

A map of Nigeria is shown, divided into its various states. Each state is a different color and labeled with its name. The states labeled include Sokoto, Katsina, Niger, Kaduna, Bauchi, Plateau, Kwara, FCT Abuja, Nassarawa, Oyo, Kogi, Benue, Osun, Ekiti, Enugu, Ebonyi, Lagos, Ondo, Edo, Anambra, Imo, Abia, Cross River, Delta, Rivers, Akwa Ibom, and Bayelsa. A large, bold, white text with a black outline is superimposed over the map, reading "ONLY IN NIGER".

**ONLY IN NIGER**

.....Elsewhere in Amer

**Chapter 6: Nigeria, an enigma – Best and the worst**

**Chapter 7: ‘Big Name’ Syndrome. No Place like Nigeria!**

## **COMPLIMENTARY NOTES**

In “**What The People Say – Reactions**”, we published some of our readers’ reactions to our first publication “Only in Nigeria” (Vol. 1). Most of the reactions were quite positive, in the sense that the majority of our readers, who wrote, overwhelmingly supported our ‘stand’ on these serious issues touching all Nigerians as well as our fatherland. The same wide reactions have greeted the appearance of the second volume of our work.

Here we like to publish some of the earlier letters of encouragement we received as well as new ones. We acknowledge these readers’ contributions to our work by publishing their comments.

### **Another bomb shell!**

Concerned Nigerians who did not read the Vol. 1 of Only in Nigeria should not worry so much. This **Vol. 2** is another bomb shell more devastating than the first. It takes a lot of talent, time and courage to produce this type of work. Nigerians wake up from your slumber! Let us mend our lives. Bravo Father Ndiokwere! (Ichie Muoneke C. O).

Stop and read it! Blow the trumpet in Zion!

Can Nigerians read the signs of the time? Has the moment of decision not arrived? “Set the trumpet to your lips. The vulture hovers over the house of Yahweh, because they have broken my covenant and transgressed my law” (Hosea 8. 1) “Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly...let priests, the ministers of the Lord weep. .Why should it be said among the peoples: ‘where is your God?’”(Evangelist Fidelis Aguh)

### **Tour de force**

Another of Rev. Fr. Ndiokwere’s *tour de force* – informative and educative...a vivid picture of our social life – some part very sad, some part humorous ...a compendium for all Nigerians, in Nigeria and in the Diaspora from age 15. Read it and react!

(*Mbachu C. Godwin Educationist and Rtd School Principal.*)

### **The language Nigerians understand**

Father Ndiokwere has a way. He has the knack and the style of saying the truth in an euphemistic way. In his column in The Forum Newspaper “Only in Nigeria”, Fr. Ndiokwere puts the truth in a simple humorous way, offending neither Eve nor Adam and yet makes his point.

Just like a joke, but in reality not one; saying serious things in unserious ways and with amiable words. non-fiction written as if it were fiction. That is the type of language Nigerians understand only too well. It is native to them and reminiscences of Chinua Achebe's literary ways. I mean, as the Igbo would say "Ebe a na-ama Njakiri, ka a na-ekwu Eziokwu". [Truth is often couched in jokes.]

*(Rev. Fr. Nonso Odiaka CSSP)*

Worthwhile undertaking

Ndiokwere is right! Nigeria is like the proverbial wealthy man's house. There, you find excellence! There, you also find mediocrity as well as imbecility. Only In Nigeria do such extremes seem to dwell amicably side-by-side. But does that not challenge us to the very possible betterment? Nigerians arise! Let us show the world that it is only in Nigeria that men do actually and successfully wriggle out of such impossible situations.

That, for me, could be the best lesson we can draw from this "Worthwhile Undertaking". That may have been the propelling intent of Ndiokwere's **Only in Nigeria**. *(Rev. Fr. Dr. Chibuike Ukeh)*

### **A pandemic case of individual and national concern**

This is another of Rev. Fr. Dr. Ndiokwere's series. A well-packaged exposition, thrilling, informing, touching, and revealing indisputable realities and episodes of our time in Nigeria. A pandemic case of individual and national concern. A call for total solemn recollection, reflection and radical ethical reorientation by all Nigerians. A reminder of their onerous responsibilities of the mainstream institutions – **NOA, EFCC, ICPA** – Courts, Churches and others, where offenders shall face the wrath of the law with no sacred cows.

As generally complained earlier, most readers who missed some editions of The Forum Newspaper where these numerous writes-up were published will now be happy to get the ensemble 'Only in Nigeria'. The author is commended for his wisdom and ingenuity. Many will candidly find the book an indispensable compendium for every household, the operators and counselors in government, businesses, schools and churches. *(Sir Ben Aleme – Educationist, Union Leader)*

### **Copies for friends and libraries**

"Only in Nigeria" is a welcome development. Those of us who missed some parts of the series will be happy to collect some copies for our library and friends. Surely, Father Ndiokwere has joined the Achebes and Wole Soyinkas in x-raying Nigeria's life style.

*(Sir Hyacinth Chukwu [KSJ] – Educationist)*

### **The simple truth in deed**

Is what Father Ndiokwere saying true or is he manufacturing falsehood? No one who read Fr. Ndiokwere's book "Only in Nigeria" will have any doubt in his mind about where Nigeria is heading to. Quite serious topics treated in a way that all – young and old can comprehend and get worried. Do not miss a copy of this book. "Only in Nigeria" is must read for youths and leaders of tomorrow.

*(Constancia Amagba – University Student)*

### **An important document**

Thank God I can have these important topics as a book. I got worried each time I missed an issue of The Forum Newspaper. Perhaps "Only in Nigeria" featured and I missed it! Fellow Nigerians we possess an important document that will help us think twice and change our strange attitudes. *(Rev. Sister Mary Nkechi)*

### **Lucid and admirable**

In an admirable, lucid and straight forward manner, Rev. Father Dr. N. I. Ndiokwere has in this book laid bare some aspects of our social life which reveal the extent to which things have gone awry in Nigeria, and the need for something urgent to be done to reverse the ugly trend.

As this book is educative, it is recommended not only to students and all Nigerians, but also to the relevant Agencies of the Federal, State and Local Governments whose responsibility it is to re-orientate the people. All may find its contents very useful. *(Barrister R.E. Ekwuatu)*

Indispensable manual for Nigerians and visitors to Nigeria

Dr. Ndiokwere's book "Only in Nigeria" is not for Nigerians only. Visitors to Nigeria must lay their hands on this book. It will serve a useful purpose. It is a manual that must be read and carefully preserved for regular reflection and recollection.

*(Chief N. I. Nnabuike – Educationist)*

### **Our leaders must read this book**

The Book **Only in Nigeria** should be circulated to all parts of Nigeria, to government offices for all those who run the affairs of this country to read. This book must be found in all university libraries. No Nigerian who cares about the future of our fatherland can afford to ignore the contents of this book. It is time we Nigerians stopped a while and think about what is happening to us.

*(Ngozi Uchendu – University student)*

What of the Judiciary?

**Only in Nigeria** has to some extent succeeded in unveiling some of these 'cankerworms' among us. But alas! It has only scratched the surface of the Nigerian ills, namely "**What is wrong with Nigeria.**" What of the Judiciary? The author has not yet visited that area. There, too there are many skeletons in

the wardrobe. There is need for us Nigerians to think again and change our lifestyles.

*(Chris Okey – Lawyer)*

A requiem: a funeral for Nigeria?

I am sure we are not yet singing the **Requiem** for Nigeria. Nigeria may one day wake up and begin to change for the better. But for the future of our children and the younger generation we all must join the author to continue to scotch the dangerous snake. Perhaps it will come out of hiding, get enough exposure and then be over-powered or killed! I felt bad and depressed after reading this book. But I believed things must change.

*(Anthony Anyanwu – Rtd. Civil servant and community leader)*

“Only in Nigeria on the Internet?”

Some chapters of Only in Nigeria should be placed on the Internet for wider circulation and also for Nigerians in Diaspora to read and appreciate. Nigerians, home and abroad, should be worried about these evils found in every nook and cranny of our society.*(Uju Okeruo – University student)*

### **Our leaders must think again**

The decay in Nigeria is nauseating. We are consciously aware that it is **Only in Nigeria** that people climb to their desired heights with a ladder, turn back push the ladder down only to try to jump from that height on their way back to base. This is both the reality and irony of the Nigerian system as depicted in our leaders.

It will surely be **Only in Nigeria** that people who benefited from the glory of mission schools in the past have turned round to destroy the very institutions that nurtured them and made them what they are today. I pity the future generation of Nigerians because as the Latin adage says - **Nemo dat quod non habet**, no one can give what he has not. The future is very bleak. Anyone who thinks otherwise should have his head examined because this country has been ravaged by its leaders and not by the led.

*(Obi E. – Educationist and community leader)*

### **Our examination system**

For many years now, examinations in Nigeria have turned out to be a scramble for certificates, and no longer true assessment of the individual's abilities and capabilities. I hate to say this. Exam in Nigeria is a sham! When will our leaders and examiners learn to shun bribery and corruption? Only in Nigeria has exposed the ills rocking this sector of our revered institution. It is sad to note that there may not be an end in sight.*(Uchenna Onwunali – student)*

## INTRODUCTION

For most Nigerians at home, America is a paradigm, a typical example that serves as a pattern or model for doing things, lifestyle that should be copied, and which in methodology - theory and practice - forms the basis for success. America is the Promised Land that must be visited and if possible adopted as a second home. A lot of people look for 'avenues', some legal, others rough and dangerous to enter America. Some are lucky to gain entrance through the annual visa lottery system; others through students' visa program for studies or business enterprises. Most Nigerians who live and work in America today, like their counterparts from other parts of the world, have come in search of greener pastures. And the number is huge.

Wealthy Nigerians and families who can afford the price spend summer or winter vacations in America to get a taste of the wonderland called America. Most ambitious Nigerian families who don't want to take chances make sure that their pregnant wives purchase an automatic American citizenship for their children born in any American city. Hundreds of Nigerian pregnant mothers visit America regularly to be delivered of their babies in America, not in Nigeria. So through most of these avenues thousands and maybe millions of Nigerians live in America today. No one knows the exact number.

But whether the America of our dreams is really as 'beautiful' and 'sweet' as that is a story every individual can narrate, and thereby prove to those who have not experienced America that it is worth all the pains entering and settling in America, briefly or for a longer period of time, or forever. America is a land of opportunities. There is no type of risk citizens sharing borders with America do not undertake to cross over to the United States of America. New arrivals in America believe there are always opportunities for them to earn a living there. There are lots of (mean) jobs for foreigners in America.

All we are saying is that America is not a strange land to many poorer citizens of many nations of the world including Nigerians, young and old. So for those who have visited or are preparing to visit, the refrain '**If it is in America'...**'As it is done in America...' sounds pleasantly like an old elementary school rhyme or poem.

We carefully selected the title of our book: "**Only in Nigeria...Elsewhere in America**"...because we strongly believe our story will make better sense if this comparison is borne in mind. Unfortunately for Nigerians, home and in the Diaspora, and perhaps too, for citizens of other nations residing in America or at home, the **American Dream**, source of attraction to the wonderland is not being realized elsewhere, in these other nations or the world. It would have been ideal to 'export' to the original land of our births those good things we discover in

America, methods of doing things, their economic, political, social, cultural and religious values that have made America great. **NOT** all the values embedded in the **American dreams** should really be considered worthy of emulation or exportation. We can only draw from those that can affect the lives of our people positively, bring peace, unity, justice, and freedom, for which Americans are proud of their country.

Since the publication of the first volume of our book **ONLY IN NIGERIA** about 6 years ago, not much has changed in our country, Nigeria. We have all along been praying for our fatherland to look beautiful and enjoyable as America so that the mass exodus of Nigerians from their fatherland and immigration to America would stop. We believe strongly that our leaders have not lived up to expectations and that our country has been in distress.

“Prayers for Nigeria in Distress” (*Ekpere maka Nigeria no na nsogbu*), have been composed by our church leaders, who also ordered that these prayers should be recited in churches by the faithful asking God to have mercy on our fatherland. Later “*Prayer against Bribery and Corruption*” has been added. This particular petition was part of the desperate efforts by Christian believers invoking God’s intervention to stop or at least to minimize bribery and corruption and all corrupt practices in Nigeria (*Awufu, Ngari, Wuruwuru*). We did not stop at prayers. We have been fasting and putting on sack cloths. We have been lamenting. We have continued to raise alarm pointing out some consequences of our evil deeds and unrepentant hearts that have brought a lot of suffering on the masses.

Bribery and all shades of corrupt practices have continued to thrive and have indeed affected most sectors of our economy and institutions. There is no need to name them. Asked whether things have changed in Nigeria since the last five years or so, an angry Nigerian teenager snapped: “No, not in the least. Things have gotten worse. And I still want to leave this country!” The young man, a secondary school drop-out, is one of the tens of thousands of Nigerians still in-search-of Greener Pastures elsewhere outside Nigeria. He has been duped several times by Nigeria con men who promised him better life outside Nigeria. He would have liked to be dumped somewhere in the Sahara Desert if he had an opportunity.

So, not much has changed for most Nigerians even years after the so-called democratic elections which ushered in an era of democratic rule were first held in late nineties. If things have not really “gotten worse” why have Nigerian young men and women continued to abandon their fatherland in search of better life elsewhere?

Our story points out the numerous contradictions most Nigerians have to put up with when they consider how they are told that things are done in America, and looking around them in their fatherland are faced with insurmountable problems. Why do Nigerians, including those Nigerian leaders who received their education in America perform differently and poorly when

they return to Nigeria and take up the mantle of leadership? Only a tiny percentage of Nigerian leaders, less than 2% have not studied or visited America or England.

We need to consider too, hundreds of thousands of other Nigerians, professionals and non-professional who have studied, lived in America and England but do not live up to expectations when they visit their fatherland or take up offices and businesses in Nigeria afterwards. A few examples can serve the introductory part of our story.

## **Politics and political systems**

Nigeria has selected among so many systems of government, the *American Presidential System*. Wonderful! How does it work **in Nigeria...and elsewhere in America?**

**In Nigeria**, elections are rigged. They are never free, fair, or credible. Violence makes nonsense of the exercise. Litigations follow and can last for months. No candidate accepts defeat. There are too many anomalies to report. We all know them. **In America**, elections are free, fair and credible. There is no violence. Defeated candidates embrace and congratulate their ‘bitter enemies’.

**In America** ‘*Primaries*’ are important part of the electoral process. The screening process of political aspirants is stiff. Many televised public debates are scheduled before a final selection is made. Those that have skeletons in closets drop by the wayside and are rarely seen again in political arenas. They don’t want their ‘sins’ to be further exposed to the public. **In Nigeria**, ‘*Primaries*’ are done by selection. The better a candidate is connected to the godfathers of political parties, the better chances of winning an election. The best candidates rarely qualify for political offices.

**In America**, if one defaults in payment of taxes, there is trouble. Political aspirants are vulnerable. **In Nigeria**, payment of taxes has little or no place in politics or public office. Once, the British man, Richard Darden put the rhetorical question to his Nigerian audience during his address during the independence anniversary. All his listeners shamefully kept mute and unruffled when he observed: **“I don’t think I have ever met a very influential and/or rich Nigerian who pays a direct tax. Is there anyone here?”** No one raised his hand! No one challenged the British man warning him to withdraw his statement. He couldn’t be lying. Definitely he was not kidding!

## **Ethics – theory & practice**

What baffles most Nigerians who have not even been to America or Europe is the way their brothers and sisters who have been to the white man’s land and must have embraced at least their correct social behavior or bits of right ethical conduct behave. Most of them behave like villagers who have not even visited

any large city in Nigeria. It looks like immediately these leave the borders of their land of sojourn and enter their fatherland, Nigeria, they switch over to their bad social ills. They stick to the principle of social conduct – “*When in Rome, do like the Romans*”; In America, keep to the rules; in Nigeria, don’t care a dime.

**In America**, ‘queue up’ is the rule. Queue up for food, to vote, at the cashier, at the train, bus station, at the airport. Take your turn. You don’t need to struggle. It makes things easy. It is the epitome of civilized life. Wait for your turn. One who ignores this sacred code of conduct makes himself a fool.

**In Nigeria**, things are turned upside down. Life is chaotic. It is **only in Nigeria** that the paradox "**The first shall be the last**" assumes its literal meaning. If your number is **ONE**, surely the first person expected to enter the bus or airplane, if the number of your seat or ticket is **TEN**, take care to struggle; otherwise you lose both your seat and number assigned to you! Someone who arrived late, who came last, who had no number may grab your position. **In Nigeria**, people (men and women, young and old) struggle for everything. **Elsewhere** the statement "**The first shall be the last**" expresses something seemingly absurd and foolish, yet in reality can be true.

In **Volume One** of **Only in Nigeria**, we wept uncontrollably for our beloved country, seeing how the situation within and outside our borders has continued to deteriorate. We tried telling our story of “**Nigeria Today**”, using some poetic imageries and lamentation genre, to whip up sympathy for a change of heart from all and sundry. The project has not been a failure! That’s why we have published an online copy of **Only in Nigeria (Vol. 1)** for those who missed the hard copy.

The feedback we so far received, through letters and comments, and twitters have added color to our discussion about Nigeria and her citizens anywhere. Most compatriots who have read our book, while expressing sadness or anger agree with us, but at the same time expressing regret that likely the situation may not change so soon for the better. Our leaders, particularly our law-makers are not showing any change of heart. Their utterances as they debate the future of Nigeria don’t give encouraging signs that they have the unity and peace of the nation at heart. This is regrettable.

Two young Nigerian youths, one writing from a place called **Newfoundland** and the other from **Ecuador** expressed their emotions this way: “**We here are not faring better than our mates at home. We are suffering in silence here, paying the prize for our collective guilt, for the sins of our leaders at home**” Truly, most Nigerians who flee their fatherland in search of greener pastures in Europe, America and Asia are not finding it easy. All that glitters is not gold. One young Nigerian man who returned from **Spain** told his friends who thought he was so fortunate to be **Spain**. He told his admirers “It is

very painful to live in **Spain**". **Spain** is another name for '**pain**' he insisted. If you want more **pains**, you can come to **Spain!**"

There is no part of the world today one may not find a Nigerian youth, from the tiny islands of the Pacific to the scorching deserts of the Far East. Those who fail 'to make it' and fast too, through perseverance and hard work, have usually resorted 'to making it' through 'crook and means'. And it has never been a success story. Unable to grab the illusive wealth of their dreams, some, gravely depressed, have opted to return home. Others find themselves in prison cells.

Many patriotic Nigerians are however, not giving in to frustrations. We are trying to arouse the emotions of Nigerians, who care, stimulate their lachrymal glands so that they can join in the search for solutions to our problems. Nigeria may regain consciousness. It is a time for sober reflection, and as well time to plead for forgiveness.

Lord, why hast thou smitten us so that there is no healing for us? We looked for peace, but no good came; for a time of healing, but behold, terror. We acknowledge our wickedness, O Lord, and the iniquity of our fathers, for we have sinned against thee. (Jeremiah: 17- 19: 21)

Our worries about the future of our fatherland overwhelm us. Many questions continue to hang around: "Why should a land and people blessed with so many human and material resources continue to perform below standard compared with other nations of the world? When will the ugly situation change for the better?" At last most of the Nigeria's intractable problems are traced to the leadership: "The problem of leadership in a troubled nation!" So the lamentation continues.

The truth which no well informed Nigerian can shy away from is that corruption has become a real burden on the economy and it should be the only priority item on the table of any serious government. Any gains made by government from the oil sectors will always be stolen and the culprits walk around in freedom. Today there are countless probe reports with names of those who swindled our country of several trillions of both naira and foreign currencies still living in Nigeria either walking freely around the corridors of power or directly holding public or political offices rather than being in jail. There is reason to panic.

### **Acknowledgements**

It is not possible to acknowledge here our indebtedness to all who in various ways have contributed to this study. But certain names must be mentioned. I must express my gratitude to Mr. Bartholomew A. Duru and his wife Sophia Chinwe Duru for the best conducive atmosphere for intellectual work and

research which they usually provide me in their home at Bakersfield, California whenever I visited the United States. This work was completed in their home during my last Sabbatical leave.

Best regards to my great friends Herbert Akwaja, Fathers Chibuiké Ukeh, Brendan Diribe, Finnian Nwaozor, and many others whose fellowship and experiences I have immensely enjoyed. I will not fail to express very sincere thanks to Sir Godwin Mbachu, a veteran school teacher and mentor, who proof-read and meticulously corrected most of the errors which still showed up after the typesetting of the work.

I sincerely thank many of my readers and friends who consistently pressed for the publication of *Volume 2 of Only in Nigeria*. I thank the management of *The Leader* and *Forum* newspapers for reproducing some of the chapters of this work in some issues of their widely read Catholic newspapers in Nigeria.

**N. I. NDIOKWERE**

## **Chapter Summaries**

### **Chapter 1: No place to hide**

Many Nigerians, together with foreigners think that it is awful living in Nigeria. The fact that the Exodus of Nigerians, young and old from their fatherland has continued unabated proves that the situation has continued to deteriorate. Nigerians immigrate to many remote parts of the world in search of greener pastures, when luxuriant ones are left to rot away at home. But that is only part of the story. Even in their *'New-found-homes'* and *'Promised land'*, Nigerians don't feel comfortable or welcome. They must suffer a lot of humiliation in the hands of the police and ordinary people who don't like their presence in their country. Something has terribly gone wrong. There is no place to hide.

### **Chapter 2: In the midst of chaos Nigeria trudges on**

Many pundits, within and outside Nigeria have for long predicted the disintegration of the nation. Things are really not rosy there. In terms of crimes and other detestable influences Nigeria is not worse than many other countries, developed and undeveloped. But Nigeria has however suffered a lot of setbacks and crises that could have resulted in a total collapse. Often in an apparent state of confusion and disorder Nigeria continues to *tick*; in other words continues to function as a nation. The states and ethnic groups continue to stick together. What keeps Nigeria trudging on baffles many skeptics.

### **Chapter 3: Addressing the kidnapping problem in Nigeria: From "*Boko Haram*" to "*Biko Haam*"**

Elsewhere, kidnapping of people for various reasons is never a new phenomenon. But in Nigeria it has become a real *business*. Nigerians who must visit their fatherland for obvious reasons, like burial of loved ones, or spend Christmas vacation in the village are always gripped with fear as mere thought of landing in the village for a few days for burial ceremonies or have nice time with families and neighbors scares them. The kidnapping spree in Nigeria has become a serious bugging issue. . In the Southern States of Nigeria the ***Boko Haram*** has its 'counter-part terrorist organization, known in Igbo as '***Biko Haam***' (*Please release me*). In other words, '*May you not kill me. Take the huge ransom offered and let me go!*) Please spare my life. Most often this plea for mercy in the hands of kidnappers is heeded to only after a huge amount of money has been paid in ransom by the relatives of kidnapped victims.

