of just surviving.

Since the inception of the fourth republic, that is, the post-Abacha-Abdulsalam democracy, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) has been in the helms of affairs in Bayelsa. Starting with Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, and later to the governorships of Goodluck Jonathan, Timipre Sylva and Governor Henry Seriake Dickson. Post-Dickson, however, with the All Progressive Congress gaining a strong foothold in previously PDP-dominated spaces after shockingly deposing the incumbent president in 2015, David Lyon Perewonrini, who was a former PDP member and contested for the Southern Ijaw IV in 2011, elected to pitch his tent with APC, decamping from PDP.

Of the 45 candidates who contested in November 16, election results initially pronounced David Lyon as winner on a landslide scale with 352,552 votes out of 516,371 voters of the 867,000 registered in the state. The first time another party would win the elections in the state outside the PDP in 20 years.

In a weird turn of events, however, as he went about rehearsing and preparing for inauguration as governor, the Federal High Court in Abuja disqualified Degi-Eremienyo, David Lyon's running mate on legitimate grounds of certificate forgery, stating that the disqualification made the APC victory null and void. An event that sent alleged PDP apologists and supporters down the streets in wild jubilation, beating drums and pulling down APC flags with music blaring; pleased their party in back on board.

In another bitter twist of events, with the 'new governor' Douye Diri just about settling in and getting comfortable in his role in the oil-rich state, the tribunal





recently pronounced the whole Bayelsa election exercise null and void. This is on account of a pre-election matter of disqualification of the candidate of Advance Nigeria Democratic Party (ANDP) on grounds that the fielded deputy of the party, David Esinkuma, was yet to be 35-years old, which is the constitutional threshold age in the country. Lucky King-George, who was the candidate of the disqualified and ill-fated party had asked the tribunal to revoke the legitimacy of the election owing to being unlawfully excluded from the November 16 election. While the Independent National Electoral Commission explained that it had excluded ANDP from the whole process because the fielded deputy was illegible to run on account of his age, the ANDP party have been able to prove that they had timely substitute for their deputy before the election. As it turns out, the ANDP are not the major contenders in the race.

The trifecta-man panel of the tribunal initially dismissed reports challenging the legitimacy of the election upon rising accusations that the election lacked credibility because of the rife incompetence and demerit of the process, however, while delivering a judgement on another petition recently, the panel acceded that the election was indeed unlawful owing to the exclusion of the ANDP party and its candidate. Judge Yunusa Musa who read the judgement thus ordered the Independent National Electoral Commission to conduct a fresh election in the state within three months.

Bayelsa, as it stands, is the latest state to have a governor removed through electoral jurisprudence – a practice that have seen some success across certain states in recent years. And while the rationale behind the nullification of the election is justified, the method and timing are

both suspicious and disturbing. For one, elections held on the 16th of November and a petition by the ANDP was filed on the 26th of February 2020 – over twelve weeks after the opportunity to do the very same act, begs questioning, so much that if one were to stretch the right of sentiment, we might say it was mischievous.

Elections by the ballot are a hugely expensive business to begin with. More so in a country like Nigeria where trust in the process does not come cheap. That a party and her persons can see it fit to pull out a card of grievance on account of proving a point, and at a suspicious timing, comes across as an impish stunt, because re-run or not, the race still remains within the APC-PDP axis.

All things being equal, logical prediction of the re-run will definitely favour the winner by landslide in the first election. All the candidate need do is field another deputy with credible credentials, and like shaft in harmattan wind, the first grave mistake is amended without any penalty. What is however so irksome about the whole event, is that the broke, debt-laden country is going to pay for these mistakes.

While it is understood that Nigeria's is as yet a nascent democracy and we do not have all of our democratic guns together, one must suggest that laws are passed to protect the coffers of the nation from such expensive re-runs and save the image of INEC. In the end, not only are the outcomes of matters of this nature banally predictable, monies that will go into such ventures could be expended more purposefully in tackling the debilitating poverty in Bayelsa for one. We lose our collective cohesion as a people with such needless drag force.



## BECOMING PRODUCTIVE

Ameenah Oke



A lot of people like being busy, but being busy is different from being productive. In fact, they are on different spectrums. Being busy connotes doing anything to give the impression of doing something. One could be busy without making any progress with work or even life. Being productive, however, is performing a series of actions with a set goals in mind.

The goal might be as small as making sure your kitchen is spick-and-span, or as large as trying to overtake Jeff Bezos as the world's richest man. The steps that you take, actions you perform, and moves you make towards ensuring the fruitfulness of your dreams is productivity. Here are a few tips to help your productivity level skyrocket:

**1. Get Some Sleep:** This might be a controversial tip as there are countless videos circulating the internet of people testifying to the sacrificing of sleep as being the backbone of their success. I think this can be quite misleading. According to research, the adult body requires 7 to 9 hours of sleep. Anything less than what is recommended means that your body will be functioning at a level that is below optimal.

A little common sense here. If your body will not function at peak levels because you are not getting enough sleep, it stands to reason that you will be bound to make unnecessary mistakes as your brain will not be functioning at the highest possible capacity. In that case, you will most probably sit down to work but will not get anything done. A good night's rest equals a productive day ahead.



**2. Exercise:** This point is one that has been made so much that it should not bear reiterating. But it would surprise you the number of people that still do not adhere to this advice. A wrong notion is that exercise has to be streamlined to a rigid timetable and to certain poses and actions.

Whereas exercise is actually any activity that gets your heart rate up, makes your blood pump, and will essentially make you feel good in the long run, exercising could include running, taking a walk, walking the dog, chasing the kids around, dancing, cleaning the house, and a host of other mundane chores and tasks.

**3. Don't Skip Meals:** Some people tend to assume that skipping meals is a test of strength and endurance. Well, unless you are practising for when you get lost in the Sahara, or on an island with no food, I do not think starving yourself should be your test of endurance. When you do not eat, you are liable to lose focus more easily, get easily tired and just be distracted all day. All these signs are your body's way of communicating its need for sustenance. Eating regular and healthy meals help to keep your concentration on a high.

**4. Organise Your Day/Plan Ahead:** Telling you to get a piece of paper and put down everything you plan to achieve for the day might seem Trite. but it actually works. When you put down a list of goals to achieve, then your brain is streamlined to achieving those goals. In essence, you have given yourself a direction. Start with the overall result you want to achieve, then break down the tasks required to get that result. At the end of this exercise, you will see that you have mapped out a plan for getting your work done.

**5. Schedule in Breaks Too:** It is common for us to get in the zone of productivity, and we are enjoying it so much that time gets away from us. Truth is, to sustain your productivity, you need to take regular breaks as well. These breaks give your brain time to stop being so focused on a particular task and help you take in the world around you. On your breaks, you could play a game, take a walk, call friends and family, maybe even watch a movie. It is recommended to take 20-minute breaks at 90-minute intervals for optimum productivity.

**6. Eliminate Distractions While You Work:** Imagine working in a construction zone, or always having to micromanage others while working. Annoying, right? This takes a toll on your productivity as your focus will continue to be broken as you work. For this reason, you should have a dedicated workspace, as well as dedicated working hours when/where people know not to disturb you.

In the same vein, mute all social media notifications and put your phone down with the screen facing down so you are not tempted to pick it up every time it blinks.

**7. Incentivise Your Work:** Give yourself incentives for achieving particular daily goals. For instance, you cannot watch your favorite show until a particular task is done. Or you promise yourself a bowl of ice cream with extra sauce if you can finish X Y Z tasks. This approach gives you something to look forward to as a reward for a job well done.

**8. Embrace Technology:** There are several apps and programmes that can take on mundane or repetitive tasks. Find them and use them to make your work easier. This will free up some time for you to perform the tasks you really love.

**9. Learn to Delegate:** Just like with using technology, you should learn to outsource tasks that reduce your productivity. If you do not have any business doing it, then do not do it. Pass on the task to someone else.

**10. Cultivate Good Habits:** Having good habits tend to help propel your productivity. Good habits like waking up early, exercising regularly, being on time are just a few key habits you need to be productive. These good habits will also tend to multiply, and before you know it, you are productive without even trying.

*Ameenah Oke is a teacher, adventurer and blogger.*

## BURNA BOY: BRINGING THE WORLD CLOSER TO AFRICA

*Babatunde Odubanwo*



Burna Boy recently released his fifth studio album, *Twice as Tall*. Since its release, the album has continued to enjoy rave reviews as well as massive airplays the world over. The album was technically perfected by world experts of sounds and production; Telz, P2J, Timbaland, LeriQ, REXXIE, Skread, Andre Harris, Jae5, Mike Dean and P Diddy. This refined the artist's musical oeuvre affirming that the 'Anybody' crooner has just started his music journey into new realms. The Executive producers of the Album were Bosede Ogulu (his mother and manager) and Sean 'P Diddy' Combs.

By this effort, the Grammy-award nominee Damini Ogulu explores other areas of his musical niche, his album hopes to break new grounds in musical composition, sound arrangements, and set to establish a unique cross-border musical alliance. To say that Burna Boy is an 'African Giant' as suggested by the previous Grammy

nominated album would only be an understatement in comparison to what is obtained listening to this new album, *Twice as Tall*.