### **Chapter 4: State of insecurity – Bakassi Boys re-visited**

As part of the search for solutions to Nigeria's security problems compounded by the rise of Boko Haram terrorism and surge in kidnapping extravaganza this study may likely gain some important consideration in the eyes of many Nigerians. In the eyes of many the once *Bakassi Boys*' security outfit may eventually prove a useful option if peace would ever reign again in Nigeria. This is a popular opinion shared by many Nigerians at home and in the Diaspora. How can Bakassi Boys play a useful role in the modern Nigerian society ravaged by fear and insecurity? This study is **an off-shoot of the international close-door conference we have discussed here.**

### **Chapter 5: "Hard Times" Syndrome in Nigeria**

Right from the day of independence Nigerians have not had it rosy. Days are gone when Nigerians knew little hardship. "*Hard Times*" (*Ihe isi ike, in Igbo language*) is a phenomenon which millions of Nigerian masses must put up with. Means of livelihood have continued to diminish and '*short cuts*' are being invented by the people every day to "*make ends meet*" This is a big concern for worry, thus complicating the already desperate situation. "*Hard Times*" and discovered avenues to "*make ends meet*" include all sorts of illegal and fraudulent practices Nigerians embark on everyday to beat the economic doom.

### **Chapter 6: Nigeria, an enigma – The best and the worst**

Nigerians see their country as a meeting point of the *best and the worst*. A **meeting point, meeting place, or assembly point** is generally a geographically defined place where people meet. Such a meeting point becomes popular and is a convenient place for all sorts of activities. In our usage here we designate Nigeria as a meeting point of '*the best*' and '*the worst*'. Two contradictory extremes exist together and accommodate each other almost comfortably in Nigeria. This is part of practical life among the people of this nation and often referred to as '*Nigerian factor*'. There are many examples. *Nigeria and Nigerians are at the same time both the richest and poorest; greatest and most feeble; best favored and most unfortunate; most democratic, most conservative; most patient and most impatient; most respectful and most abusive; the happiest and most miserable people and nation....* There are lots of 'qualities' one can predicate about Nigeria, and in the 'superlative degree!' This type of symbiotic lifestyle (mutually beneficial relationship) can puzzle a lot of people who are not familiar with Nigeria and its people.

### **Chapter 7: Big name syndrome: Craze for superlative qualities**

Nigerians' love for '*big names*' is astonishing. Their infatuation with superlative accolades is without parallel. Nigerians love big names, but rarely succeed in matching their self-proclaimed-greatness with laudable achievements. For them '*there is nothing in name*'. Nigerians take the rest of the world for a ride and thus deride the universally accepted maxim that '*there is something in name*.' They forget that adjectives are created to add meaning to given words and expressions, thus reinforcing their importance and position among other words and expressions. Look at how they employ such words and expressions, "**Great**", "**Super**", "**International**", "**Ultra modern**" rascally just to sound "big", "adorable", and "magnificent!" No! It is not real. Do not take them serious. Latin students would advice curious observers: "*non teneas aurum totum quod splendet ut aurum - Do not take as gold everything that shines like gold*". In other words "*All that glitters is not gold*". Their performances, cities they build, markets they build, schools they talk about are not *great, super, ultra modern* and do not qualify and can't be rated as international standard.

## CHAPTER 1

### NO PLACE TO HIDE

Many Nigerians who flee their fatherland in search of better life support elsewhere claim that they have examined their land of birth from all sides and found out that there is practically ‘absence of most basic necessities of life’ in the land. Are they justified in this assertion? These ‘fugitives’ are often joined by foreigners who believe Nigeria is not the best place for tourism, to settle, or do business. If in a land blessed by God and nature with everything good this state of despair is proved to be true, it should not be tolerated. It is anathema.

Mid August 2002, I was in United States on vacation. One woman wanted to know if I came from Nigeria. I told her I did. That was precisely the time the Amina Lawal and beauty pageantry drama was unfolding in Nigeria, capturing the attention of the international community. Amina Lawal, a single mother had been sentenced to death by stoning for having a child out of wedlock despite an international outcry. An Islamic court in the northern town of Funtua had rejected her appeal against the stoning sentence, handed down for having sex outside of marriage. Governments and human rights organizations around the world had urged Obasanjo's administration to intercede in Lawal's case and had warned that Nigeria would face international outrage if the sentence was applied. That drama exposed the bad side of Nigeria so much.

Nigeria is deeply divided about the application of Islamic law, or Shariah, which calls for cutting off a hand to punish theft and death for adultery. Decisions by a dozen states in Nigeria's mainly Muslim north to adopt the strict Islamic code had since 1999 sparked off clashes with the region's Christian minority, and thousands of people have been killed and maimed. Nigeria is a democratic state worldly acclaimed to be the leader of the free black African nations.

My questioner looked at me with pity and remarked. **“It must be awful living there (in Nigeria)”**. Shocked and confused, I concurred. But before she left me she further enquired: “Will you return to that place?” I said I would, but went away sad, considering the reality of what a woman who had not been to Nigeria thought. Surely she had heard a lot of stories.

In December 2011, again in United States, some ten years later, precisely on the Christmas day, I was exchanging greetings with some Catholic members of the parish after mass as the custom is in the United States. Earlier I had introduced myself as a Nigerian. One man asked me if I had heard the news; what happened in a Church in Nigeria, how an Islamic sect called **Boko Haram**

massacred many people in a suicide bomb blast. I answered, no. He added: “We thank God you were not around that church or city.” But he enquired: “Will you return to Nigeria?” I grinned and went away sad.

Most Nigerians are concerned that the international attention focused on Nigerian problems surely will continue to scare foreign investors and visitors to Nigeria and the cumulative effect of all these things is that they create a very bad image for this country. Nigerians are put to shame everyday in the lands of their exile. Many young immigrants are subjected to all sorts of harassment by police and security officials. Not a few had died in scuffles with police as these unwanted guests resist arrest or deportation.

**“Achtung! ein Nigerianer”.**

**(“Attention! Alert! A Nigerian is around!”)**, is a usual distress alarm usually raised by security or customs officials at many international airports, (not only in Germany) when they catch sight of a Nigerian passport. Meticulously Nigerians are searched at all ports – land, air and sea as they visit other parts of the world. It was a busy rush hour at the Frankfurt international airport that day. I was one of the hundreds of passengers of a Lufthansa carrier that arrived Frankfurt from Nigeria. As I learnt later it was the custom that security officials were always alerted when any plane from Nigeria landed at the airport. Security officials with police dogs and special customs officials take their positions at various exit spots to search the unwelcome Nigerian visitors. But not all passengers are Nigerians. Those carrying Nigerian passports are usually special targets.

So when I approached the customs gate, the cry was heard and I understood their conversation. The officials did not know that the visitor understood and spoke their language, too. Without raising his head to catch a glimpse of his latest victim, the chief custom’s officer muttered a few sentences to his comrade as they examined my passport from cover to cover and back again: *“Not a bad guy...doesn’t look like a criminal...looks like a professor...he has travelled a lot....visited many countries of the world...a lot of visas and attestations...he may go...”*

As I listened to their conversation I was getting ready to challenge them if they had uttered any nasty remarks about me and my country. I would confront them and create a scene there at the airport and let them prove I was a ‘*verbrecher*’, a ‘criminal! It would be an opportunity to tell them to stop those prejudices and aspersions on Nigeria and innocent Nigerians. They would have then realized their ‘*dummheit*’, ‘stupid mentality and blockheadedness’ in believing that they could harass every Nigerian that visits their land.

Most Nigerian travelers are usually suspects of all imaginable crimes, ranging from fraudulent activities (including drug-pushing) to terrorist acts. Nigerians are searched, men, women and children for illegal and dangerous

drugs, bombs and money. Many Nigerian business men and women together with politicians are said to be regular money launderers. Not a few have actually been convicted of money laundering and jailed in London, Saudi Arabia, and United States. They transfer their illegal cash overseas and lodge them in foreign banks. The **EFCC** - the Nigerian Federal Government watchdog confirms most of the stories of money laundering and associated criminal huge cash transactions leveled against Nigerians, home and overseas.

Many Nigerian travelers are said to engage in human trafficking. They have to produce **DNA** proofs that the young people they are travelling with are really family members or their children. There is no doubt these necessary and unnecessary searches conducted on Nigerians all over the world create nasty public scenes everywhere. Such may be enough to feel wary carrying a Nigerian passport or documents identifying Nigeria as your country of origin.

### **“Search him well – He is a Nigerian!”**

I can't remember how the customs officials at Moscow international airport expressed it in Russian language, '*Search him well...*' But that was precisely what the suspicious-looking head-official said. It happened again. This time, it was not at a German airport, but in **Moscow, Soviet Union**. Nigerian citizens, carrying Nigerian passports were delayed at the Russian airport customs office. Student then in England, at university of London's Institute of education, a study trip to Moscow was organized by the university authorities. We were two Nigerians in the group and had our visa and other documents for the journey as we took the *Aeroflot* flight from London to Moscow.

At the customs every member of our group except the two Nigerians passed all the screening tests and got over the gate ready to board the waiting bus that would take us to our hotel. The customs officials examined our passports from cover to cover and would not let us go. “What had gone wrong”, everyone seemed to be asking. Our professor approached them to find out. They tried to explain to him.

At last we were called into a smaller room and asked to produce every other available document in our possession that would prove we were the owners of our passports. Through a Russian interpreter we explained that the passports belonged to us and to no one else. We had travelled with the same documents to many countries and no one had ever questioned the ownership or their authenticity.

In fact it was after they had examined all the other documents we produced - library identity cards, students' union **IDs**, ordination certificates and meal tickets that we were allowed entry into the country. What was wrong with our Nigerian passports? Soviet Union and Nigeria have been great friends. Had Russia also blacklisted Nigeria as a terrorist country? Many things worried us.

No. We were no suspects. They found something wrong with our passports. Our passports, they said had no immigration or Nigerian government seal stamped on our photographs! They were right. And for the many years we had toured the world, it was only the Russians who detected a flaw in our passports. The Russian secret police **KGB** was smarter than the America **FBI**, **CIA**, or Israeli **MOSSAD**", I thought. But thanks to God we enjoyed the study trip to Moscow and were not deported to our fatherland! At least, good news, we were not declared international terrorists, drug-pushers or money launderers!

### **“Send them home – They are Nigerians”**

There is no good news coming from Tel Aviv, Israel. Israel used to have good relationship with Nigeria especially Eastern Nigerians and Igbo people. They know most Nigerians are hard working and so Israeli contractors used to make Nigerian workers among other foreign job-seekers ‘headmen’ in constructions quarters in the occupied territories of Palestine.

But drastically things have changed and the good relationship has turned sour. Most reports that come out of that Middle East country confirm that Nigerian youths that have settled there for some time were giving the country’s security forces what Israeli authorities called “hard time”. There were no specific offences named. Although the authorities who have embarked on mass deportation of foreigners to their homelands for whatever reasons, have targeted Nigerians most severely, reporters added. That is not good for Nigeria.

As a result of the notorious activities of few unscrupulous Nigerians the tendency to lump innocent Nigerian citizens together with criminals has become common place in most countries of Europe, Asia and America. It has even been proved that often crimes committed by some other Africans are recorded and inserted into the Nigerian “folder” where criminal activities are recorded. When caught, other black African youths claim to have Nigerian nationality. They don’t like to soil the good name of their dear countries where such criminal acts receive heavy jail sentences.

The tragic death of one Semira Adamu throws light to the fate of Nigerians in Diaspora - in search of the greener pastures. Semira Adamu - a 20-year-old Nigerian girl died under tragic circumstances in Belgium. She, like many other Nigerians died of suffocation in the hands of the Belgian security officers who were bent on bundling the lady back to Nigeria against her will.

No doubt, the story of Miss Adamu is the story of most Nigerian youths - the story of a young woman who fled home in search of greener pastures. She was born in Nigeria during what was generally referred to as the turbulent years. She was also raised in a society that no longer cared about its own. Or how else could one come to terms with the dilemma that eventually forced her to flee Nigeria?

Like every Nigerian fugitive Adamu had to flee her fatherland to Belgium where she hoped to find asylum and regular residence. But she was mistaken. Unfortunately, the picture of the Europe she had in her head did not square up with the reality on the ground. Instead of a sympathetic reception in Brussels she found unusually hostile and insensitive hosts. The laws she ran into were rigid and inflexible.

All over the world tough immigration laws and their stringent enforcement have combined to thwart the hope of foreign immigrants. Where the illegal immigrants' will to resist deportation is matched by immigration authorities' resolve to enforce the law, tragedy had been inevitable. As long as the conditions at home, in Nigeria remain hostile to citizens, Nigerians will continue to defy odds to seek what they erroneously see as greener pastures abroad.

The gruesome and tragic stories of many unfortunate Nigerians in Europe, America and Asia should prove a turning point in the revolution to make helpless immigrants see Nigeria for what she should really be: a place to come home to when the search in foreign lands gets awry. After all, that is exactly what brings a flood of exiles back to the country.

### **“Here they come again”**

One Nigerian engineer, who has lived with family and worked in Malaysia for more than 12 years in that Asian country suddenly packed his belongings and returned ‘home’ and settled, not in Nigeria, but in Ghana. He said he was fed up with what some Nigerian youths were doing in Malaysia and other countries like Singapore and Thailand. “No”, Engineer Nnamdi Nwosu lamented, “every time you turn on the television set you will get bad news about Nigerians caught in drug trafficking or other fraudulent practices. They are locked up in jail or are deported. But what annoys me most is that not even the harsh treatments these young men and women receive here scare them at all. Many more Nigerians continue coming to Malaysia to do what?” He questioned, angrily.

Sorry, Engineer Nwosu, I don't know who will answer the question. “*Search for survival*”, “*Search for greener pastures*” did not begin today. Many Igbo people, for example have lived outside Igbo land within Nigeria and outside Nigeria even before the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Protectorates by the British colonialists. They are like itinerant Israelites of the Old during the Exodus from Egypt who wandered in the deserts for many years to reach the “Promised Land”. For the Israelites or the modern Israelis or Jews it has not been easy to settle down in the land of their dreams. The Jewish struggle for survival as a people which started thousands of years ago has not yielded the desired goals. Frustrations abound everywhere, in the Jewish proclaimed homeland and in the Diaspora.

Likewise for Nigerians and the Igbos, it has not been easy to settle down anywhere. The Exodus of people from homelands and temporary lands of sojourn did not begin today. No! “*Search for greener pastures*” began many decades of years ago and the main reasons have been economic, better social, religious and cultural life opportunities for survival. Citizens of many European countries migrated to the United States and still do so today for similar reasons. Such are the aspirations of people all over the world. The struggle for self-fulfillment, self-determination and upliftment continues till date.

But Nigerians have many other reasons to flee the fatherland. Perhaps some may return, together with their children and a new generation of Nigerians would surface in the fatherland. However, not until the broken infrastructures have been repaired or replaced. Many factors that leave large number of Nigerians in a state of bondage must be dismantled before peace and tranquility can be restored. These factors include state of insecurity, uncontrollable corruption, yawning gap between the rich and the poor, religious turbulence, state of war and leadership problems which compound already the sore situation in the country called Nigeria - home to more than one third of every ethnic group in the black continent.

### **The Nigerian doctor wouldn't return to Nigeria**

He is one of the best medical practitioners, a rare gem in the field of medicine and surgery in the United States of America. When things get tough he is summoned to rescue entrapped surgeons and their patients in the operation theatre. Most often a helicopter flies him to the desired destination if things really get off-hand. He is always on call.

This simple-looking Nigerian, Dr. Nnabugo Alex, in his early fifties said he visited Nigeria last in 1996. He didn't like what has been going on in this West African nation. He never suffered any maltreatment in the hands of evil youths those days he visited his fatherland and families at home. But today he said he has been scared by reports of kidnapping and unimaginable corrupt practices that go on in that country.

In spite of all the work he does in America and elsewhere in Ghana and Togo he claims he is not a fraction as rich as his fellow medical practitioners in Nigeria. “How do they make all the money?” He questioned, in all honesty. “How do they get the money to build so many private clinics in the cities and villages?” He tried to confirm that most medical doctors in Nigeria have large private mansions in some big cities in Nigeria.

That is however not what makes him uncomfortable about going back to Nigeria to help his fellow countrymen and women, doctors as well as politicians who desperately need his expert advice and perhaps treatment. Dr. Alex, as he is popularly addressed in the States, is Igbo and says his parents brought them up in Kano and he has worked in Ibadan. He speaks Hausa and Yoruba fluently.

But he is so scared by the activities of Boko Haram terrorist gangs ravaging most cities of Northern Nigeria and quickly spreading to the East and the West. Dr. Nnabugo would have liked to spend some few weeks of his annual vacation in Kano or Ibadan, but at least not for now.

He spends his vacations in Ghana, Liberia and Togo. He has been in the United States since 1974 but has friends in these Western African countries. He says he feels safe there and loved those friendly people. He doesn't hate the simple-hardworking Nigerians but no doubt will not like anything to do with the leadership of the country called Nigeria. What Nigerians have lost, others have gained!

Once, Nigeria served as a safe haven for many European, Asian, and African countries. Not only oil company workers and their families took Nigeria as their second home. Filipinos, Turks, Lebanese, Indians, Sri Lankans, Pakistanis, and other Africans nations took up teaching appointments in Nigerian institutions of learning since Nigeria gained independence. Many became company road contractors while others worked in oil and agricultural sectors. They used to send their hard-earned revenue home to support families and dear ones in their respective countries.

More than one million Ghanaians, citizens of that neighboring African country took over Nigerian townships and villages as street-cleaners, street-hawkers, shoe-polishers, and laborers during the days of misrule and famine in Ghana. Few Nigerians were then subjected to suffering, untold hardship and humiliating torture and jail sentences in Bangkok, Saudi Arabia, or China. Rather were Nigerians welcomed with open arms in most countries of the world for their hard work and intelligence. Most Nigerians went to overseas mainly for studies.

The search for greener pastures in Nigeria by many Western African neighbors took a dramatic and unpleasant turn when the flow of 'refugees' into Nigerian cities and villages became uncontrollable. It was at that juncture that the Federal Government of Nigeria was forced to order a repatriation of illegal aliens who had misused or abused their welcome stay to Nigeria. **"Ghana must go,"** at a time became a household slogan, and in fact a big tough raffia bag goes by that tag name today. It was the name of the bag that Ghanaians used to pack their belongings as they left the shores of Nigeria for their fatherland or other greener pastures of Europe and America. Those days Nigeria compared favorably well in economic stability with America and most countries of Europe.

Still most citizens of Ghana, Togo and other West African neighbors reside comfortably today in Nigeria. The reason, some elders say, is that many of these West African tribes have their kith and kin in Nigeria. They share the same tribal heritage with the Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo and Efik of Nigeria. It may be true and precisely why our friend Dr. Ndubuisi and others like Dr. Isaac

Olusegun, Professor Irene Patrick, all working in the United States spend their vacation in Ghana, Liberia and Togo.

Our *Ghana-must-go episode* took place some years ago in the early eighties. Today things have changed and Nigerians are taking refuge and looking for succor in Ghana and in the other small African states, including Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Caper Verde and Gabon. The former masters are now being fed from the crumbs that fall from the former servants' tables! The marching tune and direction have changed. The rich have become the poor. Nigeria has become smaller than Ghana and many other nations. The song we learnt during our primary school days resonates louder today: "**When I was rich...**" fits the Nigerian situation today. It is culled from the parable/drama of the *Prodigal Son*:

When I was rich, when I was wealthy, I had many friends. I had many acquaintances, many companions, many associates, and a lot of cronies. I was adored and well respected. But now I am sick. I am old. I am weak and poor. Most of my friends have abandoned me. They have deserted me. I am now a lonely fellow. And I have no permanent home or hope of survival. Darkness overwhelms me...

Ghana is one of West Africa's most popular tourist attractions. It is a relatively safe, stable and friendly country filled with interesting historical sites, lots of culture, colorful festivals, good beaches and decent wildlife park. Better organized and led by better cultured and honest leaders, Ghana, and **not** Nigeria is the African leader and champion in everything - politics, economy and sports. Great foreign leaders wishing to pay a courtesy call to the African continent choose Ghana as their first port of call. They invite other African leaders to meet them in Ghana for a chat if there was need. They usually avoid Nigeria. Like the Israelites of old the lamentation for Nigeria continues.

Let my eyes stream with tears day and night, without rest over the great destruction, which overwhelms the virgin daughter of my people, over her incurable wound. If I walk out into the field, behold those slain by the sword. If I enter the city, look! Those consumed by hunger. Even the prophet and the priest forage in a land they know not. Have you cast Judah off completely? Is Zion loathsome to you? Why have you struck us a blow that cannot be healed? We wait for peace, to no avail; for a time of healing, but terror comes instead. We recognize, O Lord, our wickedness, the guilt of our fathers; that we have sinned against you. For your name's sake spurn us not, disgrace not the throne of your glory; remember your covenant with us, and break it not (Jeremiah: 14:17-21)

**Mass Exodus & Unprecedented Search for greener pastures**

In our books *“Search for greener pastures, Igbo and African experience”* (USA, Morris Publishers, 1998) and *Our Only Hope ... Chidi Uba in search of greener pastures* (Nigeria 2013) we discussed the problems and consequences of great number of Nigerians who abandon their fatherland in search of greener pastures in Europe, America and Asia, when huge luxuriant pastures remain at home untapped. The mass exodus has continued unabated. Most Nigerians who abandon their fatherland in **search of greener pastures** know the hard truth. They pack bag and baggage as they escape with no intention of returning in any near future. Those who have settled down in Europe and America after many years of struggle engage in frantic efforts to bring their families and loved ones over to the safer areas of the world. Nigeria is not safe; they inadvertently tell the outside world and investors. “Flee for your dear life before the Armageddon!”

It is worse for the Igbo of Nigeria. Known culturally for their attachment to land and ancestral property and inheritance Ndigbo don't easily exchange land for anything. It is a calamity not to possess a piece of land where a male offspring will be buried when he dies. If he dies in a foreign land every effort must be made by kinsmen to fly his corpse home for burial on the ancestral land where his umbilical cord has been buried many years ago after birth.