In his words of the Afro-fusion proponent, *Twice as Tall* is the album about a period of time in my life. It's the album about the struggle for freedom. It's the album about life in general, real life, good times, bad times, happy times, sad times, great times.' Would it be the much-awaited album for a Nigerian pop act to clinch the Grammy at the 63rd Annual Grammy Awards? Burna Boy's *Twice as Tall* made history by achieving a No. 54 on the Billboard 200, made available via Billboard Charts, a new record for any Nigerian album on America's verified album chart rating site.

Burna Boy is no longer a stranger to the world stage. He has won big at the MTV Base awards in two

consecutive years, and has been nominated for the Best World Music Album category of the Record Academy's Annual Grammy Awards. The hope that Oluwa-Burna may bring home the gramophone-styled award is good faith channeled on the right course.

The *Twice as Tall* album is not without its shortcomings; nonetheless one would agree that the production team did an excellent job in making this album at a time when COVID-19 ravaged every corner of the world.

Burna Boy's latest *Twice as Tall* may be a response to his near miss at last year's Grammy. The album peeps into a 15-track musical odyssey thickened with nostalgia and creates a distinct musical frontier for the pop culture. In a rare showcase of creativity, Burna Boy maintains originality as much as he tries to raise high the flag of brotherhood, love and respect for all races.

The first track on the album, 'Level Up' opens with a sampling of the 1959 soundtrack for the film *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*. The singer, Pat Boone with baritone voice echoing, 'Oh, I'd have to be twice as tall, at least, to view better than I do' takes listeners on a wild journey to the 20th century. The reggae/ dancehall number underscores the singer's attestation of his undoubting strength against the odds. He features the Senegalese music legend, Youssou N'Dour who brings the Wolof flavour into the track as the track merges both the old and new school music in one, without any losing its unique creative allure. This is what can be at best considered to a break from the norm.

Followed up by 'Alarm Clock', the track's intro was a short-spoken word piece done by Sean 'P. Diddy' Combs accompanied by a felaeque saxophone infusion. The black American star performs: 'God made us, he made the magical being, it is important how you view yourself, how you look at your brother, how you look at your sister.... it is black love...'. Once the voice of P Diddy trails off, Burna Boy cues into an upbeat, danceable track flavoured with Afrobeat. The sounds produced by Anderson Paak's drums is ideal for the Nigerian music market as against the notion that Burna Boy might have 'sold out' to the international musical market.

Listening to 'Way Too Big', the unmistakable voice of Burna Boy shadows the near funky influence that plays throughout the track. In the song, he clears the air about certain doubts and misrepresentation about him, reeling

out his achievements for the mischief makers. Attempts by Burna Boy to maintain his Nigeria representation was nearly marred as the melodic outro lingered for a while. 'Bebo' sustains the momentum with a systemic rhythm that swiftly transitions into a 'gbese' or 'gwaragwara' dance movements – something for the 'streets'. This track is heavily influenced with Afrobeat sounds.

'Wonderful' is a club banger anytime. The track takes its roots in the Afro-pop genre, a modern musical style that combines African beats with foreign sounds. With 'Onyeka', a love song, Burna Boy puts his highlife credibility to good use. He references 'Osondi Owendi' by Late Chief Osita Osadebe, an all-time favourite lover of highlife. Burna Boy employs the horns and percussion brings back good memories for the old folks while keeping the young folks aware of a musical history. For the younger generation, Burna Boy's Onyeka calls all to the dance floor.

In 'Naughty by Nature' which is typically Hip-Hop, Burna Boy is joined by Anthony Criss and Vin Rock. The track can almost be mistaken for American styled HipHop, yet Burna Boy uses vernacular blends with the killer. In the 'Comma' track, Burna Boy addresses his metaphorical 'comma babes'. Burna waxes poetically while he takes a swipe at his detractors. Towards the end, he remarks about the fake life of some young women of this generation. He describes the fake "Silicon" breast, and bleaching as the markers of the 'comma babes'.

'No Fit Vex' is a slow RnB and motivational song that confronts the realities of everyday living. The Pop artiste emphasizes on hard work. I can't deny the fact that the track '23' is my favourite of all the songs on the *Twice as Tall* album. It is a mid-tempo rap song which sure gives his fans one more for the road. 'Time flies' samples beat from *Sexual Healing* by late American sensational act, Marvin Gaye. Burna Boy turns philosophical as he teams up with the Kenyan 'Sauti Sol' telling us that 'we all have got a story to write'. The song creates a rich African symphony aced with Burna Boy's midas' touch and the Swahili duo, Sauti Sol. The song preaches black identity and consciousness, same stance entrenched by Bose Ogulu, Burna Boy's mother and manager when she said in the outro: 'From Niger Delta to all the corners of Africa, America and the world, black people are turning the tables, taking back our place, we will be heard because we matter'.





The twelfth track, 'The Monsters You made' is a soft rock rap song featuring Chris Martins of Cold play. Of the song, Burna Boy said, 'that song comes from a lot of anger and pain and me having to witness firsthand what my people go through and how my people see themselves. I see how many people are deceived and confused. I just try to blend all of that in and make it understood that we're all going through the same problems. We just speak different languages.' With Burna boy expressing his fury accentuated with stimulating drums, his UK counterpart Martin maintains his unflappable chorus on the electric bass.

In 'Wetin Dey Sup', Burna Boy, in the fashion of Fela Kuti's Afrobeat speaks up against certain ills in society. The follow-up RnB 'Real Life' co-written by Michael

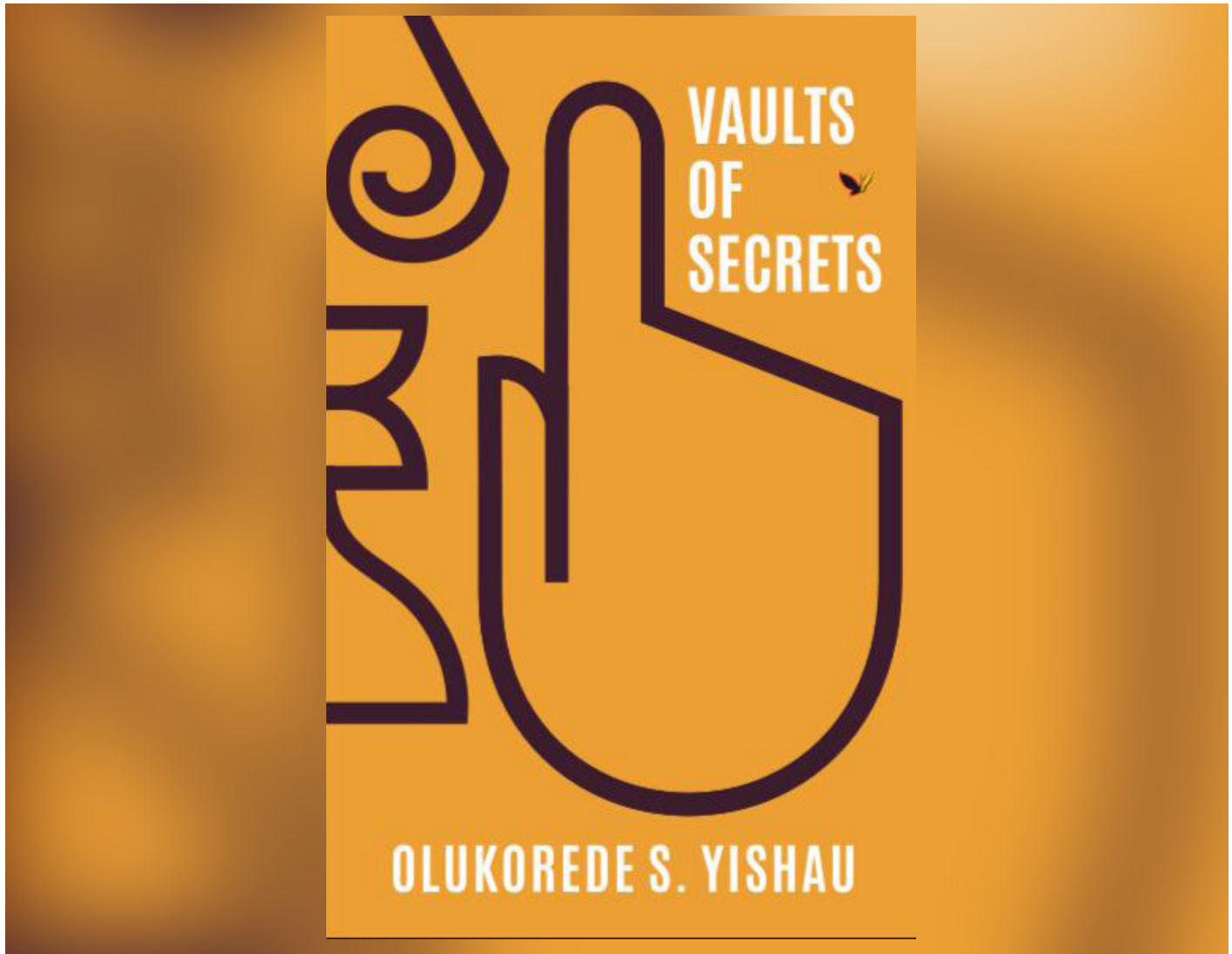
Omari is produced by Mario Winans and Telz. The track features Stormzy, the song is an interpolation of T-Pain's 'I'm Sprung'. The last track 'Bank on it' is slow-paced, RnB with emphatic drums adding force to the words of a retrospective Burna Boy who is later joined by a choir.

The *Twice as Tall* album affirms that Burna Boy is growing fast into a man. Would he consider changing the suffix of his stage? More than ever, Burna explores old and new styles, brings to his music a mix of influences with the contribution of featured artistes, co-writers and producers who add their own signature to his own. This hybrid would appeal to music lovers who are looking for new sounds without losing touch with people who are already glued to Burna Boy's music verve. Although his experimentation in *Twice as Tall* may not be seen as deeply original like 'African Giant'.

## VAULTING THE SHAME AWAY

### A REVIEW OF OLUKOREDE YISHAU'S VAULTS OF SECRETS

*Tope Salaudeen-Adegoke*



**Title:** Vaults of Secrets

**Author:** Olukorede S. Yishau

**Publisher:** Parrésia Publishers

**Number of pages:** 118

**Year of publication:** 2020

**Category:** Fiction

Amongst the peculiar things about the human nature, one thing that is inherent in every person is clear – secrets. No matter how big or trivial it may be, it is very likely we all keep some sorts of secrets. This happens when we try

to hide our absurdity, shame, fault, even awkwardness from others. Some complications arise from the unveiling of secrets when others are accidentally let in on them. Olukorede Yishau's new collection of short stories aptly titled *Vaults of Secrets* creatively bring to the fore a psychopathological understanding of our shared humanity. The book invites the reader into the recesses of the characters that populate it, and by extension, into the pit of the human mind. The novel also explores Nigeria's social realism. We bear witness to the flaws and shame of these characters in a unique way that sometimes draws the reader in as a co-conspirator or accomplice in keeping oftentimes dirty secrets.



The thematic excursion of the stories ranges as they unfold seamlessly, ranging from betrayal, infidelity, gender inequality and violence amongst others, against the motif of secret. In the story titled, 'The Special Gift' the themes of betrayal and conjugal violation are discernible, for instance. But what is really absorbing about this story is the narrative voice – at best the voice is both comic and creepy.

The reader encounters a man who has an uncanny way of being in a wrong place at the wrong time and thus happens in on other people's secret. He is named Emmanuel meaning 'God with us', a somewhat cheeky interposing, which is also a subtle reference to the conscience that constantly abide in us all. Emmanuel happens upon people at their most vulnerable moment like their conscience. Emmanuel is that quirky character that you can tell enjoys seeing and knowing things.

He happens on his perfidious neighbour and his neighbour's house help making out. The lackadaisical attitude he treats the affair when his neighbour, Mr Essien, begs him not to breach his secret shows that he is really a vault of secrets. He claims and confides to the reader that he has seen worse and deftly narrates some of the weird things he has seen like catching his brother in unwholesome situation:

*Mr Essien's misadventure brought a brother to my mind. This brother is not a friend who I call a brother, not a Christian brother from church, but my brother who has known me my entire life and knows more about me than any other person. My brother did not tell me any secret, I chanced on it (p 13).*

As secrets can make or mar anyone depending on its magnitude and the person set to reveal it or keep it. Knowing these damaging things about people burdens him as he becomes a hostage to secrets he dare not reveal for the fear of losing his job and friendship: 'I remember another secret I regret keeping, to this day' (p 14). This is the price he pays for his so-called gift.

Apart from happening on people, Emmanuel also spies on landscapes. On his way to meet his boss in the ultra rich Banana Island, Lagos, he can't help but notice the social injustice in the opulence of the privileged few, where the Lagos elites enjoy. He can only bridge his understanding with an imagination of what belongs to who:

*The Island reeked of wealth: well-laid out road network, well-mowed lawn, perfumed air, well-built and glossed mansions and an ambience comparable to Seventh Arrondissement in Paris, La Jolla in San Diego and Tokyo's Shibuya and Roppongi (p 17).*

*As I drove around, I wondered which house was Mike Adenuga's and which was Sayyu Dantata's [...] In the house opposite Nonso's place, the garage boasted a Rolls Royce Phantom, Bentley Continental, a Ferrari, Range Rover and Porsche 911. I wondered who owned the house and why he needed all these luxury cars. (p 18).*

With a gossipy curiosity, he gapes at the secret affluence of the rich neighbourhood only comparable to such dazzling city centres around the world. He finds it almost impossible that such a place could exist amidst the squalor and impoverished neighbourhoods around, and contrasts it against his middle-class apartment in Lagos Mainland. This flâneurism of the urban city centre, a Flaubertian innovation as the critic James Wood calls it, does not only inventorise the surroundings just for its sake. The details recorded through the eyes of the narrator is a conscious effort by the author to make us better readers of the life around us that is full of so many contradictory details.

But this is not so in another story in the collection titled 'My Mother's Father is My Father'. The author crams unnecessary details into the story that neither moves the plot forward nor advances the character. This unnecessary digression where the narrator launches into telling about his time in England, naming streets in England, running to three pages long, that contribute absolutely nothing to the story, at best, could have been compressed to a paragraph. If it was to point to the fact the character can be happy or lead a normal life, it went too far.

'My Mother's Father is My Father' is an already revealing title that casts light on incestuous relationship between father and daughter, such immoral happenings that now make bizarre news in the society through the eyes of someone who bears most of the burden of the secret. For the narrator, it is a secret that must not be let out at all cost and so he confesses it to his diary:



*Apart from me, no one else alive knows. I am happy that my secret is guarded and I hope to keep it so till I breathe my last. I am only recording it here for posterity's sake (p 26).*

This secret is the source of his frequent nightmares that threatens his conjugal bliss. His confession to his dairy is more like a confession to self or admittance of a heavy fact. He is not willing to confess to anybody for the shame is too great. But his healing can only be completed when he finds someone whom he can share his shame with it. This is mostly true for every occasion, before the burden becomes too heavy. The character may contemplate suicide to be the safest way out.

Infidelity is the theme in 'Otapiapia', another story of infidelity in the collection. A married woman who cheats is caught in the act by a supposed role model.

*She knocked on the door and waited a few seconds before she turned the knob. The door creaked open only for her to behold a man and a woman scrambling to cover their nakedness. The woman was her precious Auntie Rebecca, her breasts jiggling like a bell. The man was not Uncle Solagbade, Auntie Rebecca's husband; it was a man who Idera knew way back as a molue driver.*

Even though she still maintains a straight face when caught in this act, perhaps because the magnitude of her shame can still be contained as she swears her sister into

secrecy, when her secret is finally let open to the public, including her husband, with a terminal STD, she considers suicide a better option to evade her shame. To her, death is way much preferable to shame. This brings to attention the gender injustice and moral obligations expected of women. Even though the story has its moral complications, as we later learn that her husband also cheats, it is absolutely unfair that it is the woman who bears all the shame.

This also calls for a close scrutiny of the above excerpt. The author too unconsciously falls into this gender trappings. He heightens the shame of the woman by his brief description of her breasts 'her breasts jiggling like a bell', but what of, say, the man's phallus too? What of his behind or scrotal sac which surely will evoke a comic effect desired? Therefore, it is an unconscious, unbalanced allotment of shame.

All in all, *Vaults of Secrets* by Olukorede Yishau is a good read comprising of ten short stories around many themes such as corruption, infidelity, juvenile infatuation with the motif of secret linking all the stories. The stories are narrated with varied voices, even a 'it', the human conscience, as seen in the story 'Open Wound'. Through the many characters encountered in the book, we get to perform a psychoanalysis on them and thus understand more the phenomenon of shame.

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## VIRTUAL SPACE: THE NIGERIAN CREATIVE SECTOR IN A TIME OF GLOBAL PANDEMIC

*Babatunde Odubanwo*



Given the declaration on January 23 and 30, 2020 by the World Health Organisation's International Health Regulations (IHR) Emergency Committee on COVID-19, 'all countries should be prepared for containment, including active surveillance, early detection, isolation and case management, contact tracing and prevention of onward spread of COVID-19 infection, and to share full data with WHO,' it is clear that the future of creative arts in the country would need to re-purposed to suit the times.

In the observation of Stuart Waplington, the CEO, Creative Hub, 'There have been some positives in terms of reflecting on our values, solidarity, creativity, and how artists and photographers can share and teach each other just by sharing their experiences.' More than before, the current situation of the COVID-19 pandemic has called for re-inventing and re-channeling of creative skills towards profitable ends. Such efforts would require learning new skills, experimentation of dogged approaches and partnering in developing projects along the 'social distance' borderlines.

Following a Presidential broadcast declaring that the country was to undergo a month of total lockdown on the eve of April 1, 2020, there was a halt of all major economic

activities including the ever-blooming Nigerian Creative Sector. There was anxiety in the air as practitioners within the Nigerian creative sector tried to relevant in the face of a global pandemic situation.

It is often said that 'necessity is the mother of all inventions.' The virtual space which considerably accommodates nearly a half of the world's population through news and information sharing, personal avalanche, engagements on different social media platforms, brands promotion and sundry affairs have been winged to serve as the platform for cultural engagements, festivals and art programmes.

All thanks to the 'Social Distance' rule. The success recorded by the virtual space has become unprecedented going by the available statistics on the use of social media in Nigeria by Caritas, showing that 84% of young people of ages 21-45 stayed attached to the internet, especially social media devices, to keep themselves abreast of the happenings in the world on national discourse, to kill boredom or to learn a new skill. While the research focused more on social media use, streaming platforms like Zoom were used to provide masterclasses, workshops and counselling during the lockdown and the ease of lockdown.