That could have been many years ago. Today things have changed. For the younger generation today it is a worthless venture keeping anything of value back at home in Africa, including landed property. **“Ama gi chie.” - “Let your pathway close (become a blind alley);”** in Igbo culture is a curse, the worst one can spit out on the face of an Igbo man. One's pathway, inheritance, genealogy, the ancestral land giving meaning to life and prosperity is his greatest and most cherished treasure. One who abandons or loses that symbol of life is worse than a dead man.

Today, most Igbo sons and daughters in Diaspora seem to accept that reality, that curse. They are ready to negotiate their inheritance in the village for a safe passage to anywhere, except Nigeria. What a tragedy! Most Igbo people and other Nigerians who live in the United States struggle to settle down in that part of the world. The surest way to that dream is the **Green Card**. Once that is secured, follows the citizenship. Then the way is open to bring over the entire family and closest relations. It does not matter how long it takes, the number of trips these family members make to the American embassy, the number of disappointments and insults, the cost of **DNA** and other tests.

Once the entire family and other relations have settled down in the United States or in any other Western country, it is celebration galore and of course ‘good bye to fatherland’. In other words it is ‘good bye’ to all possessions, including land and inheritance in the village! The deal is sealed. All rights to earthly possession and what they symbolize in the once-cherished traditional system have been abandoned.

## Stranded in foreign land

It is not all that rosy in the foreign land. Often stranded, Nigerian parents fail to persuade their kids even to visit the village back in Africa for a couple of weeks. They find nothing of attraction there. Most Nigerians who left their fatherland in search of greener pastures in Europe and America are truly stranded in foreign lands. Some, for whatever reasons, and willing to get back, and settle in their lands of birth may after all return home alone and perhaps penniless.

Neither their wives, nor their children, born and raised in America, Europe and Asia, are in any way willing to accompany their parents back home to the village. The wives do not entertain such dreams either. Economically better in shape than the men, most of the women may be ready for a holiday trip to the village, once awhile. But to go back to Nigeria and settle down again, that has become *anathema*.

The kids, young and old see Nigeria as a far-distant land, a jungle that they may visit sometime in the future but not now. The question of returning home to the village and settling down there again is a remote idea, quite a fantasy. Some of the grown-ups - sons and daughters, who have cared to accompany their dads' corpses home for burial have not dared stay more than a few days in the village after burial. Not a few of them have cared to take over the headship of the family in the village after the death of their fathers. They would not even like the idea of 'inheriting their family fortunes' (where there exists actually sizeable possessions in landed property). Uncles, nephews, in-laws or villagers who cared could take over whatever possessions the family must have had!

Poorly equipped with little or no cultural connection to their fatherland, most of the Nigerian children, born or raised in foreign lands may not be blamed for their little love for their fatherland. Inability to express themselves in their native language or mother tongue, they are completely handicapped and can't identify with any of the so-called cultural heritage of the place they are told is their primary home. If they ever return to the village on vacation, they remain virtually foreigners in Nigeria. This lamentable situation is worse with the Igbos of Nigeria!

A Nigerian Newsmagazine, in a title: "**Nigeria: A new paradigm**" once stated as well the obvious when it wrote:

We have, at the national level become nothing but a hodgepodge of glorified ethnic nations - forever searching for identity within our own country, and every able-bodied citizen escaping our shores to become janitors and security guards in Europe and America.

Millions of well-educated Nigerians who once formed an ambitious middle class at home and have fled the country in total frustration continue to search for

identity **elsewhere**. Regrettably ethnic divisions, poverty and mass ignorance have made it virtually impossible for an honest, intelligent and well-meaning leadership to emerge. While one may be saddened by the past and recent events in Nigeria, it is not out of place truly to share the belief of most Nigerians that this is the best opportunity we have ever had to shed some of the burdens that have held us back since independence. There are many Nigerians who believe that no matter the present odds, in fact the road to recovery may after all not be far. Unfortunately conditions at home have continued to deteriorate. The people have every reason to **weep**.

Perhaps any right thinking Nigerian would be in the position to appreciate the frustration of the exiled Israelites who lamented over the shortness of their life! Abandoned by their God, there was no end to the lamentation of these wretched people. Perhaps their lost glory could be restored if they could learn some wisdom:

Lord we have become the least of all nations. We are put to shame today throughout the world because of our sins. We have no leader, no prophet, no prince, no burnt offering, no sacrifice, no oblation, no incense, no place where we can make offerings to you and win your favour [Daniel: 3.37].

**(Lamentations: 5: 1-22) sums up the present mood of most worried Nigerians:**

Yahweh, remember what has happened to us. Consider and see our degradation. Our heritage has passed to strangers; our homes to foreigners. We are orphans. We are fatherless. Our mothers are like widows. We have to buy our own water to drink; our own wood we can only get at a price. The yoke is on our necks; we are persecuted, exhausted, we are allowed no rest. Slaves rule us. There is no one to rescue us from their clutches. The elders have deserted the gateway. The young have given up their music. Joy has vanished from our hearts; our dancing has turned to mourning. The crown has fallen from our hands. Alas that ever we sinned. This is why our hearts are sick. This is why our eyes are dim. Why do you not remember us? Why do you abandon us so long?

## CHAPTER 2

### IN THE MIDST OF CHAOS NIGERIA TRUDGES ON

Often in an apparent state of confusion and disorder Nigeria continues to *tick*, in other words continues to function 'properly'. The states and ethnic groups continue to stick together. What keeps Nigeria trudging on, bewilders many skeptics. How has this nation continued to survive all the hard strokes being directed at her from all sides? It is just like a player in the football field against 22! What keeps her alive in the face of its numerous problems - name them - abuses, scandals, deceptions, betrayals, shocks, denials, deprivations, mutilations, battering, plundering, and of course abandonment? Millions of its citizens have continued to migrate to other countries of the world, vowing never to return to their fatherland in any foreseeable future.

How has the economy not yet completely collapsed? Everyday reports indicate that its leaders and con men embezzle and transfer billions of dollars to foreign accounts. And there are no signs that massive corrupt practices will ever become a thing of the past. Like an unfed sheep that is daily milked, Nigeria continues to stagger and pant in agony. Dehydrated and sick, Nigeria continues to gasp for air. But it has not breathed its last!

It has degenerated. Once a rich nation, today Nigeria is among the poorest in the world. Once a lender nation, today it is a borrower nation. Once an exporter nation, today Nigeria is the most notorious importer of all importable. It imports every type of food at exorbitant prices affordable only by the wealthy class. Its citizens only eat from the crumbs that fall from the grand masters' table. She is known world-wide as a dumping ground for all second-hand articles, known as '*Tokumbo*.'

Situations that must be seriously addressed by a new generation of youths in Nigeria are still evident in the present Nigeria that is despised by its sons and daughters, home and in Diaspora. Not only Nigerians flee their fatherland in large numbers today; foreigners, white and black, including the so called investors flee the land. As if scared to death by terrifying pythons Nigerians and their former friends and admirers continue to flee by land, sea and air without a glance behind. What is happening?

The illegal trade in goods such as drugs or weapons of warfare has been with us in Nigeria for some time. **Cocaine-pushing** started blossoming in the late eighties and gained notoriety with the "*Letter Bomb*" saga associated with the death of a Newsmagazine editor, called Dele Giwa in the early nineties. Many Nigerian youths liked the trade which often yielded millions of dollars in hard currency. They said a small lump of it, as small as a piece of candy or cough drop can cost hundreds of dollars at a dark street market in a big city.

The drug trade has continued to thrive in Nigeria as Nigerian drug barons hire the excited youths, mostly college and university dropouts, who serve as apprentices thus carrying the trade to remotest parts of the universe. About 90% of Nigerian youths serving various prison sentences overseas are convicted offenders in drug trade.

The drug trade has for long gone hand in hand with another illegal business trade referred to as “**419**” in Nigeria. It is a chain of highly organized and sophisticated business meant to deceive, cheat and lure unsuspecting people, companies and business concerns to fraudulent business transactions. Only greedy partners, those who want instant wealth get trapped. Before their eyes open, they had lost hundreds and millions of dollars

The term **Four-One-Nine [419]** is used every day to identify the nation, Nigeria, with all sorts of evil as well as corruption. A **419er** is known to be a **thief, a criminal, a cheater, a con man**. In a wider connotation he can be identified with so many detestable atrocities. He is no doubt a member of a **devilish cult**. He is a **killer, armed robber**. He may be a **kidnapper**. As his fame grows he may end up founding more sinister gangs that can accomplish his goals as he retires to the background. In a large scale, his notorious gangs can kidnap high profile citizens and rob banks. There are so many evils that a **419er** can do within and outside Nigeria.

Many Nigerian 419ers are known to be drug cartels and barons. Some are specialists in currency and the mint industry. They deal in foreign and local currencies, genuine and counterfeit money. They design, print and issue fake national and foreign passports to desperate travelers who can't secure official and genuine traveling documents. They mint and sell fake gold products to willing buyers and make a lot of money from the business. That's why they 'dash' out money in cartons, millions and in large denominations. As many people, within and outside Nigeria learn their lessons about '419', the business continues to attract less number of youths and partners. But Nigerians must find other routes to make fast money. They have found one in all sorts of kidnapping business.

Nigerians may not be alone in these detestable criminal offences. Criminality has been part of original sin, as many believers readily accept. In the developed nations of the world, as well the developing and underdeveloped nations of the world criminals abound. The richest nations are even worse hit as they invest in the most expensive modern technologies to combat criminality. But few modern states claim that the rate of crime has ever gone down in recent times. The situation has even gotten worse.

How does Nigeria feature in the worrisome situation is our preoccupation. It is necessary to assess our involvement and hence find ways of dealing with the escalating problems of search for wealth in a detestable and abominable fashion. As a big African nation with a lot of potentials, in human and natural resources, Nigeria is expected to lead fellow African nations by

example and in fact play a leading role in the assembly of the developing third world nations.

### **From Drug to Human Trafficking**

Drug trafficking has for long been an international business not limited to Nigeria and a few other South American nations. The big drug barons who produce, buy, sell and resell the commodities are all accomplices in crime. Nigerian involvement cannot be denied. Newspapers carry daily reports of traffickers caught and arrested as well as quantities of the drugs impounded and their street values often valued at millions and billions of dollars. People are tired of reading such stuff. In spite of penalties faced by traffickers who are caught, harsh actions of the law have not helped to reduce the crime.

Elsewhere in the Diaspora, Nigerians suffer death by hanging or decapitation as capital punishment. Newspaper reports are not hard to find: **“Four Nigerians beheaded in Saudi Arabia”**

“Four Nigerian drug traffickers fell on the wrong side of the law in **Saudi Arabia** days before the just concluded Hajj exercise and were not spared by the authority who insisted that they must be beheaded.”

According to reports, the punishment was carried out just before pilgrims started arriving in the kingdom for Hajj. The Nigerians, three men and a woman were arrested few months ago at the King Abdul Azziz International Airport in possession of cocaine and heroin. The Kingdom operates strict Islamic laws which stipulates death penalty for anyone caught trafficking in hard drugs. And even though human right groups mounted intense criticisms against it, dozens of offenders are said to have been beheaded in the past few years.

Top officials at the Nigerian embassy in Jeddah confirmed the development, saying that the embassy has warned Nigerians of the implications of engaging in what they described as something that is "inimical to the image of the country and could lead to their untimely death." One of the officials confirmed that even though people are aware of the stiff penalty meted to drug carriers, they still continue to indulge in the act. There are other vices no doubt, not acceptable to the Saudis which Nigerians engage in. Even though Nigerians know the consequence of perpetrating these illegal acts, they still indulge in them. Unlike some countries, the Saudis are not that flexible in looking at these offences. They will readily tell you that the law is very clear on what should be done to whoever engages in drug trafficking. But the most worrisome situation that continued to raise shocks among many well meaning Nigerians is the business in human trafficking. From drug to human trafficking has become a menace in Nigeria!

## Human trafficking, Nigeria's respectable trade?

“Trafficking in human beings” is a phrase guaranteed to cause a sharp intake of breath among listeners from the liberal and affluent and concerned West. The view of trafficking in Nigeria is somewhat different. In fact, it is seen as an everyday part of West African life. Children can either be an economic burden or an economic source.

In most tribal families in Nigeria as well as in Igboland, children can become an economic burden when so many of them are produced by one mother or many mothers in a polygamous family. Feeding and proper education and upbringing of these kids really become a burden. Still many families have not learnt to practice birth control and mothers don't fail to justify their culpable ignorance by asserting that “It is God who gives the increase, and as well provides the means for feeding them” (“**Chi n'enyé nwa**”), in Igbo.

When the feeding and upbringing becomes torturous, such parents resort to ‘a re-distribution’ of the kids to wealthy or needy families who would help raise them. In the hands of these ‘benefactors’ these kids can be used in whatever way they might become useful to their foster-families. Here they become economic source. The streets of Nigeria are always teeming with trafficking children (buying and selling soft and hardware). Often relatively young adults are involved.

It starts with the promise of better life. The parents are taken in. The children are persuaded. When they leave home, they do so willingly, with some excitement, not trepidation. The trafficker has promised a good job, schooling, and regular income. But that is not how it works out. A young woman told a story about how she was promised regular work in a Nigerian countryside, but found herself transported overland through the north of Nigeria, to Mali, then to Algeria, then Morocco. From there she was smuggled into Spain, at night, in a small boat, and from there, on forged papers, into Italy by train.

They took her to a house in Turin where she lived with other girls, some, but not all, Nigerians like her, and under the control of a madam, also Nigerian. She was put to work as a prostitute, something she speaks of now with a discernible shame. After seven months she had earned enough money to pay off what she owed the traffickers for taking her in the first place. When that debt was paid, her trafficker shopped her to the Italian immigration authorities and she was repatriated, home to Benin City, Nigeria with nothing to show for her ordeal.

There are many such stories about transatlantic human trafficking trade. There was a second woman with a similar story. Not yet out of her teens, her traffickers took her to Verona, Italy, where she worked as a prostitute. She was not ashamed to tell her story. “Just when I had paid off my debt”, she said, “Just when I was about to start working for myself, the police caught me.” This is the

pattern. The traffickers do not want their working girls setting up their own, taking customers away from their girls. Turnover-in human traffic is everything.

There is no doubt that human trafficking is more lucrative than any other trade in Nigeria and in some other West African countries, except guns and drugs. The streets of Nigeria are teeming with trafficked children. Of the hundreds of thousands of street kids living in large Nigerian cities including Abuja, Lagos, Port Harcourt, Onitsha, Owerri, Kano, Ibadan etc, more than 50% have been bought and sold at the same time.

In Nigeria children enter labor market almost as soon as they can lift and carry. Those whose hardware are too heavy to carry or balance on their heads may be lucky to get wheel barrows from their masters and mistresses.. Some skinny hungry-looking young boys and girls carry heavy logs of wood on the head for miles. It is estimated that more than 15 million children work in exploitative labor in Nigeria. It is 21st century slave trade!

What is most striking is the tacit support that human trafficking enjoys at almost every level of Nigerian society. Some who have dropped early out of primary school, after some years of hard labor, are able to save hard-earned cash to be able to purchase for themselves such luxuries like wheel barrows and grinding machines. They move around open markets looking for buyers who could employ them to transport their wares. The boys receive any amount from anyone who cares for their services.

### **Human trafficking and child labor**

Child labor is work that harms children or keeps them from attending school. Around the underdeveloped, developed and developing world growing gaps between rich and poor in recent decades have forced millions of young children out of school and into work. The International Labor Organization estimates that 240 million children between the ages of 5 and 17 currently work under conditions that are considered illegal, hazardous, or extremely exploitative.

Underage children work at all sorts of jobs around the world, usually because they and their families are extremely poor. Large numbers of children work in commercial agriculture, fishing, manufacturing, mining, and domestic service. Some children work in illicit activities like the drug trade and prostitution or other traumatic activities such as serving as soldiers. Child labor involves at least one of the following characteristics

- Violates a nation's minimum age laws
- Threatens children's physical, mental, or emotional well-being
- Involves intolerable abuse, such as child slavery, child trafficking, debt bondage, forced labor, or illicit activities
- Prevents children from going to school

- Uses children to undermine labor standards

Of an estimated 240 million child laborers around the globe: approximately (55%) are found in Asia and the Pacific, (7%) live in Latin America; and (30%) live in sub-Saharan Africa. An estimated 60% of child labor occurs in agriculture, fishing, hunting, and forestry. Children have been found harvesting bananas in Ecuador, cotton in Egypt and Benin, cut flowers in Colombia, oranges in Brazil, cocoa in the Ivory Coast, tea in Argentina and Bangladesh, fruits and vegetables in the U.S.

Children in commercial agriculture can face long hours in extreme temperatures, health risks from pesticides, little or no pay, and inadequate food, water, and sanitation. About 14 million children are estimated to be directly involved in manufacturing goods, including: Carpets from India, Pakistan, Egypt, Clothing sewn in Bangladesh; footwear made in India and the Philippines, Soccer balls sewn in Pakistan, Glass and bricks made in India, Fireworks made in China, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, India, and Peru.

Child laborers suffer extremely high illness and injury rates in underground mines, opencast mines, and quarries. Children as young as 6 or 7 years old break up rocks, and wash, sieve, and carry ore. Nine-year-olds work underground setting explosives and carrying loads. Children work in a range of mining operations, including: Gold in Colombia, Charcoal in Brazil and El Salvador, Chrome in Zimbabwe, Diamonds in Cote d'Ivoire, Emeralds in Colombia, Coal in Mongolia

### **Domestic Service: “House Boys, House Maids”**

Here Nigeria is most likely to feature prominently in the West African region. There are no big banana plantations where children are domestically used. But as house boys and girls, statistics are not available. The Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt, Benin, Owerri, Onitsha middle class families have a bountiful supply of house boys and house girls (maids), brought from villages by helpful aunts and uncles who pocket the cash and disappear. No one asks questions. No one wants to know the answers. Many children, especially girls, work in domestic service, sometimes starting as young as 5 or 6. This type of child labor is linked to child trafficking. Domestic child laborers can be victims of physical, emotional, and sometimes sexual abuse

Among the Igbo of Nigeria, domestic-child-labor is woven into the fabric of traditional life. The middlemen and women are many and collect their share of tiny ‘salary’ in advance (often paid to the child-victim only in kind, food and clothing and possibly school). The victims’ parents are involved. They simply say to the boys and girls, “Why don’t you go with this man or woman and they

may help to raise you. We have no money; we have nothing to eat. You can even send us money when they pay you.” And so the kids agree and go. And that is the problem. They have no choice.

That trafficking has obviously the tacit collaboration of the victims' own families. That it is not seen as criminal activity at all but as a normal and even respectable way for a family of seven or eight or more children to boost its meager income. Truly some of these victims of child labor (**BOY-BOY**) in Nigerian pidgin expression benefit from their masters and mistresses (**NNAUKWU, NNEUKWU – BIG DADDY, BIG MUMMY, ANTY**). Some have received good education and become prosperous through the upbringing from these foster parents. But not a few who fall into bad and wicked hands have been ruined for life. This last issue will command our attention next, as what ‘one sows, one reaps’.

There are too many *Boy-Boy* kids all over Nigeria, serving their foster families in every shade of domestic business; from shop-keeping, street-trading, house-cleaning, cooks, and errand-business, to baby-sitting. They are like adopted kids, and may receive equal care from their masters and mistresses as the family children they have gone to help out. Many of them, young girls take care of the aged parents of the foster families and equally serve as house-keepers and security personnel.

The following familiar expressions tell the inside story of the domestic service business in Nigeria: *“My son has gone to Lagos serving his master. He is learning a trade. He is an apprentice to the master. My daughter is in Port Harcourt doing baby-sitting for one of her aunts living with the husband in the garden city. My first son is still serving his master at Onitsha. He has been there for over 6 years. If he is lucky he may ‘graduate’ soon and stay on his own, become his own master....”*

Not all the *Boy-Boy Kids* have been lucky in life. Some of the boys have finished their services ‘successfully’, but graduating in armed-robbery, arts of kidnapping, kleptomania, and numerous fraudulent and corrupt practices because these were the trades their masters have taught them or what the boys learned secretly from their masters. The boys have not been taught the virtues of honesty, decency, and good moral behavior. Their masters and *oga* have not led or taught them by example. Unfortunately, the masters have ironically imparted debased ethics and bad morals to the young ones.

Their masters had commended their (bad moral) behavior when they have cheated their customers who come to buy in their shops, or defrauded customers thousands of naira in 419- style. Most of the girls have finished up, ‘successfully’ graduating in prostitution. Some have begotten babies during the period of their baby-sitting. They must have become *second-wives* to their masters, who harassed and tortured them when they failed to give in to the grand masters’ sexual cravings.

As workers in hotels, restaurants and in retail trade, young people are seen to engage in legitimate sectors of the economy,, but there are indications of considerable abuse. Low pay is the norm, and in some ‘makeshift’ restaurants (*‘mama-put’*, in Nigeria) children’s work in hotels and restaurants is linked to prostitution. Some of these wayside restaurants are visited by criminals, men and women of dubious occupation and character.

### **Uncertain future of child laborer**

The after effects, repercussion or consequences of child labor are too many to recount. Not many of these victims ‘graduate’ and become successful masters and mistresses in the society where they are expected to become role-models for younger generation. Having lived with, worked with the *Big Oga* and learnt a ‘useful’ trade, the boys must be seen by members of their families as successful ‘students’ stepping into the shoes of the master that trained them for many years. They, too, like their *Oga* must soon become wealthy men, amassing wealth and building mansions. After all they have been exposed to many experiences of life that made so many grow from village paupers to city magnates and respectable community leaders who should earn many chieftaincy titles in turn.

For kids or young school children, arrangements may lead to a success story where good benefactors, not true ‘traffickers’ accept their ‘adopted’ young ones and integrate them into their family home. The ‘*Oga*’ ‘*Mama*,’ ‘*Dede*’ or ‘*Aunty*’ is a mother, father, brother or sister to the young lads as they grow up and learn a trade.

But in most cases, especially in the modern times, all that ‘glitters is not gold’. For teenagers, male and female, especially those in a hurry to get rich and meet the expectations of their families, the story can be different. Many years of service in the hands of a master or mistress can affect the servant negatively or positively. *Negatively* it can make the young fellows harden their hearts, and be turned into a menace to society. They may be badly affected by the negative experiences of the type of life they have been forced by circumstances to embrace.

Worse still, some of the house servants have been dismissed by wicked masters and mistresses at the least provocation. They trump up false charges and accusations against the young fellows, and find excuses to disgrace and discredit the servants who have lived and worked for them for years. The masters and mistresses level false accusations of dishonesty, insubordination and reckless lifestyle on these lads and dismiss them from service, a mere false pretext to dodge their obligations towards the future and upbringing of their former servants. This is awful.

### **Beasts of burden**

Most houseboys and house-girls become literally **beasts of burden of the family** like animals such as donkeys, oxen or elephants used for transporting loads or doing other heavy work. Most domestic chores are usually under the care of the inexperienced houseboy or girl: cook, baby-sitter, mother, laborer, gardener, shopper and cleaner. Often exhausted, with little rest from work and virtually no leisure or recreation, the domestic servants feel the world is harsh on them. In some cases a scenario that looks like *babies nursing babies* is the best description of the type of service the young fellow has gotten into. The *Big Madam* is unable to impart any commendable knowledge to her own kids and the house girl. The girl is thus made to replace the inactive and inexperienced young wife, who is unable to cook or clean the house. House wife, big madam, can't give what she does not possess. She has gotten many young servants at her command.

The ill-brought up young man-servant who has experienced hardship in the hands of the master grows up, a hardened fellow, and may vow to treat those that may likewise serve under him later in life with iron hands and emit punishments to those who come across his way as much as he received in his own days, and even worse.

### **Anti-social behavior**

Cases of child abuse, child-molesting, drug addiction, alcohol addiction, experienced by young adults later in life don't come by chance. Many re-enact lessons from their child-upbringing. They too may have been molested and abused. Others have been sent on errands to buy drugs and alcoholic drinks by their masters. Some have seen wives and husbands cheat on each other. "Experience", they say, "is the best teacher". Other anti-social behaviors may arise from consistent nagging from masters/mistresses; lack of love and appreciation turns a houseboy or girl into a sadist or a monster. The house servant is reprimanded at each mistake, misbehavior or other little offences. Harsh scolding is usually followed up with spanking and other punishments including starvation. The house servant is never commended for his hard work or rewarded, in word or kind.

Most present-day kidnappers, rapists, armed robbers have never learnt the business or trade overnight. Most con men, fraudsters, and 419ers in Nigeria today have learnt to perform the craft artfully from their masters and seniors. Illiteracy can be a curse. Having been brought up with little or no education, the young business man knows little reading and writing, but in the art of cheating and stealing, he is an expert!

### **Ritual Killing , Head-hunting, and Money-making**

Ritual killing and head-hunting have been a lucrative, shameful and primitive business in West African sub-regions since the early years of transatlantic slave trade. “Head hunters” (**‘Ndi Mbe Isi’** in Igbo language) were greatly feared in the olden days. As kids I remember how our parents used to lock us up in the rooms while they were away to farm work or to the market. We were always haunted by the shadows of head-hunters who were said to roam about the villages, mainly in quiet afternoons when parents were away and no adults seen around to protect children from harm’s way

Beheading of humans has been a recognized capital punishment in Islamic countries, like dying-by-firing-squad or death-by-hanging in other parts of the world. Shameless cheering crowds in Nigeria have participated or watched gruesome public execution by beheading of suspected criminals. Mutilation of bodies or setting bodies of such people on fire, with car tires on their necks, are familiar scenarios in public squares and street corners in Nigerian cities and villages. Popularly referred to *jungle justice*, crowds of people vent their anger on criminals who terrorize towns and villages, when these criminals are finally apprehended. The people believe that police don't handle cases of criminality well and so instant justice, no matter how crude and illegal it may be, after all produces better results, many aggrieved people believe. The severity of jungle justice may serve as a more serious deterrent to would-be perpetrators of criminal acts.

Together with drug trafficking and modern kidnapping business in Nigeria, which yields millions of naira for growing number of wealthy Nigerians and for their grand masters, there seems to be a resurgence of head-hunting business in Nigeria. These head hunters go in search of human parts - head, breast, tongue, and sexual organs - at the behest of witchdoctors, juju priests, and traditional medicine men, who require them for some sacrifices or for the preparation of assorted magical potions.

Recently, there have been several reported cases of individuals who were kidnapped, killed, or had their bodies mutilated by ritualists in Nigeria. One of the most notorious of them in recent times is the one associated with one **Chief Vincent Duru**, popularly known as **Otokoto**. Another one is linked to the activities of a pseudo ‘prophet’ and ‘man of God’ popularly called **Eddy Nawgu**.

### **Otokoto Hotel Saga and other ritual killings**

In 1996, the police in Owerri arrested a man, **Innocent Ekeanyanwu**, with the head of a young boy, **Ikechukwu Okonkwo**. In the course of the investigation, the police discovered the buried torso, upper body of Ikechukwu on the premises of **Otokoto Hotel** owned by Chief Duru, and uncovered a syndicate that specialized in ritual killing and the sale and procurement of human parts. The horrifying discoveries sparked off violent protests in the city of Owerri

which led to the burning and looting of properties belonging to suspected killers. Otokoto and his ritualist syndicate were arrested and put on trial, and in February 2003, they were sentenced to death by hanging.

Apart from the Otokoto incident, there have been other instances of ritual murder and mutilation in other parts of the country. For instance, in Calabar, two men plucked out the eyes of a young lady, Adlyne Eze, for money-making ritual. And in Ifo, Ogun state, a businessman inflicted the same harm on his younger sister. In Ibadan, the police in December 2011 arrested a taxi driver, Abbas, who used his fourteen-month-old baby for rituals. Abbas killed his child in order to secure a human head, which was one of the materials listed for him by a local witchdoctor for a money-making ritual.

Stories appear in Nigerian Dailies regularly reporting incidents of kidnapping of young innocent street hawkers, boys and girls, in the villages and major cities of Nigeria. They are approached by pretending buyers of their products and soon apprehended and taken to unknown destinations where their bodies are mutilated and required parts carted away and sold, perhaps to ready buyers.

What a lucrative trade? In many cases young toddlers are snatched away from baby-sitters by kidnappers and whisked away to unknown destinations. Ritual killing and related human rights abuses take place on the continent of Africa because many people still believe that the use of charms and the performance of ritual sacrifice can fortify them spiritually, enhance their fortunes in business and during elections, or protect them from harm, disease, poverty, accident, death or destruction.

Many cases of ritual sacrifice take place in secret locations. They are largely unreported, uninvestigated and unpunished. The perpetrators and their collaborators capitalize on the prevalent irrational fear of the supernatural among Africans, and the poor and corrupt policing and justice system to get away with these egregious violations.

Victims of ritual sacrifice are mostly minors or vulnerable individuals who do not live to seek justice or redress or who lack the resources to seek redress if ever they survive the ordeal. The families of victims fear spiritual or supernatural backlash and therefore do not hold their states accountable. And local authorities lack the political will to uphold the rule of law and protect human rights. The continued occurrence of ritual killing and related abuses in Africa, and Nigerian in particular are clear indications that these states are in breach of their human rights obligations under the African Charter.

Newspaper reports show that recent occurrences in Anambra state have given people in the state cause to worry, as a 16-year-old hawker was allegedly beheaded by unknown men on Wednesday, August 29, 2012. Sources disclosed that the victim, Miss **Nwanneka Odah** was beheaded by a three-man gang suspected to be ritual killers at Nawfia in Njikoka Local Government Area of Anambra State. Nwanneka was said to be hawking groundnuts along the

Nawfia-Awka road close to Nawfia Comprehensive Secondary School when the three young men allegedly pretended as if they wanted to buy groundnuts from her, only for one of them to use a machete to cut off her head when she bent down to sell the groundnuts to them.

And in another act of ritual horror in Onitsha, two young men, Tobeckukwu Okorie and Peter Obasi, seized a boy, Monday Emenike, and cut off his sexual organ with the intention of delivering it to a man, who allegedly offered to pay 1.5 million naira for it.

In Kaduna, Danladi Damina was arrested after he exhumed the corpse of a 9-year-old boy, plucked out his eyes and cut off his lips, intending to use them for charms. Recently a woman was caught in a bush in Warri, Delta State, decapitating a four-year-old boy for ritual purposes. And while writing this piece, I read in *The Guardian* (Nigeria) a report of the murder of an 18-year-old girl, identified as Chioma, by suspected ritualists in Mbaise, Imo State.

The question is: why do Nigerians still engage in such bloody, brutal, and barbaric acts and atrocities even in the twenty-first century? For me, there are three main reasons, but the foremost reason is obviously money-making.

- (1) **Religion:** Nigeria is claimed to be deeply religious society but we need really to know how their so-called religiosity has influenced their daily, moral and spiritual lives. Most Nigerians believe in the existence of supernatural beings and that these transcendental entities can be influenced through ritual acts and sacrifices. Rituals constitute part of the people's traditional religious practice and observance. Nigerians engage in ritual acts to appease the gods, seek supernatural favors, or to ward off misfortune. Many do so out of fear of unpleasant spiritual consequences if they default. So religion, theism, supernaturalism, and occultism are at the root of ritual killing in Nigeria. All these characteristics of religiosity are obviously primitive and should really belong to the dark ages where events and universe have ever been controlled by gods, goddesses, spirits of shades, hills and streams. How has Christianity influenced religious thoughts and behavior in Nigerian modern society?
- (2) **Superstition:** Nigeria is a society where most beliefs are still informed by unreason, dogmas, myth making, and magical thinking. In Nigeria, belief in ghosts, juju, charms and witchcraft is prevalent and widespread. Nigerians believe that magical potions prepared with human heads, breasts, tongues, eyes, and sexual organs can enhance one's political and financial fortunes; that juju, charms and amulets can protect individuals against business failures, sickness and diseases, accidents, and spiritual attacks. In fact, ritual-making is perceived as an act of spiritual fortification.
- (3) **Greed and Avarice:** Most often, Nigerians engage in ritual killing for money-making purposes. Among Nigerians, there is a popular belief in a

special kind of ritual, performed with human blood or body parts that can bring money or wealth, even though such a belief lacks any basis in reason, science or common sense. For example, there has never been a single proven instance of any Nigerian who became rich through a money-making ritual, though many gullible people attribute their fortunes to the goodwill of the god of money or the devil.

And still the belief in “ritual wealth” or “blood money” remains strong among the people and features prominently in the nation’s media and film industry. Often, what we hear are stories and speculations founded on ignorance and hearsay. For instance, Nigerians who enrich themselves through dubious and questionable means, like the scammers who swindle foreigners, are said to have indulged in money-making rituals using the blood or body parts of their parents, wives, children, or other close relations. So, driven by ignorance, greed, poverty, desperation, gullibility, and irrationalism, Nigerians murder fellow Nigerians for ritual purposes.

But ritual killing is not a practice limited to Nigeria. Ritual sacrifices also occur in other parts of sub-Saharan Africa, like in Ghana, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Uganda, etc. In fact in some parts of Uganda, a child is sacrificed before a major building is erected. There is therefore an urgent need for an international campaign to end this murderous practice and other horrifying traditions and superstitions in Africa.

Ritual killing, associated with various African superstitious beliefs, is related to kidnapping and human trafficking. Before a victim can be used for the purpose of rituals, he must be apprehended, tortured and then killed. For the purposes of making fast wealth, in cash and kind, many Nigerians and Africans believe that wealth-seekers must get initiated into a satanic or cultic organization where the Grand Master of the Underworld gives directives on the actions to be taken by the one who seeks the assistance of the unseen powers to get rich.

Often only some parts of the human body are requested, heads, genitals and breasts. Concoctions made from blends of supplied human flesh and other fantastic ingredients may be administered on a new member. These concoctions can be swallowed whole or rubbed deep into deep-cuts on the body. Most Nigerians, young and old believe that most wealthy people belong to cultic organizations, and that’s why they are ‘successful’ in business and life. Most Nigerian movies featuring in “*African magic*” series are made from ritual killing stuff.

### **Bad Medicine (Ogwu Ego): Juju generates wealth**

Many do believe in this type of stuff called “**ogwu ego**” (**charm that produces money**) among the Igbo people. Truly Nigerian movie makers accept the reality

that money can be made or multiplied using diabolic forces. Their movies in content seem to encourage young people to look for this magic wand, *ogwu ogo*, this rare pearl that must be possessed if one wants to laugh at poverty. Like real medicine it cures one's pains and other ailments. For most young and ambitious Nigerians there is no shortcut to opulence except through fraud or charms. Even those who have earned their wealth through perseverance and hard work are believed to have achieved such feats through some diabolical means. If your wit, your con-man tactics can't help – as in 419 fraud – look for *ogwu ego*. But be ready to meet with the demands of the juju man who concocts this medicine, panacea for all problems: -

**Dragon's teeth**  
**Liver of a new-born child**  
**Tail of a viper**  
**Fifty-year-old grave-digger's shovel**  
**Entrails of a scorpion**  
**Breast of a 15-year-old virgin**  
**A hundred-year-old widow's cloth**  
**Tongue of a bat**

There are many more catalogues of some frightening objects associated with money-making business. This magic medicine for money may at last help enroll you into a secret society, a.k.a. '**Millionaire Club**'. To be sure that your goal in life is realized, you may also be ready to lose or forego a very important part of yourself – may be – **your dear wife, mother or even your very life**. Yes, your life, too! You must choose to die in your early forties or fifties in order to enjoy the huge wealth into which the members of your new club will lead you. It may not matter much if you live for a year or two after accumulating the much-coveted treasure. The important thing is the enjoyment of your newfound wealth no matter how brief the period!

When you jam the jackpot and money begins to flow like water, spend extravagantly on useless ceremonies and feasts. Marry as many glamorous women as possible. Buy the most luxurious cars on earth. Build mansions and equip them with furniture imported from London, New York, or Paris. It is one of the dictates of the god of the Millionaire club with which you must put up. You may not use any part of the money for charities, execute useful projects or help the poor people closest to you. No. The mammon of iniquity you have acquired is only for devilish purposes. When eventually you die, your wealth goes back to its source. This is the type of 'get-rich formula' Nigerian movie makers portray.

The practice of ritual killing and human sacrifice continues to take place in several African countries in contravention of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights and other human rights instruments. In this 21st century,

human beings are still being hunted down, mutilated, murdered or sacrificed for ritual purposes across the region. Several cases of kidnapping and disappearance of persons are traced to the vicious schemes and activities of ritualists. In most cases, those targeted for ritual sacrifice are vulnerable members of the population — the poor, women, children, the aged and people with disabilities. Ritualists hunt for and harvest human body parts to prepare charms and magical concoctions. In some cases, desperate ritualists invade cemeteries and exhume dead bodies to extract body parts.

## CHAPTER 3

### ADDRESSING THE KIDNAPPING PROBLEM IN NIGERIA

#### **Kidnapping – a lucrative business?**

Nigerians who must visit their fatherland for obvious reasons, like burial of loved ones or spend Christmas vacation in the village are always gripped with fear as mere thought of landing in the village for a few days to spend time with families and neighbors scares them. They don't even believe that better security can be assured in the big cities of Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt, Onitsha, Kano, Kaduna, Ibadan, Benin, or Owerri. One could be kidnapped by hoodlums or young terrorists. Those who find themselves in the Northern states of the nation must be ready to face Boko Haram terrorist gangs. In public places, schools, parks and churches, there is no assurance of safety. There is nowhere to hide.

The state of insecurity has truly assumed an agonizing proportion as **kidnapping and terrorist bombings** have become a common place in Nigeria. The verb 'kidnap' (abduct, take hostage, snatch, capture), formerly associated with political agitations), has become a regular feature of life in Nigeria of today. It has become a lucrative business. It is easy. It is fast and yields incredible amounts of money within days, if not hours. It has continued to create young affluent millionaires if not billionaires! The traders in this human commodity have usually little to suffer before they grab millions of naira or dollar or even euro. Not only that they cart away, without molestation, cartons of money; they often murder their victims in cold blood!

One worried Nigerian teenager, perhaps for fun, put up a 'questionnaire' on Facebook, asking his friends to indicate the 'trade' or 'profession' they liked most in the modern Nigerian society, the one that yields fast money and with little or no sweat. *Kidnapping* was the most preferable means of getting rich over night!

The **commodities for sale** are easy to come by. These include men and women, old and young, adults and **children**, the affluent and the poor. Accessories and terms for quick negotiations include threat to kill hostages if challenged by security forces or if ransom demanded was not quickly released in time. And it works for abductors. Soon any organized chase for criminals is forgotten or abandoned. Jubilation and thanksgiving celebrations follow. The kidnapped dad, mom, brother, sister, child has been released 'unharmless!' The **tool(s)** used for the operation may not be expensive; a short gun and a bullet. A **cellular phone** does the rest of the job.

**“Once upon a time....”**

**“Foreign oil workers kidnapped in Nigeria...”** Once upon a time, some regular newspaper headlines ran like this. The phenomenon was almost confined to the oil regions of Nigeria, like the Niger Delta.

Foreigners working for Netherlands-based Sea Trucks Group who were kidnapped by pirates off the Nigerian coast have been released, the company spokes-person said. “We can confirm that our four kidnapped crew were released last night and that they are OK,” Sea Trucks spokesman said in an e-mail. Piracy and kidnapping in the Niger Delta and offshore are common, and West Africa's oil-rich Gulf of Guinea is second only to the waters off Somalia for the risk of pirate attacks which drives up shipping insurance costs.

The volatile Delta area of Nigeria has for years been crippled by armed insurgency largely made up of militants from the Delta who claimed that the region's people were not benefitting from its vast oil wealth while crude oil production hazards devastated the environment. Armed groups in the Delta regions have been notorious for kidnapping oil workers. A 2009 amnesty deal greatly reduced the unrest, but sporadic incidents have continued to occur including robberies and most prominently, piracy.

Reports confirm that there had been so many piracy incidents recorded in the Gulf of Guinea for the past few years or so. Many of the raids have involved high levels of violence, and **kidnappings**, and had increasingly been spreading through the Rivers state of Nigeria, including some major cities in Bayelsa and Lagos. Truly official kidnapping attacks in the area have been under-reported for several years. At a time, it became regular incidents of kidnapping of oil workers. Undisclosed sums of money, ranging from thousands to millions of naira had been paid as ransoms and few victims were killed.

Soon the kidnapping incidents have spread to every nook and cranny of Nigerian cities and villages and everyone, young and old has become vulnerable. In some states, as little as few thousands of naira have been demanded by kidnappers. Then reports that large sums of money counting in millions, have actually been paid by relatives of kidnapped victims to grant a release of their unfortunate loved one, are not in short supply. Not only high profile political leaders have been kidnapped; men and women ministers of God and traditional rulers have also been reported kidnapped.

Has Nigerian political and traditional leaders failed in any genuine efforts to stop the epidemic of kidnapping spree in Nigeria? Have they finally surrendered to the terrifying fire-power of the kidnappers and hoodlums ravaging the cities and villages? Will the abduction of the rich and the poor, kids and aged parents, innocent passers-by and even clergy men ever become a thing of the past in any foreseeable future? This has become a worrisome question today in Nigeria.

## **CONFERENCE ON KIDNAPPING SPREE IN NIGERIA**

It seems that intimidating fear has equally gripped the most protected, including government officials, politicians and some outspoken social activists. Not even news of the capture and destruction of hideouts of kidnappers seems to give any death-blow on the nefarious activities of the evil men in Nigeria. No. Their activities rage unabated. Many Nigerians living abroad and who regularly visit their loved ones at home don't care for such visits any more. Everyone fears he would be kidnapped in his village, even though they have never been rated as wealthy citizens.

Recently a close-door conference was organized by some Nigerian elder statesmen in the United States. Some concerned Nigerian professionals and citizens living in London also attended. Some selected eminent Nigerians from various ethnic groups were invited to discuss this irritating problem of kidnapping in Nigeria. It will be interesting to give a synopsis of the outcome of that important meeting. It was really a right step in the right direction, a way of finding some solutions to the problem.

If our lawmakers and traditional rulers would do as much as private concerned individuals in the Diaspora, perhaps peace may return to this troubled region of West Africa. The invitees included retired and active politicians, traditional rulers in the Diaspora - Ndi Echichi, Chiefs, Ndi Nze na Ozo, young and the elderly - businessmen, security officials, academics, professors of economics, sociology and psychology, pastors of souls and medical doctors. A lot of **well-researched papers** were presented at the meeting and the extraordinary topic was discussed and hotly debated under the following headings. We can only give a summary of the outcome of that conference.

- (1) Original Sin and Criminality.**
- (2) Why the evil is thriving in Nigeria**
- (3) The boys work for the grand masters**
- (4) The collaborators are many**
- (5) Tracking down criminals**
- (6) Solutions to the problem of kidnapping**
- (7) Local Militia to rescue?**

- (1) Original Sin and Criminality.**

No. The problem of evil came into existence right from day one God created the universe. The ancient Biblical myth of the Original sin and how it came to affect mankind, in fact dramatized the perpetual battle between good and evil. That was why the Bible said that 'God regretted for having made man'. So, good and wicked people will continue to dwell side by side in the modern

world, as they have been from time immemorial. That was how and why Cain killed his brother Abel.

Then a lot of directives for correct human behavior came to be coded into laws since life began on earth and has continued to develop. Everyday new laws are enacted to control human behavior. Many human beings go contrary to the adopted code of laws and so came into existence, jails, and detention camps for criminals'. This is why many countries and states also prefer capital punishment, *head-for-head, tit-for-tat*' in dealing with the most cruel and evil people.

The main intention of the youth in Nigeria engaging in kidnapping and violent crimes is to make money quickly. They like to go by the footsteps of the extraordinary rich Nigerians and our politicians who make great money by taking to politics. These young men have lived and seen how a former poor man has become rich overnight, and they know how. It has not been by hard work, not by any drop of sweat, not even by winning lottery or jamming a fortune left by a benefactor or well-known wealthy parents, dead or alive. The young people join any gang that they share their life styles and learn the trade of making easy money.

## **(2) Why the evil is thriving**

A very important reason why kidnapping and that sort of easy-money-making business is surviving in Nigeria is that our people, brothers and sisters, parents, and closest relations support anyone, (not only kidnappers) who succeed in bringing huge sums of money home, no matter from where and how the money came about. Parents, wives who know the nefarious activities of their sons, daughters and husbands welcome these happily and with open arms when they return from their 'operations'. Parents and closest relations who know the criminals don't care to confront them when they grow too rich. They share the wealth with them.

Fear of reprisals: Some of the people who may know about criminal activities of our closest relations and friends are always afraid of reprisals or acts of revenge. Criminals and their friends and associates can arrange and eliminate the suspected informants and may even subject their entire household to terrible punishments and harassment.