The Creative economy was one of the worst hit by the lockdown and has not recovered from coma by the ease of lockdown. Theatre, music film, visual arts, creative writing, events, advertising, fashion suffered in more ways than one. Oluwaseunfunmi Otukoya, a Lagos-based fashion entrepreneur, noted that 'During this covid-19 period, the fashion industry has experienced low patronage and reduced revenue.' The fashion designer however offered a word of encouragement in clearing the fog of pessimism, when she said, 'this covid-19 times has also offered me the opportunity to think and look for other ways to be more self-sufficient.'

There is an estimated loss margin of more than 50% of jobs within the creative industry. The Nigerian creative industry has created about 29.5 million jobs annually, and has served as a good alternative for the much-desired economic diversification. Before COVID-19, it earned about \$250 billion yearly. A total of nearly 2.3 million jobs were lost, many rendered redundant adding to the growing rate of unemployment in the country. This disproportionate statistic affected the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on the short run basis.

On May 14, 2020, the National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC), held a virtual conference to discuss the future of creative industry. The forum which was titled, 'COVID-19: Impact on Nigeria's Creative Sector', was convened by the Director-General of NCAC and President of World Crafts Council (African Region) Otunba Olusegun Runsewe. In attendance was the Israel Eboh, the National President of National Association of Nigerian Theatre Arts Practitioners (NANTAP).

Speaking at the conference, DG of NCAC said, 'There is a global health emergency occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic. This has imposed severe economic burden in virtually all nations of the world. Nigeria is a mono-economy almost entirely dependent on oil revenue for its mainstay. The shock of the effects of COVID-19 in the Nigerian economy is devastating. There is, therefore, the urgent need for economic diversification. This is why we must now think outside of the box. Nigeria must take advantage of the potentials available in the sector.' The DG also added that 'This online Zoom series 'Agenda Setting for the Nigerian Creative Industry is a platform to engage with critical stakeholders in order to aggregate views and opinions of industry players in various sub-sectors to set agenda for the creative industry.'

The NANTAP President, Israel Eboh reacted by saying, 'We must find new ways of expressing our art. Travel operators, travel agents and other tourism practitioners could have video clips of destinations to be exhibited on different platforms to create awareness of the existence of such cities. Through this, businesses can still continue in the industry, rather than the total collapse we are experiencing. COVID-19 has seriously dealt with the creative industry because the industry is people-driven. That is the reason digitalising our crafts has become very necessary'.

The virtual space is taking over the creative sector swiftly. Industry experts who hitherto wouldn't have considered the option of the virtual space for their entire project are now turning over to the virtual space as the only mecca in achieving their dreams and potentials. The annual gathering of arts lovers and weekend revelers dubbed as the Eko Theatre Carnival, is a case in point. The week-long staging of theatrical masterpieces and performances was held online with an impressive number of engagement and followership. Other Art and Culture events slated for usually slated from October to early December which has always been on the culture lover's calendar have all been scheduled to be launched and engaged online, some of which are, The Lagos Book and Arts Festival (LABAF); Africa's Largest literary picnic, the Lagos International Poetry Festival, and the Ake Arts and Books Festival and the Nigerian International Book Festivals, are some of the festivals that will gather people from the distance of their screens instead of halls, galleries, hotels and outdoor.

Seun Awobajo, curator and founder of the Footprints of David Arts Academy said, 'The impact of social media on creative sector in this pandemic has helped the creative sector to keep in touch with the fans. It has also helped in challenging artists all over in a more different way. By that, I mean, the Social Media platforms avails the artist(s) to look for other means to exhibit their works as well as to embrace technology. In a time of social distancing, it revalidates the artist(s) efficacy in getting to more people without seeing them. It is equally true that only a segment of the creative sector is benefitting from this.'

With these new realities, there continues to be the need for improvement of the knowledge of new technologies by artists who have always relied on just the Arts and not the Acts of the Arts. With Twitter, Facebook, Mixlr, Zoom, Instagram communication and visibility has become paramount and has come to stay.



## Culture & Lifestyle



Aderinsola is a singer, guitarist and composer. She started her music career professionally in 2015 and began to rise to limelight when she worked with Tony Allen, the Grammy Awards nominee, on the song 'Iwalewa'. She had earlier released a single, 'Jeun Kooku', a remix of Fela's song by the same title. The track 'Iwalewa' brought her close to the Alliance Francais, the French cultural centre which provided the platform for her to host Music Uplugged or Express with the Empress.

She has since performed at The Lagos Jazz Festival, Eko@50, World Music Day Muson, Ake Festival, AY Live, Griots and Bards, among other platforms. Aderinsola has performed with Femi Kuti, Yinka Davies, Orlando Julius, Beautiful Nubia, India Arie, Timi Dakolo, Wole Oni, Nneka, Ade Bantu and others.

## Education

### A UNIVERSITY SAGA OF EGOS

*Oriyomi Adebare-Anthony*



Laws are made to define correct procedure and to regulate actions of members of a body, organisation, country, and social entities. To prevent ambiguity or other confusions that may arise due to subjective interpretations, lawyers study law and offer their expertise to the unlearned. This goes for most countries including Nigeria. Becoming a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) is probably one of the most desired positions Nigerian lawyers aspire to, especially considering the years of practice required and the rigorous selection process involved. It would not be remiss then to assume that if junior advocates may be guilty of misinterpreting the law occasionally, SANs should not suffer from the same error. Such blunders as this, have made the recent debacle involving Dr Wale Babalakin, who is both a doctor of Law and a Senior Advocate of Nigeria, and the University of Lagos a dicey matter to judge. Are the actions of the Babalakin-led Governing Council due to a misinterpretation of the law or some other factors?

The Universities Miscellaneous Provisions Act of 2003 as amended, also known as the University Autonomy

Act, directs all federal universities to have a Governing Council that will, among other things, be responsible for the appointment and removal of Vice Chancellors (VCs) and other principal officers following laid-down procedures. The Council is to consist of different members representing different stakeholders including a Pro-Chancellor, a role appointed by government. The Pro-Chancellor also chairs the Council. Dr. Wale Babalakin was appointed as the Pro-Chancellor of the University of Lagos (UNILAG) in April 2017.

Since one of the duties of the Governing Council is to ensure that disbursement of funds of the University complies with the approved budgetary ratio, in 2018, the Babalakin-led Council commissioned a sub-committee to audit the May 2017 - September 2018 university expenditure. In 2019, the committee, led by Dr Saminu Dagari, presented their report which indicted the then vice chancellor Professor Oluwatoyin Ogundipe and some other principal officers of the university. The bulk of the report's allegations bordered on financial mismanagement and illegal awarding of contracts.



To be fair, Professor Oluwatoyin Ogundipe was allowed to address the allegations against him which he did in a response titled 'That University of Lagos May Know Peace: Submission of Prof. Oluwatoyin Ogundipe, Vice Chancellor, University of Lagos, to the Governing Council' at its special meeting on May 13, 2019.

Whether or not Ogundipe's response satisfied the Babalakin-led Governing Council is not clear, but Professor Ogundipe remained in office from May 2019 when he gave his response, till August 2020. The Universities Autonomies Act 2003 clearly specifies what should be done if a Vice Chancellor's conduct gives room for suspicion. Babalakin would have been well within the law if he followed the laid-down procedure, but he thought and acted otherwise.

The steps to remove a Vice Chancellor as contained in Section 3 subsections 8-12 of the Universities Autonomies Act 2003 are stated in these terms:

(8) The Vice-Chancellor may be removed from office by the Governing Council on grounds of gross misconduct or inability to discharge the functions of his office as a result of infirmity of the body or mind, at the initiative of the Council, Senate or the Congregation after due process.

(9) When the proposal for the removal of the Vice-Chancellor is made, the Council shall constitute a joint committee of Council and Senate consisting of-

(i) Three members of the Council one of whom shall be the Chairman of the committee,

(ii) Two members of the Senate, provided that where the ground for removal is infirmity of the body or mind, the Council shall seek appropriate medical opinion.

(10) The Committee shall conduct investigation into the allegations made against the Vice-Chancellor and shall report its findings to the Council.

(11) The Council may where the allegations are proved remove the Vice Chancellor or apply any other disciplinary action it may deem fit and notify the Visitor accordingly provided that a Vice-Chancellor who is removed shall have right of appeal to the Visitor.

(12) There shall be no sole administration in any Nigerian University.

One would expect Babalakin as a Senior Advocate of Nigeria to have a perfect understanding of this process; but knowing the law and obeying it are apparently two different things. In an emergency Council meeting

called to consider the 2020 budget of the university, Babalakin, using his power as Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Council, called for a vote to remove Prof. Ogundipe from office. Votes were allegedly done via WhatsApp and Ogundipe was removed by a vote of 6 to 4. The Council then announced Ogundipe's removal as Vice Chancellor on August 12, 2020.