## **(3) The boys work for the grand masters**

There is no doubt that most of the armed bank-robbers we hear about, for example, are only 'errand boys' who serve the interests of their grand masters. The boys give accounts of their 'mission' and stewardship to their masters after each successful operation. There are also 'middlemen' who must coordinate the operations, and provide the necessary logistics for each operation. The boys are

usually told to keep sealed lips on their operation and dealings with their masters. Consequences of betrayal are great. The boys may fail to get their little remuneration, or may even lose their lives or find their entire families decimated if they fail to keep the secrets of their operations.

Not a few unfortunate captured criminals have refused to make any disclosures about their masters even at threats of torture and death. They claim they had taken oaths under the penalty of death never to reveal the identities of the Grand Masters in crime. This is possible in every society and culture. Most long-term investigations world-wide have failed to reveal the identities of key players in some assassinations and criminal activities. If key planners and sponsors of criminal activities were to be known in Nigerian, no doubt, there will be uproar and great mourning in the land! Not even the prophets of the new religious movements in Nigeria, or the most sophisticated traditional occult magicians can unravel the mysteries surrounding the identities of those behind most kidnapping cases witnessed in Nigeria.

#### **(4) Behold the collaborators in crime!**

For certain criminal operations like bank-robbery or kidnapping to succeed, some people have to supply the logistics. Logistics is the management of the flow of resources between the point of origin and the point of destination in order to meet some requirements for a successful achievement of a goal.

Management in all business and organizational activities is the act of getting people together to accomplish desired goals and objectives using available resources efficiently and effectively. Management comprises planning, organizing, staffing, leading or directing an operation, and controlling an organization, in our case here, some young people for the purpose of accomplishing a goal, kidnapping a named person, or carrying out a bank robbery. The resources managed in logistics can include physical items as cars to be used, equipment, and quantity and quality and type of weapons or ammunition to be used, as well as information needed. The logistics of physical items usually involves the integration of information flow.

The one who supplies the information plays a major role in the successful execution of an operation. Igbo people have the saying “**Onye ma mmadu n’egbu you**” (an unfortunate fellow is usually betrayed by his closest associate or friend). Put in another way “**Oke n’ulo gwara oke no n’ama, n’ihe no na ngiga**” (It is domestic rat that informs the wild rat that there are some pieces of fish in smoke-basket). The real brain behind the operation may after all not be a foreigner. He may be a very close friend or relation.

The details, which someone uses to gain advantage for anything is supplied by a well informed person, an insider. So in most cases accusing fingers are pointed on workers in the **bank** whenever a successful bank-robbery takes place. “Who tells the thieves that a large amount of money is in the bank?”

Who tells them the right time to strike and the type of weapons to bring along, some dynamites to break the bank safes open? Who tells the security officials stationed in the highways and major roads to steer clear and out of trouble as the robbers take off to their mission?" There are always good informants to supply the details. If there are to be none or few in Nigeria most of the kidnapping and armed robbery operations would end up in woeful failures and disasters for the thieves. Many may be caught or killed.

Operators in high-class kidnapping missions and bank-robberies don't take risks. They must be sure there are large sums of money in the bank and enough to go round all the participants as well as their sponsors when the booty is shared. There must be a lot to get from the bargain if a high-profile person, young and old was to be kidnapped.

The story of the young lady-accountant clerk in a First Bank branch at Onitsha, Anambra state who colluded with armed robbers to rob a customer that withdrew a large sum of money from the bank is still told and rehearsed by some incredulous villagers. The customer within few minutes' walk from the bank was waylaid by a waiting armed gang on his way home. Immediately they reached their destination, the gang phoned the lady banker, informing her where to meet them to collect her own share of the booty.

But luck is not always on the side of the wicked. Very few people believed that such a young lady could be as treacherous as that and that makes many people shudder in disbelief. "So, she is a thief and even belonged to a gang?" O! Yes! There are many like her. That was only a tip of the iceberg. Many innocent Nigerians will fall into coma if they are told what happens in their country in the cover of darkness and during telephone conversations!

### **(5) Using the latest communication technology to track down criminals**

"Why are Nigerian leaders unable to track down criminals who use the mobile phone and services of phone companies to negotiate ransoms?" In the United States and many developing and developed countries, modern technology helps everyday to resolve intractable issues that in the past used to sound or look like mysteries.

Although Nigeria is not yet advanced in modern technology as United States and most other European countries, but Nigerian security officers can employ the services of high-tech communication systems, via satellite to track down phone callers who use the gadget to amass huge illegal wealth for themselves, their gangs and families and subject their captors to terrible nightmarish disorders from which only a few recover many years after their ordeals with the men of the underworld? This is not one million question!

One of the Nigerian computer technologists who addressed the august assembly explained how this works and how it has helped everyday to resolve even simple phone bill discrepancies in America. Almost every bit of phone

conversation is recorded, time of call, location of the caller, duration of call etc. Hospital and ambulance attendants, fire-fighters, the police, and other security agencies respond to 911 emergency calls with ease. With or without GPS, they trace the exact location of the caller and render incredible services in times of need.

What is **GPS**? **GPS** (Global Positioning System) is a Satellite Navigation System. In US it is funded by and controlled by the **U. S.** Department of Defense. Although the system was designed for and is operated by the **U. S.** military, there are many thousands of civil users of **GPS** world-wide. **GPS** provides specially coded satellite signals that can be processed in a **GPS** receiver, enabling the receiver to compute position, velocity and time.

Nigerian authorities must employ the services of modern technology to solve most of our problems that seem to have defied human solutions if Nigeria is to recover from the devastating shocks criminals operating in various guises have given to the nation's development ventures. These were the closing warning and distress call the Nigerian computer and communications expert directed to Nigerian leaders and all and sundry that still have the interest of the nation at heart.

#### **(6) Long term solution: Employment opportunities for the teeming youth**

There was unanimous agreement during the international conference that one of the best ways of eradicating evil, especially all juvenile related crimes, including kidnapping is the creation of jobs for the teeming population of youths roaming the streets of big cities in Nigeria. There is great need, too, to create sports opportunities for young Nigerians. Gainfully dedicated youths who derive both leisure and financial gains in sports and games will find less or no time for crime. Most successful ones eventually become role models in society. It is sad to note that more than one-third of Nigerian population is unemployed. That will be more than 50 million youths.

That was a Nigerian newspaper headline report, early November of 2012. The statement was credited to a chairman of a senate committee in investment who broke the non-shocking news that 'one-third of the country's population is unemployed. This is a disturbing figure and the more reason why the rate of crime will continue to rise.

The chairman of the senate committee stated the obvious when he further opined that "Nigeria is sitting on a time bomb as a result of the growing number of unemployed youths." According to him what is needed is an aggressive sensitization on self-employment by the youths. He said that with assistance of **ITF** (Industrial Training Fund), Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria and the National Directorate of Employment, Nigeria can put

together a pool of self employed people who are ready to contribute to the country's economy. In the chairman's words: "We have to let them know that if they devote 35 years of their lives on government work, they would retire one day and if they do, what next".

Good words! But who are really motivating the youths? The time bomb, the chairman was referring to has already exploded and shocks have been reverberating everywhere – the kidnappings, incessant armed and bank-robberies, drug-trafficking, head-hunting, and human trafficking, to name only a few of the consequences of inaction. The leaders of the nation, employers of labor and the rich have not cared about the youths. The youths have not been motivated to work, rather have they been taught by adults to engage in fast-money business.

All said and done, almost everyone that attended that conference agreed that the most lasting measure that would help in reducing the incidents of kidnapping in Nigeria is the creation of employment opportunities for millions of Nigerians, especially graduates and school leavers who enter the labor market every year in search of non-existent jobs. Often the idle and unemployed young men take to armed robbery and kidnapping business that yield fast money and the girls take to prostitution. It was high time government and private employers stopped paying lip service to unemployment problems in Nigeria.

Thousands of Nigerian youths who are ready to take up many 'dirty' jobs at home are not gainfully employed. Many transport heavy loads on their heads and shoulders, loads like cement, wood and rods. Most of them who successfully flee Nigeria to overseas countries engage in all sorts of dirty jobs there. They are office cleaners, street sweepers, plate washers and garbage disposal workers. Often under hot weather conditions in Arab countries and freezing colds in Icelandic nations, Nigerian youths take up nerve-crushing jobs to earn decent living.

### **Employment opportunities in sports for the youth**

*"Minister of state orders reconstitution of sports associations"*. That was a newspaper report and news item that would gladden the hearts of many patriotic Nigerians and Nigerian youths. According to the report, the Minister of state Federal Capital Territory Abuja (FCT) directed the secretary of social development secretariat to reconstitute all boards of sports associations in the FCT. The sports association named were: **basketball, handball, karate, volleyball, judo, boxing, taekwondo, hockey, golf, badminton, kick-boxing, special sports, traditional sports, wrestling, weightlifting, swimming, gymnastics, tennis, table tennis, shooting and squash.**

Hurrah! It seems Nigerian sports ministers and their associates are getting up from slumber. There is no doubt that they have been resting for years letting the Nigerian youths stay idle, while football fields and stadia in Nigeria rot

away. Although the minister was citing the poor performance of Nigeria at the London Olympic games 2012 as reasons for making the clarion call, many concerned Nigerians believe it has been a long time Nigerian leaders abandoned sports and training of sportsmen and women. Since on domestic levels Nigerian youths abandoned sports and embarked on fast-money business, it has become impossible for our sports men and women to compete on international levels.

Related to employment opportunities is, no doubt engagement in gainful **sports and games' activities** by many talented youths within and outside Nigeria, world-wide. There are many young people, men and women all over the world who have become millionaires because they have employed their sports prowess in most regular sports activities. National and local sports and soccer competitions must feature regularly in school and college curriculum, so that opportunities are given, not only towards discovering one's abilities in sports and games, but also in gainfully using one's talents to the maximum. Non-government organization (**NGOs**), including corporations and companies, together with wealthy Nigerians can immortalize their names by sponsoring youth programs that can help reduce crimes in Nigeria.

### **Selecting the best athletes**

Nigerian sports and soccer coaches are usually poor in selecting the best young athletes to represent Nigeria in international and regional sports events. What is wrong basically with Nigeria is found in their attitude towards preparation for an important office or event. They don't begin in time. They select their actors poorly. Nigerians don't do their homework in time. White people begin quite in time and by doing the '**paperwork**' thoroughly well before embarking on the actual selection of candidates and starting their training. Theoretically paperwork refers to routine work that involves tasks such as filling in forms, keeping files up to date, or writing reports and letters. In practical terms paperwork means more. For our purpose here let us illustrate with the Nigerian situation. Truly a routine clerical or record-keeping work is often incidental to a more important task. There are a lot of questions that require some answers. Examples abound. Let's take a look at preparations for international events like sports and games.

**Swimming:** Where in the vast area and 36 states of Nigeria could Nigerians sports officials go for the best **swimmers**? Not in the Delta, Bayalsa, and Rivers states? Many 'magic swimmers' are said to feature in Sokoto and some Northern state where diving and fishing competitions are regular sports in Nigeria. Unless it is a fairy tale, stories circulate about Nigerian young men and women from these communities who can swim like fish and remain under the waters of the river Nigeria and Benue and the wide Atlantic ocean for hours. Nigerian sports officials should cast their nets deep into these areas for big catches of worthy men and women who can bring glory to our fatherland in

international swimming contests. Look at the number of events associated with swimming or water or rowing. They include: **Diving, Canoe Sprint, Canoe Slalom, Rowing, Sailing, Swimming, Synchronized Swimming, and Water polo**, or Water ball, which is a team water sport.

In some Northern states of Nigeria **Polo** is a popular sport. Polo is a team sport played on horseback in which the objective is to score goals against an opposing team. Sometimes called "The Sport of Kings", Polo was introduced in the Summer Olympics at the 1900 Games. It was contested in another four Olympiads before being removed from the official program after the 1936 Summer Olympics. Players score by driving a small white plastic or wooden ball into the opposing team's goal using a long-handled mallet. This is related to **Hockey**, which is a family of sports in which two teams play against each other by trying to maneuver a ball or a puck into the opponent's goal using a *hockey* stick. Nigerians can do well in Water Polo and Hockey.

**Shooting:** There are a lot of **shooting** contests in the Olympic sports where bows and arrows are used. Precisely we are talking about **Archery**, which in alphabetical order comes first in the list of the 36 sports events in the Olympics. **Archery** is the art, practice, or skill of propelling arrows with the use of a bow. Historically, archery has been used for hunting and combat, while in modern times its main use is that of a recreational activity. A person who participates in archery is typically known as an "archer" or "bowman".

Related to Archery is shooting proper. Nigerians, if trained and motivated can do well in this sports event. **Shooting** is the act or process of firing rifles short guns or other projectile weapons such as bows or crossbows. Even the firing of artillery, rockets and missiles can be called shooting. A person who specializes in shooting is a marks man. Shooting can take place in a shooting range or in the field in hunting, in shooting sports or in a combat

If you are smart and your arrow or bullet lands on the correct mark, you collect a Gold medal. A lot of physical energy is not involved. The **Hausa/Fulani** people are known to be the best accurate shooters in Nigeria. Wouldn't they compete favorably with their counterparts from the East European regions of the world? Who will inform Nigeria's sports officials and ministers of sports and tourism that shooting is a world sport and Nigerian young men and women can make their nation proud if they participate and win?

**Cycling:** Cycling is an important Olympic event. Under cycling we have Mountain **Bike, Road Cycling, Track Cycling and BMX**. **Bicycle motocross** or **BMX** is the sport of racing bicycles, in motocross style on tracks which use an inline start and have obstacles. Nigeria, no doubt has no good roads. But this type of cycling does not require very smooth roads. Nigerians being used to rough roads and hard times should win medals at all types of cycling events in the Olympic s.

### **Motivating young athletes**

**Nigerians coaches are said to be poor in motivating young athletes:** We come to another important point on paperwork. Nigerian sports officials are poor administrators because right from the start they fail to motivate athletes. They fail to take a look at the entire sports odyssey from the grassroots development. There is shameful neglect of sports at the local level. Young talented athletes are not discovered and nurtured when they are young, in the primary and secondary school levels.

Little or no sports activities are organized in the local communities, in schools and colleges. Inter-house sports have been a thing of the past, once one of the most important days in erstwhile Mission schools and colleges. Taking over from the missionaries, Nigerian school and college administrators converted huge acres of football and cricket fields into large farmlands where they cultivated yams, cassava, cocoyam, plantains and maize. Bush rats and dangerous reptiles took over what remained of the magnificent edifices formerly known as Mission Schools.

Nigerian administrators don't know how to engage youths in gainful activities. They don't even know how to curb crime and convert a former drug addict, a jail breaker and a young prostitute into a celebrity in the field of sports. Nigerian leaders should send honest officials to the United States to learn this simple art. Without Black American competitors and their siblings from Jamaica, Bahamas, Trinidad and Tobago the Olympic fever will never reach any high pitch! Nigerians don't know how to motivate the young ones; they equally fail to catch them young!

Not only sports administrators in Nigeria fail to inspire or encourage young talented Nigerians in the bid to succeed in sports; parents are equally guilty of this neglect. In a country where the emphasis is placed on academic achievement and paper qualifications, sports activities are thought to belong to low achievers and dropouts. Our child experiences show that up till the modern times most Nigerian families regard children who engage in sports and games in school as failures and disgraceful kids. A report to parents that their son or daughter was seen playing football in school or village square at any time of the day generates problems in the family. Not only that the offending kid is physically and severely punished; he may be denied a lot of daily needs, including food for days.

Who inform Nigerian families that children in most parts of the developed and developing world take parents' and guardians' support in sports for granted. By constant parents' support and patronage, children develop wonderful skills in sports when they were still toddlers. Most of the great names in sports all over Europe and America, past and present started so early as toddlers to swim, run fast, carry golf bats, tennis rackets, to twist their bodies in gymnastics. They were introduced into the arena or field or court by their parents, who were equally their teachers and coaches.

Most of the present reigning athletes and sportsmen and women simply learned the trade from their parents, who were long distant runners in Kenya, great boxers, like Mohamed Ali or Mike Tyson. The great tennis champions, Williams Sisters were initiated by their father and who coached and accompanied them to every competition anywhere. The great Tiger Woods was taught by his father. There are too many examples of parents and sponsors who have played leading role in the development of sports and as well nurturing the greatest sportsmen and women in modern history.

In modern America and Europe, most parents spend a lot of time and financial resources in the upbringing of their children in sports events. Parents register their children in various sports clubs and associations even at the age of six. They drive them to playing grounds; stay and watch their performances and bring them back home at the end of the day. Parents don't stop at that. They prepare playing grounds behind their homes so that their children can practice at their leisure. They spend a lot of money providing various types of sports wares which help in the rapid development of talents.

### **Immortalizing successful athletes**

Nigerian leaders are said to be poor in immortalizing successful athletes: Not only the states of nations as a whole register their joy and appreciation for their son's or daughter's success in every sports achievement; celebration galore follows thereafter at various levels, in local communities and even churches. At the highest level, the young athlete may be brought to the government house for a chat with the prime minister or the first lady. What an honor! Soon companies and manufacturers engage the services of the victorious athlete and actor in the adverting business and promotion of their businesses. Sports enthusiasts surely buy products promoted by their idol and angel, who promptly becomes an icon readily found among others on the desktop computers!

Who will blame young sports lovers for adopting any hairstyle their idol adopts? They prefer and buy articles of clothing, foot wares and other products which their admirable athlete confirms to be the best in the market. Young sports lovers don't stop at what might appear like frivolous antics in the eyes of adults. They soon adopt the lifestyle of the one they now consider as a role model. They, too will like to succeed like their great friend and take to the same or other sports activities that lead one to greater heights in life.

Poor Nigerian leaders and sports masters may really jump up and down and rejoice with the rest of their compatriots when Nigeria as a team wins a medal in an international contest. Good! But their show of joy and appreciation lasts a moment! With some bogus promises of rewarding the victorious members of the team, soon the victorious sports men and women are forgotten and the promises remain unfulfilled. They may be remembered again, maybe a few weeks before the next sports events.

There is absolutely absence of continuity in the way Nigerian officials do their business. Soon the massive sports arena prepared to host an important state, regional or an international event is abandoned and rots away. The arena may be visited only by religious groups who organize crusades to promote so many religious activities flourishing in Nigeria.

Very few non government organizations or former successful sports men and women found and sponsor sports club for the purpose of training future athletes who can represent their fatherland in international sports events. Big wealthy Nigerians don't invest in sports, but may be found in sports clubs for only recreational interests. That is lamentable. There are many other sports events which Nigerians are masters. Athletics, boxing, and any sports event associated with 'ball' – hand, leg, volley, basket, beach etc can't be strange to Nigerians. Here Nigerians, if given proper training can become masters like their counterparts elsewhere.

### **Downsizing the number of “Billionaire Clubs” and jumbo pay for lawmakers in Nigeria**

One of the most important recommendations made by the participants at the Conference on kidnapping spree in Nigeria was that of reducing the number of billionaire clubs in Nigeria. They lamented that even as it has become crystal clear that the activities of the ultra-wealthy class in Nigerian society has aggravated the insecurity situation, more and more billionaire clubs have continued to sprout and flourish in Nigeria. The general conclusion may not be far from the assumption that these wealthy Nigerians, whose sources of wealth are publicly or not publicly known are after all the sponsors of criminal and terrorist activities in the nation.

Besides rich Nigerians whose sources of income are unknown or are clouded in mystery, there are a lot of Nigerians, and precisely the lawmakers of our nation, who receive jumbo pay for lawmaking business in Nigeria's democratic system of governance, inherited from Europe and America.

Many concerned Nigerians (including the present writer) have raised alarm over the high salaries which our legislators receive and had equally pointed out some of the deadly consequences on our economy and on the poor masses of this nation. The rich continues to grow richer, while the poor languish in abject poverty.

In Radio News talk the present writer had pointed out in 2011 why the president of our country should look into the jumbo pays which our lawmakers receive when millions of youths are unemployed. The writer directed the following clip to authorities in power, in the address caption: ***Elections, lost and won - Which way forward?***

Let winners take note. Nigerians are very critical, unforgiving, often merciless in judgment, easily disappointed, very impatient with their leaders. Very soon you may hear “regrets”, “Had we known”. Winners should remember how the people (the Israelites) murmured against Moses: “Why did you bring us out here to die. Why did you bring us out here, no water, no food.....It would have been better to die in Egypt as slaves....! Winners, if you do not perform from ‘Day One’, Nigerians will murmur. If you procrastinate, they will grumble!.....

### **Coming to the concretes, the writer addressed the president:**

President, Goodluck Jonathan can never fail Nigerians in the area of *power and electricity*. *Petroleum products* must remain cheap and flowing everywhere. President Jonathan, whatever other programs he may have, must not close his ears to the people’s protests against the activities of law makers. Their salaries are said to be too high and scandalous and must be slashed to the minimum! The Bible says it all, “By their fruits you shall know them”. Nigerians are tired of “business as usual”. They want change. They voted for change. They don’t want old faces, crooks and 419’ers in new administrations. Any administration that does not begin with anti-corruption campaign is already a failure. The ‘people’s army’, ‘unhired and unpaid agents’ of their loved ‘Moses’ and ‘Messiah’ and candidates at the polls are watching the winners, and big brothers very closely. They cannot be disappointed!

It is unlikely that our voice was heard or that the outcry ever captured the attention of the president and the lawmakers, hence the cry is loudest now that many more Nigerians, the great majority, still find themselves in the camp of the marginalized, and operating much more on an intolerable poverty line.

Most Nigerian newspapers have also thrown light to Nigeria’s utmost predicament, injustice and callousness on the part of our leaders: It is not hard to draw conclusions that it on account of the type of jumbo pay package that Nigerian lawmakers receive in the business of lawmaking in our country that politicians are always ready to go to any length, even to kill to grab a seat in the National Assembly. **“Jumbo Pay: Lawmakers earn N338.6 billion”** was a Newspaper (Daily Sun) headline, Friday, June 3, 2011.

According to a breakdown, 469 lawmakers will earn N338.6 billion in the next four years, investigations revealed, and that was an authoritative report. It will cost the country that whopping sum in taxpayers’ money to keep the 469 members of the seventh National Assembly in office for the next four years.

The amount which covers salaries and sundry allowances (accommodation, vehicle, furniture, house maintenance, domestic staff, entertainments, utilities, constituency, leave allowances, newspapers, periodicals and so on) to be earned by the lawmakers does not, however, factor in the deferential pays and other gratuities that go to the principal officers of the two chambers of the federal legislature. It does not also include expenses incurred on duty tours. It is also silent on the unverifiable lump sums that come from 'oversight functions' and 'lobbying'.

Whatever these calculations might come up to, one thing is clear to the ordinary Nigerians. The amount is too large to imagine. The bottom line is that apart from other additional 'remunerations' an average Nigerian lawmaker takes home at least a monthly pay packet of sixteen million naira (**N16,000,000**). If true, that is odd news for more than 50 million jobless youth in Nigeria.

I would not blame the governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Mallam Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, who has asked the Federal Government to downsize the labor force if it must achieve anything meaningful as far as economic resuscitation is concerned in the country. The downsizing of the labor force will however be meaningless if it is only the civil service, we know that will be affected. Malam Sanusi might be right when he tried to make his case against the civil service. To Sanusi, it is illogical for a country to have its economy developed when it spends 70 per cent of its revenue in servicing salaries and gratuities of workers. He maintained:

"At the moment, 70 per cent of Federal Government's revenue goes for payment of salaries and entitlements of civil servants, leaving 30 per cent for development of 167 million Nigerians. That means that for every naira government earns, 70 kobo is consumed by civil servants," Sanusi contended. The solution, according to Sanusi is that: "You have to fire half of the civil service because the revenue government has is supposed to be for 167 million Nigerians. Any society where government spends 70 per cent of its revenue on its civil service has a problem. It is unsustainable," he argued.

Many will surely get angry and differ from Sanusi's call for mass retrenchment, arguing that the country is already battling with the menace of unemployment. Such measure may increase poverty, armed robbery and of state of insecurity. There may be need to consider other areas from which the government's spending cost could be downsized. Malam Sanusi hit the nail at the right spot, when he wondered with millions of other Nigerians the sense in the **jumbo pay** for Nigerian lawmakers The **CBN** governor has here rightly taken the political system of the country to the cleaners. He wondered what manner of country would elect over 100 senators and about 400 House of Representatives members in the name of lawmaking. He said a cursory mathematical summation of the expenses of the executive arm of government, the lawmakers and the civil servants would reveal the fact that these three arms of government are the ones taking the lion's share of the nation's revenue.

It is not only Sanusi who has bemoaned this tragedy. The British man, Richard Darden, an expert in African affairs could not comprehend the situation. He pointed out while addressing Nigerian politicians during the 51<sup>st</sup> independent anniversary celebrations in Abuja that the staggering margin of income disparity between the highest paid Nigerian politicians and the *have-nots*, languishing in man-created misery throughout Nigeria is no doubt alarming. It can cause the staunchest of hearts to break, he asserted. He continued:

It is even more **unacceptable** that in a country with the above statistics, that the politicians are the highest paid in the world. \$1 million dollars for a parliamentary position as salary, with another \$1 million in expenses is obscene.

### **The aftermath of the Insatiable lust for wealth**

#### **'We slaughtered hunchback to live big'**

This newspaper headline: “Suspected ritualists confession: *'We slaughtered hunchback to live big'*” may help drum the ugly lesson hard into the heads of Nigerian leaders, the young and old in Nigeria. The future looks really bleak if the number of billionaire clubs in Nigeria is allowed to proliferate.

"We also want to live big after seeing other young boys that are not even our age group living in affluence, riding good and exotic cars, living in good houses and enjoying the good things of life". These were the words of Samuel Olatunji, paraded by the police authorities in Akure, the Ondo State capital, for the ritual killing of a 25-year old, Adeoye Dovo, a hunchback. Adeoye was an **SSS3** student in a private school and lived with his parents at Bashorun Quarters at Ago-Alaye area in Odigbo local government area of the state.

The suspects, three of them - wanted to get rich by all means; they were ready to kill to achieve this purpose. So they approached a herbalist, Oluwatosin Elebile for money ritual. The death of the Adeoye led to violent reaction from youths in the community who set ablaze vehicles and houses of the suspected ritualists. Parading the suspects – Olatunji and the herbalist Ondo State police commissioner, Sani Mogaji, said Olatunji had confessed to the ritual killing. The two other suspects, Dayo and Holo, are on the run. Such stories are reported daily in Nigerian newspapers.

#### **Procure a human head and collect N500,000**

Another report confirms our contention that the ‘get-rich-quick’ mentality is largely responsible for heinous crimes committed by Nigerians every day, including kidnapping, armed robbery, drug trafficking and head-hunting

business. One Chukwutem Eke, a farmer in Delta State was sentenced to death by hanging for beheading a 15-year old boy for rituals. During his trial before the Ogwashi-Uku High Court in the state, Chukwutem alleged that he was contracted by the pastor of a certain white garment church to commit the act. The court was told that the suspect attacked the deceased and his sister with a cutlass while they were weeding their father's farm. The sister succeeded in escaping but the boy was overpowered and beheaded. The convict had, in a confessional statement, admitted committing the offence, saying that he was contracted by a pastor of a certain white garment church with a promise of N5000,000.

### **I sold human parts to churches and ritual killers – Joshua**

According to Vanguard newspaper reports, November 21<sup>st</sup> 2012, will ever remain indelible in the hearts of Oloko villagers as members of the palace guard to the community leader of Ajara Topa community in collaboration with a vigilante group operating in the area arrested a man who allegedly eats and sells human parts to ritualists, operating from a hole he dug under the Gbaji bridge along the Badagry-Seme border.

Joshua Akindele, 56 confessed that he had been into cannibalism and ritual killing for the past 15 years, after being introduced to the business by a friend who convinced him to stop driving popular motor cycle known as "Okada" which he claimed profited him a little, but could not sustain him.

He further confessed that he was the brain behind the incessant killing within the village using timber woods to hit his human prey, and dragging them into the holes before splitting their parts for food and business with ritual buyers

When asked how he carried out his activities, he confessed "Whenever I see somebody walking alone without being conscious of who is watching, I walk slowing up to them and hit them with a big wood on their heads after which they fall unconscious. I then drag them into the hole and use a knife to cut them into parts which I sell to some churches and some ready buyers who indulge in **ritual killing for easy money**, and some times when I feel hungry late in the night, I eat some parts for food. He confessed further that he sells the parts as follows: Heads N7,500, breast N1,500, penis N1000, hands and legs for N3,500.

### **“How I beheaded a seven-year-old boy”.**

A man arrested by the officials of the Department of State Services (**DSS**) in Abuja with the head of a seven-year-old boy explained how he beheaded his victim. Joan Yakubu a-k-a Tambaya, 25 was arrested by the **DSS** officials attached to the **FCT** command at Asokoro alongside his accomplice Ishaya

Dukulung, 30. Yakubu said his friend asked him to get a fresh human head to be sold to a client in Abuja who promised him **huge amount of money**.

"I cut off the head of Danjuma after I persuaded him by asking if he would like to eat bread and he answered yes! So I bought bread for N50 and gave him and while he was eating, I asked him to go with me to a nearby river for a swim which he did. "When we got to the river, I entered the river while he stayed away. I told him to join me while I pretended to be washing my feet. I forced the boy to drown before I cut off the head and left the main body in the river." Yakubu said he later concealed the head in a bag and took it to Dakulung before heading to Abuja to meet the buyer.

Only government officials whose hands are clean can really put up stiff fight to wipe out crime in Nigeria. Stubborn condemnation of corrupt practices in Nigeria by the political and traditional leaders can help deliver a devastating blow on the menace of armed robbery, kidnapping and other violent crimes in Nigeria. There is need for moral and ethical revolution in Nigeria today.

## CHAPTER 4

## STATE OF INSECURITY: BAKASSI BOYS RE-VISITED

**Search for security - the powerful role of the occult**

The Bakassi Boys did it those days and there are their likes today in the militant groups and organizations like **MOSOP** (Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People), **MASSOB** (Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra), **OPC** ((O’Odua People’s Congress) and other vigilante organizations that have been created to protect the interests of various ethnic groups in Nigeria and promote their autonomy. Often these strong groups do not recognize the government or the authority of the police.

As part of the search for solutions to Nigeria’s security problems, compounded by the rise of Boko Haram terrorism and surge in kidnapping extravaganza, this study may likely gain some important consideration in the eyes of many Nigerians. In the eyes of many the once Bakassi Boys’ security outfit may eventually prove a useful option if peace would ever reign again in Nigeria. This is a popular opinion shared by many Nigerians, at home and in the Diaspora. How can Bakassi Boys play a useful role in the modern Nigerian society, ravaged by fear and insecurity? This study is **an off-shoot of the international close-door conference we have discussed above.**

*The belief in the powerful place and role of charms, the occult, portents, and the spirit world particularly among the Igbo, Nigerians, and most Africans, is so strong even in the modern times that no amount of Christian evangelization can eradicate or diminish such influences in the lives of these people – Christians and traditional religionists. Most undesirable ‘evils’, ‘unfortunate natural incidents’ and even ‘accidents’ – car, fire, and storms – are usually attributed to the ‘hands’ or intrusion of (named and unnamed) enemies, who are said to be bent on destroying a member or entire family. Conclusions are not hard to come by if a harmful or harmless utterance, a curse, by a sworn enemy happens to turn to a reality. It is the enemy who has wrecked the havoc!*

*Belief in the powerful influences of the occult is shared by most Nigerians, who insist that extraordinary role of the spirits in society is part of the people’s cultural heritage. The fearsome characteristics of the spirits are daily exhibited in the communities’ traditional dances and festivities – **mmanwu, okorosa, ebuebu, keleke, okonko** – and in various masquerades. These Igbo ‘spirits’ have their counterparts and names in other Nigerian cultures. Whether anyone cares to accept the realities the people claim these*

*represent, the fact is that the fear and respect embedded in the masquerade phenomenon give credence to the powerful influence they represent in society.*

*It is a great offence to challenge the masquerade, because it is precisely a spirit (mmuo). It is the custodian of the great heritage of the communities and its decision is final. In some communities in Igbo land the okonko is called 'our father' (nna anyi). It is the final arbiter in all disputable cases of infidelity, injustice, and oppression. It is not a woman's cult. And to unmask the 'spirit' is one of the greatest disrespects and abominations one can show or commit. If the crime ever takes place a lot of libations must be poured and reparations made to appease the spirit world.*

*These beliefs and the aura of respect enjoyed by the 'spirits' are not easily challenged or discredited by the most audacious or staunch Christian communities, bodies, and believers. Most people truly hold tenaciously to this traditional heritage believing it is the most powerful protective force they still see around in the modern world governed by atheistic theories and practices as well as modern technology. We can see and appreciate the place of mask and the masquerade in African society, ancient and modern.*

There are a lot of misfortunes usually attributed to seen and unseen spirits and enemies always believed to be lurking at the dark corners and intersections, and imbued with occult powers. These enemies can make life miserable for humans. Nigerians, young and old, educated and uneducated, firmly believe in the activities of witches and occult powers. An enemy can make a healthy young man impotent and a woman unable to conceive and bear a child.

Even if the woman succeeds in getting pregnant, a sworn enemy (brother or sister, mother or father, grandparents and closest relations), can manipulate the gender of the unborn and turn them to females!) Constant emergence of female progeny or offspring in the family is usually a bad omen in Igbo land. Female offspring is never a cherished one among families who do not wish to go out of extinction in the community.

The bottom line is that science has no satisfactory explanation to offer as regards the gender of a child. Even Christians, who believe in the omniscient and omnipotent God, rarely admit that it is the Alpha and Omega of the universe who determines the gender of the female offspring. While the merciful God may be responsible for the numerous births of male kids, He cannot be so hardhearted as to pronounce a curse on a family who produces only female offspring. This is the Igbo man's belief.

Among most Nigerians, even in the modern times, when science and technology provides answers for a lot of bugging problems, including sickness and death, people easily arrive at conclusions that seen and unseen enemies or forces are responsible for certain inexplicable calamities. Deaths which result from treatable and untreatable deceases like diabetes, stroke, heart attack and cancer are easily attributed to the activities of spirits, enemies, and medicine

men, who provide or concoct magic mixtures to harm humans. Poison or act of poisoning is a tormenting problem openly discussed in African society.

So long as man feels unsafe in this world, among friends and foes, neighbors and strangers, there is need to rely or cling to the succor of someone, who claims to have some spiritual powers to deal with hidden enemies of man or to objects, in nature of charms and amulets, which can assure or provide some type of security. **‘Search for security’**, is thus an inevitable preoccupation that can make a troubled soul undertake torturous journeys and risks to procure solutions to many vicissitudes of life that menace humans.

### **Who are Bakassi Boys?**

During the troubled period in South Eastern States of Nigeria in the nineties, when hoodlums and dangerous youth gangs went on rampage menacing lives and properties, most communities and even government turned to a group of young armed vigilante, called **‘Bakassi Boys’** for succor. The activities of Bakassi Boys had great impact on the lives of both people and communities throughout Nigeria during those turbulent days.

It is necessary to take a short look at the so-called Bakassi Boys and their activities to appreciate the place of the occult in Nigerian society – ancient and modern. The Bakassi phenomenon illustrates how armed gangs combined physical and occult violence to deal with criminality in communities. Bakassi Boys, who operated from 1998 until 2002 among the Igbo communities in the south eastern states of Nigeria, was formed by market traders as a private security organization, paid to fight armed bandits in Aba and the entire Abia State. As they performed their job very efficiently, the government gave them official recognition and started co-funding them.

Soon after, the state assemblies of two other Igbo states, Anambra and Imo, entrusted them with the task of “cleansing” the land of criminals. Besides hunting down ordinary criminals, they also fought sorcerers and witches. The government of Anambra state then claimed that the boys were reviving an “age-long system of our people taking care of their defenses.” The militia operated in a social and political environment in which traditional forms of policing were indeed better suited to maintaining order than bureaucratic institutions borrowed from the West. Bakassi Boys adopted Igbo traditions in an arbitrary (or creative) way and like many militias or vigilante groups in Nigeria and beyond tried to gain legitimacy by reviving pre-colonial traditions.

Since the state could no longer protect its citizens, they must turn to militia leaders and other local strongmen who monopolize the means of survival. Those seeking patronage cannot protest or rebel when they are treated in a humiliating manner. The armed gangs that often replace police cannot easily establish a monopoly on violence.

In order to assert themselves against competing gangs, they have to intimidate their rivals by celebrating their strength and brutality. Using physical and occult violence thus becomes part of their public image. Power that defies institutional regulations grows out of public control. It becomes unpredictable and appears to be linked to invisible forces that may be manipulated by secret techniques. Decline, which affects all spheres of social life, is experienced as a collective trauma for which people have no explanation. By linking it to witchcraft, evil is personified, making it comprehensible and opening avenues to take countermeasures.

Bakassi Boys could be compared to the members of the local Lagos **OPC** (O’Odua People’s Congress) militias that typically made use of magic or spiritual powers to intimidate people or enforce discipline in communities before the group was banned in Lagos.

### **‘Prophet’ Eddy Nawgu & Bakassi Boys**

Eddy Nawgu movement that brought the Bakassi Boys to great limelight in Nigeria those days was a mixture of Christian Piety and the Occult. On November 8, 2000 precisely, demonstrators stormed the government house in Anambra State, Nigeria, took some government officials hostage, and demanded the execution of a sorcerer called Edward Okeke. Prophet Eddy, also known as the “Jesus from Nawgu.” Edward Okeke popularly called **Eddy Nawgu** has enjoyed the patronage of ever-growing millions of Nigerian miracle seekers, owned a church in which miraculous cures were said to have been effected for many years.

Whoever visited the prophet was greeted at the very entrance of the “healing center” by pious images in the form of an immense statue of Jesus surrounded by statues of Moses, the Prophet Elijah, and finally Eddy himself, rising up over a fallen angel or the devil. As people came to learn, however, behind this facade of Christian piety, monstrous crimes were said to have taken place, including a series of ritual murders.

Some newspapers speculated that the *“man of God”* had killed scores of men in order to prepare especially effective charms from their body parts. In the area of Onitsha, Eddy was suspected of having played a role in the theft of 25 babies from a maternity ward. Because of the enormous power he wielded, people assumed he must have had great occult knowledge and powers which helped him evade all attempts by state authorities to prosecute him.

Stories of Eddy’s powerful concoctions are too many. He compounded his charms with frightening materials which included human parts, animals, leaves, fowls, dust and sea creatures and ‘holy’ water. Eddy Nawgu was said to have ground or pounded the heads of new born babies in a big wooden mortar to make charms. Most people who went to him to procure spiritual powers and wealth were forced to drink potions made from those ingredients!

Edward Okeke was suspected of being no ordinary mortal, but a strange hybrid—half man, half spirit. He was known to be both spirit and man. On posters that were for sale in all the large markets in Igbo land, he was depicted with a double face, showing human features hiding an animal-like, demonic rascal.

Original recordings of the so-called *Confessions of Eddy Nawgu* circulated all over Nigeria and sold like hot cakes in the streets. And as Eddy's problems with the Bakassi Boys who had arrested the infamous 'prophet' escalated, the Bakassi leaders sent a video cassette to the president in Abuja, showing scenes from the interrogation. While the prophet was interned in the Bakassi headquarters, the president's office was said to have demanded that he be handed over to the police.

The governor of Anambra State, which was officially overseeing the activities of the militia, also tried to prevent the Bakassi fighters from executing the sorcerer. Even the president and host of prominent government officials – state and federal - were said to have exerted pressure behind the scenes to have the prophet released. But the Bakassi Boys were not to be bribed. On November 9, they led Edward Okeke out of his cell and brought him to a market place, where about 20,000 onlookers sang enthusiastic songs while the young men hacked the sorcerer to pieces with their machetes.

At first sight, it might be assumed that the dispute over whether the prophet should be released or executed reflected a conflict between enlightened and traditional forms of thought. Yet this was not a confrontation between legal-minded state representatives and a murderous mob possessed by backward, anachronistic ideas. Everyone in Nigeria knew that the politicians who became mixed up in the case took occult powers as seriously as anyone else. It is not unusual in Nigeria for government functionaries to be intensely concerned with occult threats.

General Abacha, who ruled Nigeria until 1998, and many Nigerian and African leaders, including Idi Amin Dada, a one-time Ugandan military dictator, and many more high political stalwarts were known to have kept sorcerers, fortune-tellers, and Islamic marabouts with them in their presidential bunkers. These fortune-tellers concocted medicines believed to have helped to keep the officials in power and frustrate their enemies who fought to kill or dethrone them.

Against this background, it is hardly surprising that state representatives acted so decisively on behalf of the sorcerer from Nawgu. In the eyes of the people, the alleged ritual murderer was part of the political establishment—indeed he embodied the worst aspects of the Nigerian upper classes. The violent protests in the state capital, which were to lead to the sorcerer's lynching, therefore must have had aspects of political rebellion or class warfare between the rich who make money by fraud and through devilish means. There

could be no doubt that Edward Okeke had close links with the top ranks of society.

Some of his most influential clients had had themselves photographed with him, photographs that Eddy had hung in his office to advertise his spiritual business. These photographs gave rise to the suspicion that the prophet must have possessed particularly exclusive charms in order to attract such prominent clients. Why else should his visitors have made him presents of luxury limousines?

During the reign of Eddy Nawgu, it was widely claimed by large number of ordinary Nigerian citizens that most of the practicing pastors, healers, who owned and operated numerous miracle centers, as well as founders of New Independent Church Movements in Nigeria owed their ‘spiritual’ and ‘prophetic powers’ from their Grand Master Eddy Nawgu. This claim, at least should demonstrate the amount of prestige the mysterious earthly and heavenly figure commanded in the history of occultism and religion in modern society in Nigeria.

As the story went, before his death in the hands of Bakassi Boys, Eddy Nawgu warned or left a declaration for this clients, instructing them to throw into the River Niger all the staffs of office or effigies he must have given them during their initiation into the ‘religious cult’. He warned that those who failed to comply would take personal responsibility for what happened to them at last. As those who believed in such ‘prophecies’ testified that hundreds of Eddy Nawgu adherents – men and women, the ‘religious’ and occult diviners, highly placed politicians, businessmen and traders rushed to perform that ‘unholy’ ritual.

Many would later testify, even under oath, that most of those personalities they knew, and who lost that Eddy Nawgu staff of office, or magic wand, which was the great symbol of spiritual powers that worked the miracles for them, eventually lost everything of value they possessed. They became paupers and like the Prodigal Son of the Scriptures must have had their eyes opened to the realities of the situation into which they messed themselves up. How have the mighty fallen! And like their grand master they found themselves in oblivion, a bottomless pit.

### **Wealth, Human Sacrifice, Ritual Murder**

As far as Nigerians are concerned, the accusation that the church owner from Nawgu, and many other ‘prophets’, who operate such ‘religious’ business enrich themselves by means of human sacrifices cannot be dismissed as groundless. In Nigeria, on the other hand, the public is becoming uneasy because ritual murders are in fact taking place. Hundreds of individuals are supposed to fall victims to ritual murder yearly.

In the popular imagination, such crimes are readily associated with the rich and powerful, and indeed one is often told that they have only been able to acquire riches through occult means. The suspicion therefore rages that members of the upper classes, like witches, join together in secret societies. Whoever wants to become a member of their “millionaires’ clubs” has to “sell” a close relative. The person to be sacrificed would then be gripped by a mysterious disease and slowly wither away because his tormentors would devour his soul or invisibly destroy his inner organs.

### **Role of the occult - dealing with rival forms of justice in Nigeria**

In Nigeria and among Igbos in particular, state authorities are hardly in a position to contain fear of occult powers. Not a few Nigerian medical doctors and experts have confessed their inability to deal with some severe cases of medical conditions or ailments, which they describe as ‘mysterious’ and above their western medical knowledge. Some have never hesitated to refer their patients to ‘occult medicine men’ or ‘prophet-healers’ who know best how to handle such cases.

What local Nigerians refer to as ‘*spiritual attack*’ is one of the ailments, some believe is best handled by the ‘witch doctors’ or modern ‘religious founders’. “Spiritual attack”, can be another name for ‘chronic pneumonia’ ‘chronic headache’, ‘hepatitis’, ‘severe heart conditions’, tuberculosis, elephantiasis, or even hiv/aids.

Some judges of high courts in Nigeria often refer their clients to customary courts of justice in the local communities. Some land disputes involving cases of witchcraft, deposition of charms, and poisoning are often best handled by local authorities who best understand and appreciate the roles played by mutual mistrusts among disputants and arising from superstitious beliefs in witchcraft and such stuff. Often local chiefs are asked to mediate; and they usually take recourse to the process of ‘swearing’ or oath-taking’, similar to the old pre-colonial ‘*Aro Chukwu and Igwekala* shrine deities.