This was the first in a sequence of events that have raised a question on Babalakin's expertise in interpreting the law. What with the Joint Committee of the Senate and Council that should have been set up? What about the committee's investigations and report? What happened to giving Ogundipe the opportunity to defend whatever allegations the joint committee brings against him? Why didn't Babalakin consider other disciplinary measures? Why was there a hasty decision to vote for Ogundipe's removal? What about the option to notify the Visitor of the Council's decision before announcing Ogundipe's removal? The Federal Government claimed an unawareness of the event and remained silent days after Ogundipe's sack. These were the questions many people asked Babalakin and he had a ready answer.

While speaking with newsmen, Babalakin insisted that the Council followed due process in the removal of Ogundipe. He said, 'Most people don't know what the powers of the Council are vis-à-vis the removal of the Vice-Chancellor. I assure you that there was full compliance with the law in the removal of the Vice-Chancellor. If you read the Universities Miscellaneous Act 2009, the Visitor has no role in the removal of Vice Chancellors. It's a decision of the Council and if the Vice Chancellor believes that he hasn't been removed properly, the appropriate thing to do is, as stated in the law, for him to write an appeal to the Visitor.'

It is not certain if Babalakin is referring to a different law, if it's the same Universities Autonomy Act 2003. It is glaring that he omitted or maybe misinterpreted some steps.

The war of egos between Ogundipe and Babalakin was reported to have rankled high when Babalakin had petitioned the Malam Adamu Adamu, the Minister of Education that Ogundipe was organising the convocation ceremony of the university without involving the key stakeholders in the university community. This led to the indefinite suspension of the graduation ceremony.



While Ogundipe dismissed the Council's statement by saying that he remained the Vice Chancellor, the University Senate led by Prof. Bola Oboh asserted that Wale Babalakin made sure that the tenure of some strong members of the Senate ended before he used the Dagari report as his sword of Damocles. He also said that the removal of the Vice Chancellor did not follow due process. The UNILAG ASUU seems to be on the side of VC Ogundipe when it stated that the Council lacked the powers to remove the Vice Chancellor. The ASUU, led by Dr Dele Ashiru, its Chairman, had also declared that Babalakin was henceforth persona non grata in the university at its congress. On the flipside, the SSANU seems to be on the side of Wale Babalakin as they had earlier called on the Pro-chancellor to overhaul the UNILAG financial infrastructure perceived to be run by a cabal.

Meanwhile, Oladejo Azeez, the Registrar of the University, had responded to the ASUU, reminding it that under the 1999 Constitution and the Trade Union Act, the ASUU had no powers to restrict the movement of Wale Babalakin in the University. It therefore disassociated itself from the decision of the ASUU UNILAG Congress.

If the Babalakin-led Council ended its misinterpretation at removing Ogundipe, one may have concluded that it was a minor misstep probably fuelled by their passion to stop a corrupt official from continuing in office, especially since it had taken the Council more than a year to act definitively on the Dagari audit report. But the Pro-Chancellor's goof did not end there. Barely 24 hours after they removed the then Vice Chancellor, the Registrar and Secretary to the Council, Mr Oladejo Azeez, announced the appointment of Professor Theophilus Soyombo as the acting Vice Chancellor of the institution. This was another glaring disregard to the Universities Autonomy Act and the University of Lagos' Act.

To appoint an acting Vice Chancellor, Section 3 subsection 13 of the Universities Autonomy Act states that 'In any case of a vacancy in the office of the Vice-Chancellor, the Council shall appoint an acting Vice Chancellor on recommendation of the Senate.' There is no record to show that the Babalakin-led Council consulted with the Senate before it announced Professor Soyombo as the acting Vice Chancellor which is another strike against it.

All of these blatant disregard or misinterpretation of the law did not inspire confidence in Dr Babalakin. The recent actions by the Federal Government seem to back this assertion. On August 22nd, the Federal Government asked the Vice Chancellor and the Pro-Chancellor to recuse themselves pending investigations by the Special Visitation Panel set up by the President. In the same vein, the government also removed Professor Soyombo as acting Vice Chancellor of UNILAG. That would make him one of the shortest serving acting VCs ever. While both Babalakin and Ogundipe had to return to their homes with their tails and egos tucked, Providence seems to be at work when the Federal Government appointed the new acting Vice Chancellor. The government appointed Mr John Momoh as acting Chairman of UNILAG's Governing Council, and the Council has gone on to confirm the appointment of Professor Folasade Ogunsola as acting VC. Professor Ogunsola was appointed by the Senate of the University of Lagos.

Folashade Ogunsola is a Professor of Clinical Microbiology at the College of Medicine. Her research interest is in clinical diagnosis and disease prevention and control. She is also a honorary consultant microbiologist and infectious disease specialist in infection control and antibiotic resistance. Ogunsola has done a lot of research work on the management of viral diseases especially Human Immuno-deficiency Virus, HIV. She earned her first degree from the University of Ife (Obafemi Awolowo University) and a masters degree from the College of Medicine, University of Lagos. She later bagged her PhD from the University of Wales in 1997. She was Deputy Vice Chancellor Development Services before assuming the office of the acting Vice Chancellor. She was once the provost of the College of Medicine, University of Lagos. She is also a principal investigator at AIDS Prevention Initiative in Nigeria, at the University of Lagos. Ogunsola has two decades experience in infection control and management. She is the first female Vice Chancellor of the university.

*Adebare-Anthony is a writer and editor based in Lagos*

## Education

### ADVANCING WOMEN EDUCATION

*Zainab Abdullahi*



ResearchGate, an online research platform, suggests that Nigerian women constitute about half of the population of the country. A woman in Nigeria wears many hats including but not limited to mother, time manager, organiser, political activist and social activist. Notwithstanding all these roles, Nigerian women are still discriminated against in the society especially when it comes to roles of leadership, some of the contributing factors are early marriage, lack of proper education, religion and culture.

When we start even at the grassroots level of the family, one finds out that the education of the boy is given more priority than the girl-child. For girls, even before they can walk or talk, it is always drummed into their heads that the only thing they can aspire to is marriage. Some who are lucky enough to be in school. Typically, the moment a man shows interest in her she is immediately removed from school and married off like a burden that has long

been borne by her family. That is how, in most cases, her life ends up being ruined because her education was not seen as a necessity. The girl grows up to be a woman and she passes on that same kind of ideology to her own girl-child, and the generational circle continues.

For some women who decide to get married while hoping to continue their education – either as a graduate hoping to earn a master's degree or a late-entry secondary school student – in most cases, one finds out that their husbands eventually forbid them to go back to school or to work. The reason behind their husband's decision is often that they do not want their wives around other men. Men use their positions of power to bend and make women conform to their views. And in some cases, these men get physical. The woman becomes a shell of her former self and loses sight of all the dreams and hopes she had as a girl.





Primary education in Nigeria is free and compulsory but about 10.5 million children aged 5-14 years are not in school and more than half of that number are girls. According to the UNICEF, States in the North-East and North-West have female primary net attendance rates of 47.7 percent and 47.3 percent, respectively. This implies that more than half of the girls are not in school. The education deprivation in Northern Nigeria is driven by various factors, including economic barriers and socio-cultural norms and practices that discourage attendance in formal education, especially for girls.

Most of the people who are affected by this problem are girls and women especially in the northern part of this country. It is so bad that in some areas it is considered a sin for a female child to have any form of formal education.

According to the World Bank, Nigeria female labour participation rate from 1990 to 2019 is 48.44 percent with a minimum of 47.11 percent in 1991 and a maximum of 50.62 percent. An example of this is Nigeria, which did not get her first female governor till February 2006 and that was because she was a deputy who took over from the governor. This speaks volume on how backwards our country is when it comes to women holding positions of power despite her educational

qualifications, the men become intimidated and hateful because they don't want to take orders from a woman. In 2011, when Sarah Jibril aspired to be President of Nigeria, she only got one vote in the primary elections, meaning she was the only one who voted herself. This speaks to how women are not given a fair chance to aspire to a position of leadership.

Women's rights organisations are already overwhelmed by the number of cases they receive daily and they are really trying their best to break the mould, but what needs to be done is purposeful community sensitisation. Women need to be educated on how to fight for their rights and to demand to be treated equally and to aspire to greater heights. The women's rights organisations are mostly focused on issues of domestic violence and various forms of abuse. Although this is very important but they have neglected another very important sector which is the education. Once this is not addressed, women in Nigeria will not reach the heights of their potentials and that will be to the detriment of Nigeria as a country.

*Zainab Abdulahi is a writer and a development researcher*



## COVID-19: A LAYERED THREAT TO PREGNANT WOMEN

*Adebowale Bello*



The battle to contain the COVID-19 pandemic is far from over. With many countries yet to peak out with the disease, and the rising cases of resurgence, it is essential not to let down our guard. The Australian state of Victoria and South Korea were recently in the news because of a new wave of the disease. Similar stories have been reported elsewhere with Spain being the latest of them. It is in times like this that it becomes important to protect groups which are really vulnerable. Among these are children and infants, the elderly, and not the least pregnant women.

Available data about COVID-19 and pregnancy is incomplete for now. However, there are a few things which are known. The first is that pregnant women are not likely to get more unwell than other individuals if they contact the corona virus. As a precaution, pregnant women have been put on the list of people with moderate risk. The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists advised that women who are in their

third trimester should make sure to observe the social distancing guidelines to avoid contact with individuals who may have caught the virus.

There are no predictive data as of now regarding the risk of losing pregnancy due to the coronavirus neither can it be concluded yet that there is the probability of mother to child transmission during pregnancy. The few cases of COVID-19 on newborns and maternal-child mortalities are still within the limits of chance events, since they cannot be completely distinguished from events under normal conditions.

Regardless of what is, or is not known, pregnant women are a group of people whose health must in no way be compromised. They face myriads of issues and have certain requirements which should not be undermined. Global public health statistics, for example, have shown an alarming number of women who have lost their lives due to pregnancies. Maternal mortality, which

is the loss of lives of women due to pregnancy related complications, has been classified among preventable deaths. Though the United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported that there was an overall 44 percent global decline of maternal mortality (from 385 to 216 deaths per 100,000 live births), from 1990 to 2015, the reduction is still but of a moderate effect in some countries. It translates to an annual reduction rate of 2.3 percent, and this is less than the 5.5 percent set target.

In spite of this impressive global reduction in pregnancy and birth-related deaths, data from bodies like the World Bank Group has it that Nigeria still ranks second, just after India, on the list of countries which account for the most maternal deaths. The World Health Organisation reported that nearly 20 percent of maternal deaths happen in Nigeria. It is estimated that about 600,000 maternal deaths and no less than 900,000 maternal near-miss cases occurred in Nigeria between 2005 and 2015. In 2015 alone, the total number of maternal deaths in Nigeria was about 58, 000 (maternal death ratio of 800 in 100,000 live births) while that in the 46 most developed countries was 1700 in all (maternal death ratio of 12 per 100,000 live births).

While all eyes are on the government and all key stakeholders to double up efforts, and weigh in on these issues, just as it was done successfully with the eradication of the polio virus in the country, what should individuals do in the time being? In the light of these staggering statistics, and with healthcare facilities being stretch to their limits, what can and should be done by and for expecting mothers?

There can be no overstating the roles that good nutrition plays during pregnancy. Some of the maternal deaths accounted for in Nigeria have been said to be due to poor economic status, which had a direct impact on the quality of the food consumed by such persons. As is expected, a pregnant woman's nutritional requirements are more than that of a woman without pregnancy. The common saying of eating for two is the ordinary person's way of explaining this. Besides body weight and size being factors, all food classes should be taken in

balanced proportions. Emphasis are however placed on plant-based proteins and some animal proteins. These are well spelled out in the nutrition hand book given at the antenatal centres. These guidelines should be followed as advised.

Medications and supplements should only be used as prescribed by an expert. Regardless of what a pregnant person is feeling, they should not in any case resort to self-medication.

Personal and communal hygiene at this point cannot be compromised. WASH professionals (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) usually come up with guidelines for keeping personal and collective hygiene during outbreaks. Hence the advisory on hand washing, surface sanitizing, proper waste disposal and others. This is to ensure that harmful microorganisms do not find easy access to the human system and thereby attacking it. Pregnant women will do well to abide by these advisory. In addition, keeping the social distancing rule and avoiding overcrowded spaces is key.

As a way of avoiding crowded spaces, visit your healthcare facilities only when necessary. And when you do, take appropriate measures to keep safe. If possible, get the contact of your healthcare providers and the government's emergency lines. Doing this, you can quickly reach out in case of an emergency or you observe symptoms that seem to be COVID-19 related. Seek help early when something seems wrong.

On the community level, there is the need to begin to collectively assess the state of our maternity and Primary Healthcare Centres (PHCs) with a view to holding the government responsible to keeping them running properly. Many Primary Health Centres are in total shambles. Some local governments can hardly boast of having a government medical presence in any shade. Sadly, even in urban centres, a number of general hospitals are highly undermanned, to say the least. These, and many more, are issues that should be brought to the fore when the time comes to analyse all that transpired during the coronavirus pandemic.

## BLACK LIVES MATTER

*Najite Atirena*



America the land of freedom, opportunities and happiness. Many say it is the land of milk and honey which simply indicates that life challenges are easy to overcome once you step foot onto its land. The American Dream is captured by writer and historian, James Truslow Adams, as a state of being where 'Life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement,' with neither social class nor the circumstances surrounding their birth being a barrier to success. This does not seem to be the case now. People of colour do not seem to enjoy their freedom. In the health sector they seem to suffer the most, and in the economy they rarely even matter. How about education and civil rights? Invariably, we recognise the chant which people of colour intone every other day: 'BLACK LIVES MATTER!' Barack Obama being the first Black president of the country made African Americans in particular finally feel a sense of belonging and proud to call the land home. But that was about to change when the next president Donald Trump stepped in as the 45th president of the United States.

During Trump's presidential campaign in 2015, he mentioned that he was a candidate of law and order; but the rate of police brutality against coloured people especially is now on the increase. The Trump administration, within two months of assuming power, forced a sweeping review of court-enforceable reform packages known as 'consent decrees' imposed on numerous problematic police departments. Trump revoked a directive, issued by the Obama administration, to end the US government's use of private prisons, a marker of the first Black president's attempt to end the disproportionate incarceration of people of colour.

Eight months into his presidency, Donald Trump freed up local police to once again procure military-grade equipment and Sessions had effectively cancelled the US government's flagship community police programme. But, outside the culture wars and quiet policy rollbacks, the most treacherous effect of the Trump presidency on the battle for equal justice and fair policing was its partial suffocation of the story itself. Young men continued to die and the movement for Black lives received less and less media oxygen.





Walking through the historical alleys of incidents that have taken place in recent times, the memory of the 2018 incident remains fresh as ever, of when 21-year-old EJ Bradford was shot three times from behind by an officer in Hoover, Alabama. This incident barely made the news. In 2019, Willie McCoy, a 20-year-old rapper, was shot at 55 times by officers in Vallejo, California, as he lay sleeping in his car. His death also had failed to arrest prolonged attention.

This year 2020, bloody rioting across Mississippi's prison system had led to more than a dozen deaths. Yet, Trump was seen to have made no vital intervention. George Floyd, another Black man was suffocated to death after a brief interrogation and it was the Minnesota attorney general, Keith Ellison, who had intervened in the George Floyd case to elevate former officer Derek Chauvin's murder charge. Maybe the case would have been obliterated from public memory.

Few weeks later, protesters' demand of justice for Floyd was still on when another Black man was shot by a white police officer. The shooting left many in the city of Atlanta once again incensed by the death of yet another Black man at the hands of the police and the nation was nervous about the potential for more destructive flare-ups.

Protesters hit the streets again. Then authorities said 27-year-old Rayshard Brooks had run away from the police after failing a sobriety test and grabbing a taser from an officer during a struggle with him.

Still, Jacob Blake another African-American added to the list, shot seven times at the back by a police officer in

Wisconsin. Violence and police brutality continue to be the same story with just a different name.

With these events happening at the time when many Americans are angered by the fatalities from the coronavirus pandemic in the United States and a time when the statistics for America have climbed well above two million cases of COVID-19, the Trump administration may be faced with a transition into a new but dark era in the American history.

The curtains might have been raised in a ceremonial reception which welcomed Trump's presidency four years ago, but same curtains are on the verge of falling, if not having fallen already. America and its 'super power' status is threatened by a Trump leadership that has led the country into a vulnerable state to the chagrin of citizens and the global community.

No doubt that the night has fallen in America as the bloods of blacks have flooded its streets. Will the re-election of Trump – if he ever gets re-elected – bring change to the American polity? The question is left unanswered. Few days ago, during the Democratic National Convention's campaigns, former Vice President and Candidate of the party, Joe Biden had described this phase in the experience of the United States as one in which the country might be going through dark moments. While political and public-health darkness may have covered the landscape, the incumbent president might have continued to play the ostrich, carrying on with his ambitious second-term pursuit while the Star-Spangled Banner slowly burns down.

## Oustanding Careers

### **BABATUNDE AHONSI**



Few in Nigeria have contributed to the social and intellectual advancement of the country as much as Dr. Babatunde Ahonsi. The intensity and diversity of his interest in human development initiatives stands him out as someone difficult to overlook in national and global reckoning. From concerns with general life expectancy to care for pregnant and nursing women, to diseases that afflict children, scholarship and population studies, and to gender-related matters, he has impacted some segments of human life in more ways than one.

A renowned development expert, Babatunde Ahonsi holds the leadership baton of the United Nations Population Funds (UNFPA) in China, where he currently serves as the organisation's representative. The UNFPA is a United Nations health agency whose primary objective is to provide sexual and reproductive health support for mothers, children, and the elderly in partnership with national and regional governments, with an eye as well on global population issues.

As the representative of the UNFPA in China, he is tasked with providing leadership and guidance at different levels of the organisation. In partnership with the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he is also expected to pursue vigorously improvements in the sexual and reproductive health of people across China.

Of course, such responsibilities are not strange to Dr. Ahonsi, who had discharged similar tasks in Ghana for four years beginning from 23 January 2014.

Prior to joining the United Nations, he had impressively revolutionised the policy landscape of the Population Council having served as the Country Director for Nigeria, coordinating the overall programme and bringing about some unprecedented growth to the organisation. His twelve years at the West Africa Office of the Ford Foundation as the Senior Programme Officer were equally remarkable for his astonishing returns in terms of result stimulating strategies. He formulated strategies that spurred and helped to establish an apparent culture of enthusiasm in the response of national governments to outbreaks of diseases across the globe, and the proliferation of NGOs to defend women's right in West Africa. Dr. Ahonsi assisted in policy advocacy on sexual and reproductive health, gender equality, and environmental sustainability through the management of funds and technical support to both state and non-state agencies.