For many Igbo, however, it is reassuring to know that judgment is rendered by alien, invisible powers, not by one’s fellow humans, as human authority is scarcely to be trusted. Such practices have a long history. In the pre-colonial era it was usual for people to consult poison oracles or to turn to shrine priests and diviners in order to let religious or magical forces decide critical questions. People have often resorted to the occult because they lacked effective mechanisms to resolve conflicts. Having no access to independent central powers meant that any groups that got involved in a conflict were also burdened with the task of resolving that conflict among themselves.

Under such circumstances, the determination to have an oracle decide matters may have been the best means of keeping or reconstituting the peace. Thus, thousands of people in search of justice once went from all over Igboland

to the famous shrine of Arochukwu in order to have their disputes settled there. The priests who managed the cult would lead the accused into a closed-off area of the shrine, and when the stream that emerged from the sacred grove turned red, people believed that the god's decision had been rendered. Often litigants went with cocks. One whose cock died in the event lost the case. The jubilant opponent whose cock emerged from the shrine healthy celebrated the victory at home. The loser pays an agreed penalty or fine.

The British authorities who destroyed the oracle in 1901 could only see it as a fraudulent undertaking. Colonial officers reported that the priests reddened the water of the stream with goat's blood because they were not executing those found guilty, but rather were selling them into slavery. It was believed that the loser of the case was devoured by the shrine god (*Igwekala* – 'heaven-is-greater-than-the earth'). It was a fraud, a deceit of an unprecedented magnitude. But the fraud has not been completely destroyed. It operates still in various shades and nuances, being supported and patronized by the ever-superstitious people of the land.

Yet for the quarrelling parties who made their way to the *Aro shrine* as pilgrims, it was advantageous to ignore such possible manipulations and to surrender to the illusion that they were subjecting themselves to an impartial deity. The actual content of divine judgment was less important than the fact that unequivocal judgment had been made, ending the conflict before it could escalate into a chain of revenge killings.

Today people still submit their affairs to the judgment of the spirits, as there is no human authority they can trust. Igbo politicians have little reason to accept the verdicts of law courts or the decisions of party executives and parliamentary meetings. In Nigeria, before some politicians are given a chance to contest for offices, they are made to visit a shrine and swear to their political godfathers, or wealthy businessmen and influential members of the ruling party, that the candidate would provide their masters with government contracts, money or other good things of life. Some of these rituals are often conducted in secret locations or at the homes of the grand masters. Oath takers are made to jump over empty coffins or put on dead people's clothes as sign of commitment to their promises.

In one celebrated case in Nigeria in which a named governor had to take such occult steps to get support from grand masters and win elections, this secret oath became known only when the police raided the shrine and detected 60 corpses in its vicinity. According to the priests who ran the shrine, the dead bodies had been brought to the evil forest surrounding the shrine because the deity residing there had killed these unfortunate people.

Whenever the oath sworn at the shrine was broken and the deity felt offended, it would take revenge, so that the guilty party, wherever he or she was, would die within a certain period of time. The corpses of the deceased

were not allowed to be buried, but were displayed openly around the shrine as they testified to the deity's determination and strength.

Since European-style court systems do not produce justice, it is not difficult to turn one's back on them. Militias like the Bakassi Boys avoided public trials; instead they used spiritual means of determining the truth, including the so-called "lab test." During interrogations, a special chain, or sometimes a tortoise, would be hung around the suspect's neck, making it impossible for him to lie.

The Bakassi fighters also possessed a sword that only drew blood when it came into contact with a murderer or a thief. For Westerners it is frightening to imagine that decisions of life or death should depend on such methods. In the case of the Bakassi Boys, too, belief in occult powers made it easier for people to accept the excessive force they used. According to the estimates of the Civil Liberties Organisation, in Anambra State alone the Bakassi Boys were supposed to have killed 3000 people within a period of 18 months. Despite such brutality, however, they enjoyed enormous popularity for a variety of reasons. A decisive factor was that they did not act as arbitrarily or corruptly as the police, who "routinely" tortured suspected law-breakers while simultaneously working together with criminal bands.

After the government gave the Bakassi Boys authority to pursue criminals, the rate of violent crimes fell dramatically. It fell to such an extent that a commission of independent journalists determined that Anambra was the most secure state in Nigeria. Naturally there were indications that the militia mistreated the innocent and intimidated political opposition on behalf of the ruling party. Nevertheless the population persevered in the belief that, thanks to its spiritual superiority, the most powerful and most dreaded militia in Igboland did not spill innocent blood.

Competence in matters of the occult was regarded as an essential advantage for the Bakassi fighters, and when rival Bakassi factions emerged, it became a crucial criterion for determining the authenticity of the group. When the parliament of Imo State set up an autonomous Bakassi unit, for example, suspicion arose that it was not genuine, but an instrument of corrupt politicians. What puzzled people was the fact that the militiamen obviously did not know how to handle occult techniques.

According to one report: "Whereas the original Bakassi Boys in Abia and the ones in Anambra used magical powers to fish out criminals, the ones in Imo relied on information supplied by members of the public to arrest their suspects. Soon, it became public knowledge that people were supplying Bakassi Boys with names of their enemies to settle personal scores. Imo indigenes concluded that Bakassi Boys without magical powers must be fake ones. Clients visiting the oracle would gain the impression that there was no counter-magic strong enough to save the guilty party and that nobody had a chance of

manipulating the verdict, as one would do in a secular court when bribing the judge.

The most convincing means the Bakassi group in Anambra had of demonstrating its superiority in the realm of the occult was to execute Edward Okeke. While the police could not harm the “false prophet” because he had bewitched them, the Bakassi fighters were well equipped to do battle with him. Because the “great spiritualist” possessed the capacity to make himself invisible, however, even the Bakassi Boys required two attempts before they were said to have succeeded in capturing him at his villa. Further problems arose during the subsequent interrogation.

It would hardly have been possible to force Eddy to confess to his crimes if the juju man who was aiding the Bakassi Boys in their search for the truth had not developed an unusual method. In order to break the prophet’s magic, his long, bushy hair, which had helped give him a strange, wild appearance, was cut off. The militia then celebrated the final triumph over their opponent with his public execution, when they played football with the prophet’s head. Through this act of contempt, they were able to show that they did not even fear the ghost of the deceased.

### **Eddy Nawgu and supernormal experiences**

How did Eddy Nawgu succeed in wielding great ‘spiritual’ powers which attracted enormous following from all nooks and crannies of Igbo society and beyond? What supernormal experiences did he lay claim to, and which made people flock to him in times of need? If he was really a fake ‘prophet’ or ‘evangelist’ why did it take much time to discover the true nature of his mission?

It may not be easy to get answers to these questions. Nigerians are always in search of spiritual solutions to their problems and are ever-ready to lean towards any group or anyone who can lay claims and connections to the unseen powers – divine and occult. They are always ready to accept results, especially when these come by way of concoctions prepared by the one who claims occult knowledge of events. He can handle every type of problem, settle disputes and possibly interpreted ‘signs of the times’.

Since the ‘man of god’ sees eye to eye with his clients, and listens carefully to their stories of woes and the unseen forces that stand on their way to success in life, there is no doubt that his predictions and prophecies will never be disputed. The ‘prophet’ is believed to communicate with higher spirits that decide the fate of all humans.

### **Search for Security and Vigilante Organizations**

Many well meaning Nigerians in the Diaspora and at home have pointed to a sense of “moral panic” or “moral confusion” that has spread all over the nation. Many Nigerians would agree that they are witnessing a “moral collapse in the nation. Like some other African countries, Nigeria is a candidate for state collapse. This frightening situation is worsened by what seems to many to be a helpless situation in which the Nigerian leadership has found itself. Is there any sign of hope or should experts sponsor another conference to discuss strategies to deal with the possible eventuality of the country’s collapse. In early 1999, when Nigeria returned to democracy, expectations were more optimistic. After 15 years of military rule, Nigerians hoped that life would again become more secure. Rather things have gotten worse, 52 years or more after independence.

Even after the “democratic” elections 2003, 2007, Nigerians have witnessed an “explosion” of violence. To add insult to injury, the rise of the religious and terrorist sect called **BOKO HARAM** has worsened matters. According to one report, “it is estimated that at least 50,000 people have been killed in various incidents of ethnic, religious and communal violence since the return to civilian rule.” When the mass of the population is becoming impoverished while the elite of politicians and businessmen openly display its wealth, the power of ruling elites becomes demonized. If there is any sense of legitimate authority at all, it lies rather in the vengeful mission of groups such as the **Bakassi Boys**, who gave the impression that they did not pursue self-seeking ends but protected the whole land.

They could not, however, expect to establish a monopoly of power as the colonial administration had done. The Bakassi Boys had to share their operational space with other violent actors, marauding soldiers and policemen, private security forces and street gangs, militias and ethnic “liberation movements.” Since such groups were allied with rival politicians, clashes between them have been unavoidable. The competition between armed groups, which is slowly turning politicians into warlords, is altering the character of political rule. The sovereign power of the state, which used to control the use of force, did not have to fear rival powers in its territory, whereas the new armed gangs that are gradually replacing the crumbling state must constantly assert themselves against each other. Thus, they have to appear intimidating.

For the Bakassi Boys, as for their rivals, it was important to show that they would not shrink from any bloody act. Like a cult of violence that feeds off human sacrifice, they used the punishment of lawbreakers to celebrate their overwhelming might through an endless series of executions. The cold, ritualized cruelty with which they hacked their victims to pieces and burned them was intended to demonstrate that any attempt at opposing their ruthless power would be in vain. To create an aura of invincibility, they surrounded themselves with attributes of the occult, especially with charms that they wore clearly visible on their upper arms, and sometimes also around their hips or ankles. It was through such mysterious means, coupled with their fearless and

resolute appearance, that they acquired the reputation of being bulletproof, so that initially even the army and the police did not dare to attack them.

There is strong belief that the inability of the political class to handle the situation of fear and insecurity in Nigeria might create a vacuum in the maintenance of peace and order in the state. The masses might rise in arms and invite their own ethnic vigilantes and strong men to take over power of protecting their citizens and ensure that criminals and evil men are punished for their offences.

The Bakassi Boys did it those days and there are their likes today in the militant groups and organizations like **MOSOP** (Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People), **MASSOB** (Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra), **OPC** ((O’Odua People’s Congress) and other vigilante organizations that have been created to protect the interests of various ethnic groups in Nigeria and promote their autonomy. Often these strong groups do not recognize the government or the authority of the police.

## CHAPTER 5

### “HARD TIMES” SYNDROME IN NIGERIA

There is no doubt that ‘hard-time’ factor has contributed to a large measure to an increase in violent crimes in Nigeria, one of the products of unemployment crisis today, as it has been in the past. Another notable aftermath of leadership failure and economic disasters in Nigeria is the syndrome known as (**“Hard Times”- “The Isi Ike”**). It has become almost a permanent feature of the miserable situation most Nigerian masses find themselves. It has become an incurable disease. One man’s gain becomes a misfortune for the masses, signs of economic-political instability. While privileged Nigerians, mostly politicians *whose bread had been buttered* by the gods that help them win elections and store the excess wealth they grab through fraudulent means in banks overseas, many Nigerians suffer and die in poverty. One man’s frustration becomes another’s salvation.

But before they store the excess wealth anywhere those politicians must first of all re-fill their empty storehouses. Surely a lot of money has been borrowed. The donors must be *settled* in cash and kind, partly through ministerial appointments and contract awards. The new ministers, advisers and contractors are free to collect back cash from government treasury anyway they choose. No one dares question them or ask for any account of jobs executed. Having initiated measures for settling the donors, some amount (part of the budgets) must be used in settling the thugs and hoodlums hired to help the emerging politicians win the election through all sorts of crooked means. It would be dangerous if thugs were not settled in time and fully!

The next stage is the re-filling of purses that had been emptied during electioneering campaigns, as politician-hopefuls doled out lots of money to everyone whose assistance was needed to grab the much-coveted political post-Chairmanship of Local Government, First Citizen of the State, and of course the Presidency.

Come what may, under no circumstances would the political godfathers be forgotten. They too must be settled. This is where the entire state or local government feels the greatest and most devastating economic pressures. Settlement of a godfather or godfathers, who must have masterminded the emergence of the man now in power, depending on negotiations could become a monthly burden and can consume a large chunk of the government treasury. No doubt the above tasks and many more must need about two, three years or even a whole tenure of office to accomplish before any meaningful program or project could come up in the agenda, before anyone can think about the people to whom it is said power belongs!

It may not be out of place if lawmakers of the nation took care of their special needs before thinking about the people that voted them into office. They are free to fix their salaries, allowances and other fringe benefits as they wish. They can squander millions of naira in furnishing their private apartments and offices, buy new cars and take trips overseas as they wish. The business of law - making is a part-time affair for them.

Who is to blame for the mess? Do the Scriptures not tell us that what one sows, one reaps. Is it not true that any business or enterprise, which the tortoise directs as chairman can survive only by tricks and fraud? Igbo people also make it clear that when a fraudster tries to bury himself, one hand will always show up. After each change of government in Nigeria, military or civilian, times continue to harden. Nothing gets 'soft'. The political, social, economic situations worsen, as the masses emerge from one hard and biting experience to the other. The evils the corrupt leaders perpetrate are soon uncovered. But who punishes them? In spite of wide publicity given to their criminal acts, no one, absolutely no one cares to desist from evil conduct. None of the exposed perpetrators ever resigns his or her post in shame and apologize to the offended humanity. What a tragedy!

Ask any suffering Nigerian why he does not look happy in his fatherland. The answer is a 'refrain' that tells the rest of the story and points to where the nation is heading to: There is absolutely no sign of hope that things will ever get better in any foreseeable future. The way is long. The troubles will multiply. The suffering is indefinite. The sickness is incurable and which means the patient will die after all. It is a matter of time. "IHE ISI IKE" is an Igbo language expression which describes vividly the exact picture of the situation in which most frustrated Nigerians find themselves. It tells the story of an oppressed people whose leaders have abandoned in the wilderness after promising to lead them into a land flowing with milk and honey, the giant of Africa as well as the most populous and oil rich nation in Africa, if not in the whole planet.

### **Troubled nation: from tragedy to catastrophe**

When the situation continues to deteriorate, people scamper for 'shelter', as means of sustainable livelihood continues as well to diminish. Since the past one year, many patriotic Nigerians who have had unwavering faith that things would get better again in their fatherland have been expressing horror at the rate of deterioration and depreciation of everything good – size and quality of food per average family, employment opportunities, security and peace. The activities of the religious terrorist gang called Boko Haram have further complicated matters for most Nigerians. So the lamentation continues. The tragic situation becomes catastrophic.

**A wealthy Igbo man** who had lived in Zamfara state of Nigeria since Nigerian independence was forced to flee the state with his family, to escape the Boko Haram massacres of non-Muslims in the North. He did not receive a warm welcome among his kinsmen in Igboland. War erupted in the family and the man tried to relocate to another safer area of Igboland. A former friend of his who met him in that miserable situation accosted the man and questioned him: “It is only a few months you returned from the North; why are you packing your things again? **Where else are you heading to again? Back again to the North?**” “No, my dear. Home is not better. My people said I should leave our father’s compound. Our senior brother insists that the whole land and compound belong to him. They are even planning to kill me. I am in trouble. Neither the sky nor the land is within reach. I don’t know where to relocate. I am in fact stranded in this land.”

**A kidnapped man’s wife:** Chief Udeogu Ukaegbu, who narrowly escaped death at the hands of the Boko Haram terrorists in the North and settled in the village was kidnapped immediately he settled down to restart his business in the village. A sympathizer who accosted the man’s wife questioned: “Madam, what are we hearing?” “Yes, Sir. It is true. Neither home nor abroad is safe anymore. See how we have escaped from the cobra’s burrow and entered the lion’s den. Had we known we would have remained in the North? We are confused and terrified to the marrows. From where can we get the 20 million naira the kidnappers are demanding?”

**A Nigerian, Mr. Uzochukwu Igwe,** who had lived in the United States for more than 40 years was fed up with the white man’s system and lifestyle, and economically depressed decided to pack his belongings and headed back home to Nigeria. His wife and kids refused to join in his flight. At home, the embarrassed relatives, including the aged parents questioned him: “**Man, have you gone crazy? What have you returned home to do, when most Nigerians are fleeing the land and emigrating to America and Europe?**” *Response:* “You people wouldn’t understand. You don’t know nothing. You can’t figure out what I have suffered under the heavy hands of my wife. The girl I did everything possible in life to help and bring over to America, is now a big Registered Nurse (**RN**) and earns a lot of money, ten times, what I had earned in a year. Before her I am nothing, just like a houseboy, a non-entity! She does not cook or clean the house. She sleeps during the day and expects me to take care of the kids too. I can’t stomach that no more!”

**(After 6 months sojourn in Nigeria, Uzochukwu returns to America).  
Someone questioned:**

**“Man, what is going on? Are you back to the United States? Why are you back”** *Response:* I can’t narrate my ordeals in that country called Nigeria; just within 6 months I was fed up with everything. Neither the big cities nor the villages are good for any level of human life. There is no light, no water, and no good roads. Our political leaders are just doing what they like. There is no life in that country. I am done with that fatherland.....*From tragedy to catastrophe!*

One of his listeners was so infuriated, moving away questioned Uzochukwu’s wisdom and criticized him, saying: “Look at him; not ashamed of himself. What did he go home to do? What has he contributed to the development of his fatherland, Nigeria? A fool at forty...

### **Search for Medical Treatment: Indian Comes to Rescue**

India is a vast land and a continent, even though geographers and historians refer to the region and state as ‘subcontinent’. Much is of course known about India by the West, America and the rest of Asia. It is a nuclear power, a nation on the brinks of joining the First World nations and a nation teeming with peoples of all languages, cultures and color. Here, like Nigeria, more than 30 languages are spoken. English is the common language (the British were there in the forties!). Hindi and Tamil are among the well developed languages. Nigerians who visit India, precisely Mumbai (Bombay) and Chennai (formerly called Madras), will be very familiar with Tamil language.

They say, in short, that each state has its own language. A student can take all known courses in college and university curriculum without any reference to English language. Even the most educated are much more at home with their local languages; this is why when two Indians are speaking with you, they easily switch over to their local language they are more conversant with! You can compare this situation with that which the Yorubas and Hausas (but not Igbos) find themselves.

Indian continent and people are not unknown to Nigeria and Nigerians. Most of us who finished secondary school education in Nigeria before the Biafra war broke out will remember that most of our Physics, Chemistry, Zoology, Biology and English teachers were Indians and Sri Lankans (Ceylonese). They taught the sciences well and that was why the missionaries ‘imported’ them. Recently in Business and Technology, Nigerians have come into closer contact with the Indians. In the 1970s and 80s Indian business men dominated most major road and estate construction works in Nigeria. Some of

them left Nigeria when Nigerian economy started collapsing under poor management coupled with unstable political leadership and massive corruption.

Some Nigerian state governments find business dealings with India more comfortable than with Europe and America. Nigerians prefer China, India to Germany or Britain. Many Nigerians are very familiar with such names as ‘Tata’ and ‘Keke na Pepe” There are many Indian-made vehicles of every specie on Nigerian roads – township and rural. Indian manufactured drugs and medical products are found in abundance in Nigerian markets. It is amazing.

Even as early as early 1960s Nigerian students eager to further the education they could not afford in Nigeria had taken refuge in Indian Universities scattered all over Bombay and Madras. Most Nigerians who are forming strong growing communities in most cities of India today are those who took their tertiary education in Indian universities. As well, some of them took Indian wives and are doing quite well like their counterparts in Britain and United States.

### **Better Medical Treatment in India**

Today, Nigerians are fleeing Nigeria to India, not in search of work (none available), better comfort or greener pastures. No! India is still struggling to feed and find employment for its large population. But they have almost succeeded in attracting foreigners, including Nigerians to their formerly impoverished land by creating self-employment opportunities in areas such as healthcare, computer science and general business opportunities. Experts say that most computer wizards one finds in Europe and America today are Indians!

No one will be surprised to find many hi-tech-hospitals, therapy and rehabilitation centers springing up in many cities of India. They say Indian doctors are among the best in the world today. They specialize in all sorts of treatment, including of course surgery. Such names like **Apollo Hospital, Miot, Dr. Kamashi Memorial Hospital and Life-Line** specialize in sophisticated cases of heart diseases, kidney problems, and various kinds of cancer diseases, psychiatrist and neurological problems. And the doctors are not doing badly. Their good performance is assured by the length of time and resources spent in medical schools in India. Here I like to share my experiences with fellow Nigerians and anyone who cares about my visit to India, precisely in search of medical treatment. **“BACK FROM INDIA”** is a more elaborate write-up I composed after I returned from the medical trip. But I have culled this portion to fit into our present topic on “Leaders and Followers”. There is a lot to learn, share and discuss

To go for medical treatment in India you must have obtained a recommendation note from one of your Nigerian private doctors. Most of them know India and the facilities their hospitals offer to help desperate Nigerians. Ready with your invitation letter proceed to Indian High Commission in Lagos

or Abuja. There may be need for an embassy doctor to approve your request before you are issued with a visa.

### **Welcome to India!**

God bless Nigerians who can afford the resources to pay the hospital bills in India. Not as exorbitant as what one would pay in the United States or Europe, it is a quite good sum of money. The trip is not for any poor man, I can assure you. If you are not rich, forget it. If you have no sponsors like I had forget a medical treatment trip to India. If you a casual fellow with the ambition to stay alive long, maybe up to 100 years, you can try it. But remember what the psalmist tells us concerning longevity: “Our life is over like a sigh. Our span is 70 years or 80 for those who are strong. And most of these are emptiness and pain. They pass swiftly and we are gone...Let us know the shortness of our life that we may gain wisdom of heart” (Pss 89). If you insist, be prepared to sell some of your family property to procure good health in India!

Want to come to India for serious medical treatment or surgery in **Apollo or Miot Hospital?** (These hospitals are found in most major cities of India - Mumbai, New Delhi, Chennai etc). You must be prepared to pay a deposit of not less than \$8,000 to start processing your papers after your local doctor had confirmed your disease could not be treated in your country. Be prepared to pay for all the medical tests, including CT-scans, PET- scans and X-rays. Do you know what **PET-SCAN MACHINE** is? They say it is one of the latest and most sophisticated scan machines that can detect and locate any cancer virus no matter how small and at what part of the body the worm is hidden. Other scanning gadgets can just tell you cancer is around. But where? How big? They use these and other sophisticated modern gadgets and machines to detect your ailment. And you meet experts as you travel from one scan room to the other. The results of scans and X-rays are accompanied with detailed reports which help the doctors to treat you well. By the time you know it your medical bill is running to two digit numbers in dollars. Some hospitals don't accept the local currency.