Dr. Ahonsi who has a robust background in sociological and demographic studies, has burnished his experience with over a decade of lectureship and research in the field. His first professional foray into teaching and





research was at the University of Ilorin in 1985 where he taught Sociology and Demography for three years. He later had stints at the University of Calabar in 1987, and the University of Lagos, in 1988. The sheer volume and diversity of his research and publications speak not just to his intellectual prowess but also to the fact that his international and global recognition is not without justification.

His interests, let it be said again, transcends academics. He has also passionately sought to promote education in sexuality and HIV/AIDS related subjects. Through his instrumentality, people afflicted with the dreaded virus have been educated to pursue a normal life and not to see their affliction as a death sentence. He has also collaborated with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Nigeria working on pro-poor, youth development and maternal health policies. In 1995, he became the World Bank-Robert McNamara Fellow a mere two years following his appointment as a Visiting Young Fellow at the Population Institute for Research and Training at Indiana University Bloomington, USA in 1993. In between, in 1994, he had also earned the CODESRIA Laureate at the First Gender Institute in Dakar, Senegal.

Dr. Ahonsi has served at different levels promoting human development. In 2010 he was appointed as a Trustee of the International Women's Health Coalition in New York, and in 2013, appointed into the External Advisory Group for the development of UNFPA's 2014-2017 Strategic Plan in New York. 2008 saw him on the Board of the UN University's International Institute for Global Health in Kuala Lumpur, and in 2002 he became a member of the Gender and Rights Advisory Panel of the WHO's Department of Reproductive Health & Research in Geneva.

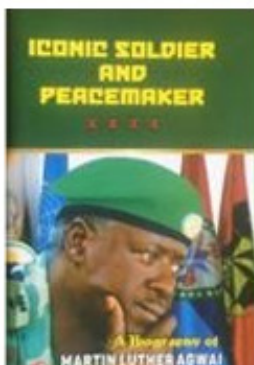
Babatunde Ahonsi distinguished himself as a first-class student during his undergraduate studies at the University of Lagos, Nigeria, and holds a PhD in Population Studies from the London School of Economics and Political Science on a 1992 Commonwealth Scholarship.



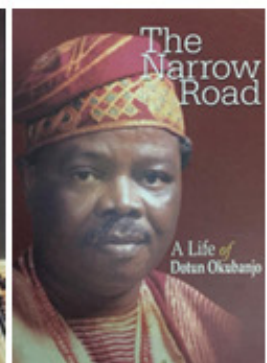
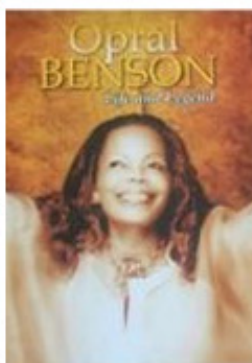
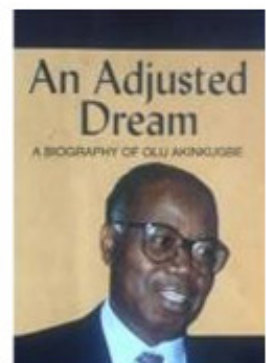
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## OPRAL BENSON

***Fashion Icon and Business Impresario***



*Opral Benson, also known as 'Iya Oge of Lagos', is the first woman to be awarded the title by a traditional ruler in Nigeria. She is an entrepreneur and business impresario. She studied at Morris Brown College, Atlanta, USA, for a Bachelor of Education degree and at the Atlanta University for a Masters in Educational Administration. She is a holder of many titles and awards including Commander of the Star of Africa bestowed on her by the President of Liberia which is her native country, and Member of the Order of the Niger (MON) and Order of the Niger (OON) awarded by the President of Nigeria.*

### PRIMARY CONCERNS

I wasn't interested in make-up while growing up. I never saw it as an issue to bother myself with. My major challenge was the desire to grow quickly and become a woman to be reckoned with, one who would make a positive contribution to the society. I wanted to acquire the necessary training required to make an impact on

people's lives. I craved to be looked upon as someone people had learnt from. That, however, did not make me overbearing or assertive against authorities. Taking to my father's ways, I did things as I saw them and went along with whatever I had to do.

Much was passed on to me by my father in the area of behaviour. The values of gratitude, respect for elders, contentment, diligence, honesty and compassion for others were instilled in me early. They are the things that have made me who I am today. In all I do, I try to be exemplary.

### MEMORABLE MOMENTS

I have never consciously gone out of my way to label the events of my life as most memorable or most devastating. I flow along in whatever situation I find myself, trying to do things for myself. I treasure the memories of my childhood, being with my parents, growing up, making friends, and going to parties.





*Young Oprah Benson*



*At Morris Brown College in the USA.*

Those, for me, were memorable moments. I do things with passion in order to get them accomplished. I do not know anything that was or is special; everything I have done is what I have planned to do, without giving room for regrets about the past as this only causes heartaches. My dreams about education, marriage, family life and career have been realised. I know there is a God who is watching and helping me to decide, make up my mind about what to do and get things done. I also think there is a guardian angel somewhere who helps people to plan things and I feel lucky and satisfied that I have been able to execute my personal plans. Unlike many people, I do not feel that I have lost out on a lot of things. I believe in Providence, holding firm to the belief that whatever I have not achieved is not meant for me. In that way, I live a simple, happy life.

#### **FROM MONROVIA TO THE US**

After my primary education, I went to Monrovia, capital of Liberia, where I lived with my sister and had my secondary education. She was also morally conscious, having undergone the same training under our parents, but she was not as stringent as they were. Being in a city, life acquired another meaning for me. There was much

life and gaiety, as well as the availability of many things that were not present in the small community where I began the journey of life.

Subsequently, I travelled to the United States for my undergraduate studies and bagged a Bachelor of Education from Morris Brown College, an African Methodist Episcopal School in Atlanta. After that, I went for my Master's in Educational Administration at Atlanta University before returning to Liberia. I studied Education because I felt I would put it to good use in the lives of the little ones in my community. A year later, I went back to the states to acquire some literacy in music. I got a diploma in that from a university and then moved to Pittsburgh University to improve on my administrative skills.

Having acquired all this formal training, I felt I needed something else. I liked hairdressing so I took a course in it. It was my belief that I would need it someday, having always had an interest in the beauty industry and the arts. Besides, I felt that I would be able to do my hair on my own. I wanted to have as many qualifications as possible.





*Oprah, truly larger than life. Mr. Harold Macmillan, former British Prime Minister, admires a sculpted portrait of an outstanding African woman. This was in 1979 in the studio of Oscar Nemon in Oxford, UK,*

Going to the States exposed me to many things. At that time, there were many Americans in Liberia and many Liberians went to the US to study. The relationship was the type obtainable between Great Britain and pre-independent Nigeria. The things I had read and learnt about the States became incontrovertibly real. Before then, I had only seen them represented in movies and books. However, I was not overexcited at the sight of the monuments. Somewhat introverted, I am calm and composed, not reacting to things unnecessarily. As a secondary school student, I had friends whom I visited, went to the library, visited relatives, went to parties and other social events. However, none of these made me talkative or domineering. Although people do not really agree that I am an introvert, I think I am.

While in Atlanta, I experienced racism too. Restaurants, schools, churches, buses, etc., for the blacks were different from the ones for whites. It was really a social problem. However, once the whites found out that I was not from America they changed their attitude. That notwithstanding, there were limits to the places one could go. The society was divided into two distinct classes. What I did was to be in company of my African friends, not allowing the discriminatory attitudes to bother me. The church I attended belonged to the father of Martin Luther King, Jnr, who worked to give voice to the noble

struggle and underground activities of different groups and organisations. King championed the cause for civil equality. He wrote a book, 'Strive towards Freedom', in which he tried to educate blacks on how to conduct themselves in order to earn the respect they craved. I had high esteem for him because he was all out to right the wrongs in the society. Meeting him, I saw him as a man who had brilliant ideas. Unfortunately, he was killed before his dreams were realised.

Blacks dominated the schools I attended. However, I had a few white friends. On one occasion, I went to places with two of them where blacks were not accepted but because they were with me. I avoided being arrested. In that way, I demonstrated that we were not supposed to be judged on the basis of our skin colour. Some of the experiences were similar to ones I had in Monrovia when I was in secondary school.

I used to be very good at English. One Friday, our English teacher (who doubled as the principal) assigned us to write essays over the weekend and hand them in on Monday. However, I did not do mine. I thought that it would not be collected until Tuesday. To prove me wrong, he came to our class on Monday and I was the first person to be called out to read her essay. I rose, took my notebook and gallantly walked to the front of the class.



*Opra Benson in a dance with TOS Benson*

Everyone was so impressed by my reading that I received thunderous applause. The teacher then requested that I hand in my notebook and discovered that I hadn't written anything. For that, I was nicknamed Sister Fox. From then on, I was taken for somebody who could do things without planning to do so previously. Till today, there are still those who refer to me as Sister Fox.

### **A HUMBLE BEGINNING**

My grandfather was one of the immigrants who came from the US to settle in Liberia. He came there as a boy, grew up there and continued there as an adult. He built a house in South Carolina Road, a street on Masor Hill, so named because most of the immigrants who came during that era of Liberia's history came from South Carolina.

Unlike my grandfather, however, my parents were born in Liberia and grew up there. They, a paternal uncle, and my grandfather formed a little community on the hill, each having one of the three houses that were on it. It was a place generally called Hartington and it was there I emerged the sixth of seven children on 7 February, 1935.

My parents were strong disciplinarians, holding firm to the principles of the Christian faith that they had embraced. Growing up was interesting for me because there were many people in the house and we were given the opportunity to learn a lot of things. My parents,

in spite of our having some house helps, tolerated no idleness of any form. Household chores were shared among us and we enjoyed doing our work, playing together, with occasional moments of disagreements and quarrelling.

There was no pipe-borne water or electricity, luxuries of a modern age that no one would expect in such a remote settlement at that time. We fetched water in buckets from a stream down the hill, not far from our house. With buckets balanced on our heads, we hurried up the hill. In the evenings we usually went out to sing, dance, and play together. We were happy although we knew nothing about modern amenities. There was only one primary school in the area. It was owned by an aunt of mine. It was called African Methodist Day School. My aunt was assisted by only one lady. She ensured that everyone who came paid their fees early enough, the relationship between them notwithstanding. It was there I had my elementary education, subjected to the rigorous training and discipline of a woman who disregarded the relationship between her and my father to do her work the way it should be done. One thing she particularly attached importance to was homework. She never cared whose ox was gored when it came to this. She frequently made reference to her son, Valentine, on whom her rod was not spared when he did not conform to her required standards. Their house was across the street from us and very early in the morning we would hear him crying, running around the compound without books. Having a strict aunt for a teacher, I got beaten several times for either failing to master my rhymes or not doing my homework. That, coupled with the training I received at home, instilled in me a high sense of discipline which has endured till date.

Growing up, I had a cordial relationship with my elder and younger siblings. Benedict was the eldest, followed by Myrtle. The others are Agnes, Melvin, Lilly-Mac and Demosthenes, the last. None of us was born in a maternity centre or hospital. There was a midwife in the community through whose services pregnant women put to bed in their houses.

Father, Mr. Johnson Boto Mason, wielded much influence on me. He was what one might call a Justice of the Peace who settled problems within the community. He was calm and confident, not allowing anything to bother him. He was not a man who got distressed or weighed down by problems. However, my mother, Mrs.



*The Young Oprah Benson*

Lilly Melissa Mason, was the type who was ready to push anything to happen. She was decisive and active.

Although I cannot say I was closer to my father, I took to his ways more, especially in dealing with issues. As a girl, any day I was not active enough, I would say, 'I am playing my father today.' I also learnt from the diligence of my mother; she always found something to do. There was a very good relationship between us and their joint efforts in instilling discipline in us have yielded lasting results.

### **WHAT IS IN A NAME?**

It was my aunt, the proprietor of African Methodist Day School, who named all of us. Educated at Wilberforce University, Ohio in the US, she was the first degree-holder in Hartington. On completing her education, she came back to establish the primary school as an expression of her passion for the development of the community.

She named me Opal after the precious stone. However, as I grew up, I was not comfortable with it. To start with, I felt that I was not precious to anyone since I was the sixth of seven children. Besides, I felt I was too tender in nature, and not as hard as a stone. So, I asked, 'What can I do with this name?' I discarded the idea of changing it. Instead, I decided to add an 'r' between the 'p' and the 'a' and the result sounded pleasant to my ears.

Many, especially in Nigeria, mistake that name for Oprah, taking the famous American lady, Oprah Winfrey, for a namesake. But their calling me Oprah does not change my name – we are two different ladies: she is wealthy while I am not; she is a renowned international figure while I am a humble African woman. However, I admire her self-confidence; her excellence in everything she does, her comportment and the respect accorded to her worldwide.

### **A TEACHER OF TEACHERS**

My first work experience was teaching in Liberia. However, I did not teach for long because my employer, the Ministry of Education, made me a supervisor teacher a year after. My duty was to inspect elementary schools in Monrovia and assess teachers based on their teaching methods and aids, and then teach them the latest methods most relevant to the profession.

When I started, I was referred to as JJC (Johnny just come)! Because they were much older than me, they





*The Iya Oge*

claimed that they had been in the profession before I was born. They felt that I was using my American education to intimidate them. It was challenging because I had to teach teachers and not pupils. I made them understand that it was not my intention to lord it over them simply because I studied overseas. I made friends with them and in my interaction with them explained the changes in the educational system and the effective modern methods and aids of teaching.

Subsequent to that, I was appointed an Administrator (a position similar to that of a Permanent Secretary in Nigeria) in the Ministry of Agriculture, Commerce and Labour. The three ministries (separate now) were like departments then, and it was my responsibility to coordinate their activities and report directly to the Minister. Through me, he got detailed information of what was going on in each department. He was the one who actually invited me because he felt I was good and had bright ideas, having been educated overseas. My experience in the ministry working directly with the Minister, Steven Tolbert, opened my eyes to a lot of things.

In those days, government functionaries were not preoccupied with thoughts of how they could amass wealth for their selfish ends. There was no corruption. Everybody was concerned about how they could contribute their best to move the country forward.

## MEETING MY LOVE

Before I met my husband, I had been looking for my Mr Right, just as he was searching for his ideal lady. In 1961, he came to Liberia with the then Nigerian Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, for a conference. He said he found the ideal he wanted in a woman in me and I also fell in love with him. We courted for a time and in 1962 we wedded. We were together for forty-five years and he cherished family life, although he had experiences in other marriages before we met.

Unlike me, he was not a disciplinarian. He was kind, friendly and forgiving. He had a long career in government, politics and law, his profession. The slight differences between us notwithstanding, we shared mutual love, understanding and respect. We had regard for each other's individuality and values. I have one daughter and a few stepchildren my husband had before our union and were brought up by me. They are all grown up and doing well. My husband is a Yoruba and, as it is generally said, one does not count another man's children for him.

Precious, my daughter, is a journalist and is also into information technology. At the moment she is preparing an information brochure about West Africa. She has established a magazine and more or less works for herself. There is a very good relationship between us, just as there is with the other children.

## AT HOME IN NIGERIA

About two and half years of work experience in Liberia, I came to Nigeria. I found it bigger and much more developed. My first appointment was as the Registrar at the University of Lagos. I worked there for about ten years. I saw to the problems of accommodation, feeding, extracurricular activities, scholarships and the like. After the stated period, I worked with the staff department before becoming the secretary to the council and senate of the university. After ten years I decided to retire and go into private business.

I established Chic Afrique. I had a boutique and a beauty salon at Yaba and another boutique at Falomo Shopping Centre, which I later turned into a private agency. The beauty salon is now a beauty school, Chic Afrique Beauty Company. I was also into beauty consulting for some time, trying to promote beauty products and educating people on which ones to use and how to use them. I bought into a cosmetics manufacturing firm



*Opra Benson*

called Johnson's Products. The vision behind Chic Afrique was to share with others what I like personally, special clothing and beauty on the whole. I like things that lift one's spirits. At the moment, for instance, we are promoting Africanism through our dresses and what we make. We are conscious of our values in our designs and it is our intention to portray a beautiful image of Africa to the world. The fashion industry has made a big impact on the Nigerian public. Because of their distinct dressing, they are easily identified in places. However, there is a problem the African woman has in her dressing and adornment. In her effort to be gorgeous, she goes excessive sometimes, being altogether flamboyant. At other times she under-dresses.

I started a travel agency named Bits International Travels and Tours, and added an NGO called Outreach Foundation to my entrepreneurial concerns. Its main purpose is to give scholarships and loans to women in rural areas in order to get them economically empowered. The idea struck me when I attended a conference for women in 1995 and discovered that many Asian women were involved in micro-credit schemes.

With a passion to reach out to women, I have been very much involved with lots of NGO activities. Some years ago, a foundation in New York asked me to set up something for them in Nigeria. It was supposed to be an environmental NGO because they were interested in the environment. It was called Foundation for Environmental Developmental Education in Nigeria. We conducted lots of training on environmental matters with participants from different countries. It is now an associate of an organisation called LEAD International. It is affiliated to several other African groups which do the same thing. We organised different seminars that border on the environment, both nationally and internationally.

I am an ex-President of Zonta, an international body of women in businesses and different professions working together to improve the lives of others. It is a selfless organisation. It is not meant for the elite but for business and professional women who want to contribute to the lives of others. If a woman has reached an executive level in whatever she does, she is invited. Membership is strictly by invitation – people cannot join at will.

I am also the current President of African Refugee Foundation established by Ambassador Olusola. I am interested in the welfare of refugees because they are not in any sense subhuman. We hold workshops and organise different kinds of fora for their welfare. In conjunction with UNHCR, I have been actively involved in helping refugees over the years. I have also served on some international peace committees.

Although there have been challenges to get things done over the years, I have a sense of accomplishment. I am retiring from the beauty institute bit by bit and I do not nurture fresh dreams about the future. I am done and I think I deserve some rest.

*Opra Benson is described as a dazzling fashion icon and socialite. She runs one of the biggest fashion houses in Nigeria. She continues to run The Opra Benson Fashion Institute, a platform which has trained young beauticians, fashion designers for over 35 years.*

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