As you check your pockets please do not forget your airfare from Nigeria. Your loved ones will no doubt be anxious to visit you and see how far you have improved. The journeys to and fro, short and long will always drain your purse. At a time it might look ridiculous to worry about the fat bill. The important thing is whether the patient is reporting some significant changes in his life. That is a more serious point to consider. What is money afterwards? A Latin adage has the following to say about this loved and hated commodity. It says that “without money, there is no life”. Not true? Another adage puts it this way “Money is the root of all evil.” People hold this view. The Bible confirms it, too. But the truth is that money is good. It is only avarice that paints the bad picture!

Whatever view people like to hold about money and poverty, I believe the English writer Bernard Shaw put an end to this controversy. For Shaw it is clear who is responsible. He asserts: “The greatest evil and worse crimes is poverty”. Don’t you see that these are interrelated! As you check your pocket, my dear sick visitor to India, do not forget the cost of food. You may need extra food-support. Indian menu is a disaster! “One man’s food is another’s poison.” You find the phenomenon everywhere. Indians are mainly vegetarians; they rarely eat meat or drink alcohol. All the huge cows roaming the highway, the street corners and everywhere are sacred to the Hindus who dominate the land and government.

### **In the Hospital**

You, as a patient have little or no problem. As you relax in prayer at what happens next, your senior doctor will order all sorts of tests and X-rays and in fact a ‘General Checkup’. You don’t know all the ‘other diseases’ and ailments you have been putting up with; please tell the doctor when asked. Even though you came for a heart problem, make sure you order a ‘general check-up’. If you are a man and your main problem is that of heart –chronic or mild, you must also reckon with other men’s diseases which oftentimes send men to untimely death. Prostrate diseases are rampant among all men, white and black. As from 30 men must be wary (on their guard) against the possibility of their prostrate problems going or becoming ‘cancerous’. If so there is reason to show a big concern. “A stitch in time saves nine”, they say. The hospital environment will be your cherished community and family for the next few weeks you many stay in this foreign land.

### **With Whom to Interact!**

As a foreigner from Nigeria, able to make it to India, whatever your problems you will go back home happy and much-better than you were when you first arrived India. If pains still persist after all the treatments, you should not worry; nature will play its own part in complete healing when you are discharged and you return home. You only need to pray.

Usually a deluxe room or ward is assigned to you (deluxe = special, sumptuous, luxurious, exclusive, plush, expensive, superior ...). There is everything in your apartment including ICU (Intensive Care Unit) gadgets. Next to your spacious room is a smaller bed for your aid, your boy, sister, wife etc, who has come to take care of you.

In this room, you have cable TV, refrigerators and assorted fruits are supplied, cold drinks and whatever else you may need. The toilets may have up to 6 towels and you must tell them whatever you need and these will be

supplied. These are parts of mundane things employed to calm a troubled soul. They are important and expensive and you must pay!

The situation in the ward, in your room is important and needs close examination. The person you interact with everyday will no doubt influence you; perhaps accelerate your quick recovery. He or she is next to your doctor. Let us first look at the figure of the Indian doctor.

### **The Doctors: Nigeria doctors, please take note!**

Whatever part of India they come from, whatever their color, some may be described as ‘white’ (Caucasian?); others half white half black. There are still many others ‘deep black’. All said and done, color does not play any major role in the society we are describing. The doctors can be described as nice, kind, friendly, gentle, knowledgeable and profoundly humble. These virtues are opposed to proud, haughty, arrogant; unapproachable and so on. The Indian doctor is a fine fellow, man and woman.

The Indian doctor is thorough in whatever he does; he meticulously oversees the procedures for the surgery. Everything would be ready before the surgery begins. The patient, he insists, he tells the nurses and all hospital attendants should not be treated like any other ‘animal’. He is a human being. The patient must be brought early enough to the theatre to familiarize himself with the huge place. He should not be made to look afraid and disturbed and his blood pressure running high! In medicine, especially surgery, one of the doctors I knew well, Dr. Samson, says there is no room for half-measures. **The Nurses and Other Attendants** are also very good and many are so useful as doctor’s aids. Most Indian registered nurses and midwives have high reputation in America and Europe, where they outnumber their counterparts from other regions of the world.

### **What I did not see in India**

- I did not see any person, wealthy or poor, kidnapped in India, and fantastic ransoms paid to obtain release of victims. There is absolute security in the villages and cities and people went about their business 24 hours, round the clock without any molestation from hoodlums, bandits and swindlers. In fact I never heard any sound of gunshot from any quarters.
- I did not see any police check-point where vehicles were checked and controlled by security men in police or army uniform. But there were police wardens at check points on the roads directing the flow of traffic. The traffic wardens help the street lights especially at multiple junction roads. The street lights function 24 hours round the clock.

- I did not see “toll gates” where men in army or police uniforms collected money and other bribes from motorists and passers-by.
- I did not see young men and women, boys and girls selling re-charge cards, sim cards and phone accessories at road junctions and open market places. If you are a foreigner in India, you must produce and present a certified photocopy of your international passport before you can purchase a mobile phone, buy a sim card or re-charge your phone. This is for order and security.
- I did not see money-changers at road junctions and free-markets exchange Dollars, British pounds and Euros for Rupees. Once again for any such monetary transactions foreigners must produce international passports with valid visas. Moreover only certified agents and banks are authorized to transact such businesses. In fact I did not see any “illegal Dollar Market.”
- I did not see anybody, normal human beings or even lunatics ‘pee pee’ or ‘poo poo’ at any place, public and private property. I did not see anybody, male or female, young and old urinate into the gutters or at the foot of trees and poles. I must add too; I did not see anybody naked. There were a few fellows I saw that looked like lunatics (by their look, unshaven and unkempt), but they were never naked. I didn’t see them performing any frivolous antics at street centers and middle of roads.
- I did not see any people, men and women, young and old fighting, quarrelling and exchanging angry words and hauling stones and sticks at one another. These Indians are absolute gentle people. In most congested street corners and roads people in a hurry push at each other, but no one gets angry. When ‘accidents’ happen, to your greatest astonishment what you find is mutual apologies! “I am sorry”. Who has offended the other? They go about their business peacefully.
- I did not see self-styled pharmacists, compounding, prescribing and selling drugs to patients without prescription from qualified medical doctors.
- I did not see any stabilizers attached to the TV sets, refrigerators and other electrical appliances in my room. No voltage drops in power supply, 24 hours daily!

The Indians should be among the best and most elegantly dressed people in the world. Men always dress ‘British’ in style – trousers and shirts (long and short sleeved). Women have the traditional wear at home and at every other occasion. Few men put on the traditional wear – wrapper. School children and students are always in uniform, clean and elegant. They have great compassion for the sick. In most of their hospitals, the inscription on the hospital walls and wards

are clear and teach the lesson: **“The most important person in this hospital is the patient”**. A visitor can then draw more conclusions!

### **Medical treatment in Nigeria - Which way forward?**

I made casual visits to Miot, Apollo, and Kamatschi hospitals in Mumbai and Chennai. I took time to visit these three famous hospitals which bring Nigerians almost daily to this part of the world to enrich my experiences on this topic. Everywhere you go, you find Nigerians, the grand patronizers of these hospitals. Those Nigerians I visited and interacted with spoke with passion and almost in tears questioning why Nigeria could not compete with India in this particular healthcare issue. Nigerians, joke aside, have great brains in every field of human endeavor. But why does it not work in our fatherland? Are you not worried too? What are the issues at stake? Almost everyone agreed that we still have a long way to go in areas of power generation, water, and roads.

On a very serious note all concerned Nigerians, home and abroad - I have spoken to are making passionate appeals to our leaders, particularly political and Church leaders, as well as good-spirited individuals and philanthropists to come to the rescue of many beleaguered, stressed and harassed Nigerians who spend life's fortune in search of good health care outside Nigeria,

Government must take a serious look at the provision of power and other necessities of life to make the dream-like goals of most Nigerians look like a realizable venture. We may start by taking good care of the hospitals we have in our fatherland, which must include the maintenance of the existing structures we already have. Wonderful incentives must be made available for young medical students to take unprecedented lead into the intricacies of modern medical research which may bring about astonishing major break-through into areas such as heart surgery, cancer treatment and other everyday ailment that if not well handled send a great number of people to their untimely death.

Maybe Nigeria will wake up again from slumber, from the snooze and take back her hitherto and enviable position among the community of developed and developing nations.

If you visit the Indian embassy or consulate in Lagos and Abuja and behold how Nigerians seeking for visa to travel to India for medical treatment, you can appreciate the amount of humiliation Nigerians have to put up with. Perhaps, Nigeria can once again become a haven for people of the world who seek security, but cannot find it in their country; who seek good health-care but can't produce qualified medical personnel to run their health institutions; who seek education but can't boast of qualified teachers and professors or even educational institutions adequately equipped to meet the needs of our modern hi-tech world of today. Nigeria must become a nuclear nation like India if we are to realize our dreams!

The Lord can touch the hearts of our leaders to hearken to the voices of the poor and oppressed in Nigeria. The sick, no matter the seriousness of their ailments **do not** need to travel abroad, spend life's fortunes to seek medical treatment for an aching limb. All the sophisticated surgeries and transplants can be performed here in our fatherland, in the bigger and smaller city hospitals, name them Abuja, Lagos, Ibadan, Port Harcourt, Enugu, Benin, Kano, Kaduna and of course Owerri and Orlu.

### **End of Suffering in Sight?**

It is frightening to note that "*The Isi Ike*" for many Nigerians may not pass away soon! Once it was the fate of Ghanaians in the early eighties. There was devastating famine, political instability, total economic breakdown, chaos and confusion. Many brothers and sisters from that neighboring West African country fled their fatherland. They found comfortable shelters in Nigeria. But the hard times did pass away and they recovered their breath, lost glory and almost everything that placed that nation on the world map as 'great African nation'.

Will the giant of Africa, Nigeria ever rise again? Will it recover from the rude shock inflicted on the people by the privileged few and their leaders? The answer to these questions is within the reach of every honest Nigeria. The truth is that since independence in 1960 Nigerians have been in bondage of poverty and frustrations. Both under the civilian and military rule the leaders had maintained their stiff grip on the throat of the harassed Nigerians threatening to strangle them to death.

Matter grew worse during the **Structural Adjustment Program (SAP)** initiated by one dictator after another. Most Nigerians were almost 'sapped to death'. That was the beginning of the mass exodus of many – professionals and the best brains - from the land in search of 'Greener Pastures.' Many thought their sojourn in foreign land, their exile would be short. No! As things got worse, many settled permanently overseas with their wives and children. Those who could return home occasionally spend a few days to sell off whatever property they still owned in their fatherland.

The era of oil boom could not even put smiles on the faces of Nigerians. Only a privileged few enjoyed the wealth or squandered it. Rather the situation continued to deteriorate as those in power, the heartless leaders found one reason or the other to increase the prices of petroleum products, thus tightening their grip on the throat of the dying people. Even as one regime vacates seats for another, each made sure that "*The Isi Ike*" continued.

### **Any Songs of Deliverance?**

So all said and done, poor Nigerians, more than 90% of the people may not after all sing songs of joy one day when their sufferings will come to an end. Will it be in a dream that Nigerians would sing a song of deliverance!

“When Yahweh delivered Zion from bondage it was like a dream. How we laughed; how we sang for joy! Then the other nations said about us “The Lord did great things for them.” Indeed he did great things for us. How happy we were!” [Psalm 12:1-3]

### **Will Nigeria’s fortunes be restored?**

“Restore our fortunes, O Lord. May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy! He that goes forth weeping, shall come back with shouts of joy bring his harvest.”

Perhaps in a dream, like it was with the oppressed Hebrews of old! Only the new prophets of prosperity (never doom) in Nigeria try desperately to sustain the hope of the hopeless Nigerians. As far as these numerous prophets – founders of new Churches and religious movements are concerned – it is absurd to preach “*the Cross*” to the Nigerian masses already overburdened with suffering and all sorts of ailments. There is no surprise that many miracle Churches exist at every nook and cranny of our communities and members are Legion.

Someone has to sustain the hopes and aspirations of poor Nigerians. One day a ‘**messiah**’ will arise from among his people and set them free from bondage. **He must be a Nigerian – selfless political leader, incorruptible, detribalized, and God-fearing.** He will be the one to wipe off his people’s tears and restore their lost dignity. Then the millions of sons and daughters of our fatherland will return from exile, some from United States of America, Europe and Asia.

Those who have taken refuge in remote places of the world during the times of misrule and economic disasters will return to re-populate Nigeria – our engineers, scientists, doctors, professors, and business men and women. Then other nations will come seeking friendship with Nigeria, now stable – politically, socially, religiously and economically. Hurrah! I assure you that that messianic leader will rule over Nigerians forever. There will be no need for elections. For that “*Man of the people*’, who has made justice, equity and fair play his watch-word, his tenure of office will have no end! No doubt Nigeria will be a blessed land – flowing with milk and honey, a true fatherland, the most populous nation in Africa and an enviable world power!

Unfortunately there are yet no hymns of victory and liberation. Many patriotic and God-fearing Nigerians cross their fingers and pray for victory over evil, victory over tyranny and oppression. That day of liberation may eventually

come and no more like a dream. It will be true liberation and victory and the hymns and dancing with tambourines and drums will resemble those of the ancient Israel. Nigeria's fortunes will be restored. The era of *one naira to one dollar* will be restored, pyramids of bags and bags of groundnuts ready for exportation to other lands, millions of barrels of palm oil ready for shipment to overseas, millions of cocoa and rubber plantations adorning Nigerian thick forests and all that made Nigeria a great nation in the past will put smiles and joy on Nigerian faces. No one will ever think of any greener pastures outside our fatherland. Rather foreigners will be struggling for space to reside and earn decent living in Nigeria.

## CHAPTER 6

### NIGERIA, AN ENIGMA - THE BEST AND THE WORST

Once a foreign journalist described Nigeria as ‘an enigma’, a mystery, a puzzle, where one finds the **best** and as well the **worst**. A lot of opportunities for the good and the bad exist in Nigeria. Every type of ‘business’- legal and illegal thrives everywhere and are usually and openly accommodated by the people. Opportunists and dangerous crooks operate and blow hot and cold. But the best patriotic leader, the one who emerges with best of intentions to govern his fellow citizens and bring them to the ‘promised land’ must still be very careful. Ever-ready to sacrifice everything to achieve success, alas, his efforts may be greeted with cynicism. Unless the emerging leader has a lion heart, unless he is a ‘radical’ and a no-nonsense fellow, and remains unshaken in his ‘dreams’, he may easily get discouraged and give up. Nigeria is a tough nation to govern and her problems did not start today, not even after independence.

The reasons why the failure of leadership in Nigeria can also be attributed to the failure of ‘followership’ are too many. There are a lot of contradictions in the people’s lifestyles. Nigeria is an enigma, an unfathomable mystery. There is nothing one cannot associate with the fatherland, home to more than 150 million people. There is nothing you cannot predicate of the nation and its people, namely nothing you cannot declare of her to be true or false. A lot of contrasts abound. **The richest** oil-producing nation in Africa and as well the **poorest** nation in the community of oil producing nations of the world; the most **populous** nation in Africa; in other words, the **greatest**, a giant on the sun; but the **most feeble**. Her output, her performance in human resources is poor and shameful. Little nations in Africa, some a tenth as populous as Nigeria (Ghana, Chad, Niger Cape Verde, Gabon, Vernanda Po (Malabo) are better organized. Citizens of the giant nation flee to these little islands and desert enclaves for refuge and succor. More than 25% of Nigerians live outside the nation and are scattered all over the world, in search of greener pastures leaving their God-given treasures to decay, as giant and expensive structures lie in state of dilapidation and ruins!

Dear reader, if you are able to rehearse these old ‘rhymes’ about Nigeria with me, you have to exercise patience and bear with me. At the end of the ‘lamentation’ you will agree with me that Nigeria is ‘full of contradictions’ **Leaders and followers** look like opportunists, blowing both hot and cold. When it looks like this nation of variegated ethnic groups with patches of different colors would disintegrate, soon a sort of revival of interest in a united

Nigeria emerges from nowhere. Wonders will never end. In the midst of chaos, Nigeria trudges on.

### **Best Favored – Most Unlucky and Unfortunate Nation**

Nigeria is said to be one of the best favored nations of the world in terms of human and natural resources; one of the best if not the best favored nation in the world with the best climatic conditions. Rain is abundant. Sunshine is in enormous supply and is quite admirable. The land is fertile for the growth of any type of crop and vegetation. In spite of the recent global warming, there are no devastating and adverse weather conditions - earthquakes, hurricanes, drought, famine, surnames, flooding - and name all the fearsome natural disasters that have devastated the richest and poorest nations of the world. But at the same time, Nigeria is said to be the worst place to live on earth. Many prominent Nigerians and authors have said worse things about our fatherland and no one has summoned courage to question, challenge or contradict them!

Nigerians are said to have the best ‘brains’ in the world and in knowledge, brilliance, intelligence, innovation, and hard work. They should compare favorably with their counterparts all over the world. But **unfortunately** Nigerians never put their cherished ‘talents’ and ‘charisma’ into useful ventures that help to improve the fortunes of millions of people all over the world. They turn their admirable knowledge in technology, science and arts into most horrible, obnoxious, detestable and stunning ways and means of achieving selfish motives that can shock and render those that fall into their nets useless for life.

It took the United States **FBI**, time, years of surveillance and incredible amount of resources to discover how a Nigerian man of 28 was able to manufacture, distribute and sell the fake American Green Card to needy illegal aliens in that land. Examine the “*Nigerian Made*” **Green Card** well and it was a ‘carbon copy’, a ‘true replica’ of the real thing. Turn it upside down, left, right and it looked ‘genuine’.

How do they do it? It is only an educated expert that can accomplish such a feat! And as the story went, the Americans had to pay the young wonder man a lot of money to explain and demonstrate scientifically how the third world man from Nigeria did it. Wise Americans! They did not prosecute, jail or bully the young man. They organized a red-carpet welcome for the con man into the club which only people of worth, intellect and charisma belong! They turned evil into good; the **worst into the best!** After all it is best to use God’s given talents to help humanity and not dupe people.

There are too many other stunning stories of ‘despicable’ achievements of Nigerians, at home and in Diaspora, which actually could have earned their fatherland honor and respectable place in the modern history. Regrettably these ‘achievements,’ instead of placing Nigeria on the world map as a great people

rather put us into ridicule and disrepute. All of us, home and abroad are taken to be con men, dupes, interlopers that can never be trusted, honored or even made welcome into any city. “Take care. They are around”, expressed in words or signs, tells the rest of the story about the best and the worst of a people and nation!

**“Nigerians are said to top the list of the best educated people in the U.S.”** Such news headlines grace the academic achievements of Nigerians all over the world, in Great Britain, United States and in the Far East countries. Having a master’s degree in engineering just would not be enough for the second son of a Nigerian family in New York. So he goes further with a doctorate. The mother of the family, a civil engineer, wouldn’t stop at a bachelor’s, either. She went for her Master’s and PhD programs.

Close study revealed that Nigerian immigrants have the highest levels of education in most American cities and the nation, surpassing whites and Asians, according to Census data bolstered by an analysis of 13 yearly Houston-area surveys conducted by Rice University.

”Although they make up a tiny portion of the U.S. population, a whopping 17 % of all Nigerians in this country held master’s degrees while four per cent had a doctorate, according to the 2006 American Community Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. In addition, 37% had bachelor’s degrees.”

**In comparison**, to put those numbers in perspective, 8% cent of the white population in the U.S. had master’s degrees, according to the Census survey. And 1% held doctorates. About 19% of white residents had bachelor’s degrees. Asians come closer to the Nigerians with 12% holding master’s degrees and 3% having doctorates. “The Nigerian numbers are “strikingly high,” said Roderick Harrison, demographer at the Joint Centre for Political and Economic Studies, a Washington, **D.C.**, think-tank that specializes in researching black issues.

Most Nigerian students in various schools and colleges in the United States receive certificates and scholarship awards on account of high records of academic performance they set in the institutions of learning. The same thing is true in Great Britain. There is no doubt that there are highly educated professionals of Nigerian origin who are probably working in the petrochemical, medical and business sectors all over the world. For such good news Nigerians should hold their heads high and walk proudly along the streets. They should not be avoided or despised anywhere. The big question: “With our education what have we achieved that would place Nigerian in the group of the most powerful and respected nations in the modern times?

Nigeria is said to have the best pilots, medical doctors, judges, engineers, professors, and even computer experts in Africa if not in the world, but where are they? Do not be surprised to note that Nigerian hospitals and clinics are the worst equipped in the world! One medical doctor may take charge of more than

half a million patients while elsewhere in the developed world; the ration is usually less than 100 patients to one physician. Nigerian nurses are said to be the best in Europe and the United States. They work day and night and make lots of money; but at home quacks and “*Nurse Eliza*” and ward maids take care of the sick and even perform surgery! No wonder thousands of Nigerians who visit these hospitals, most of them not better than ‘sickbays’ or ‘rehabilitation centers usually end up in the mortuary! The busiest part of Nigerian hospitals is the mortuary. Most of the Nigerian pregnant mothers die at child-birth. There are no drugs, doctors and qualified nurses. Most of the best we have continue to flee the land as a result of harsh political and economic conditions

Tell me, then why India or Saudi Arabia should not become the “*Promised Land*” for sick Nigerians, rich and poor, young and old, who seek medical treatment and are not yet ready to die in their God-deserted fatherland. As long as you have the money visit India, Pakistan or Saudi Arabia for your headache, toothache, eye, nose, kidney transplant, liver or heart problem. The Indian doctors and their counterparts will take good care of you as you pay through your nose for even a cup of water delivered to you on your sick bed!

Before the unquenchable corrupt practices invaded Nigeria and the best brains opted for “greener pastures” abroad, Nigerians used to produce the best politicians, medical doctors, Supreme Court judges and professors. The politicians were usually well versed in the game of politics, theory and practice. Not in Nigeria today. The nation has the *worst* politicians. Actually most of these men and women may not be called politicians in any fashion. Con men and impostors have invaded the field of politics. What have you? There are the worst contractors, businessmen, serving or retired police officers and military men. Some became heads of state and ministers through the barrel of the gun in military coups. The rest you find in the arena of politics are really not serious politicians.

In the past Nigerian police force used to be a force to reckon with in Africa. They were the best in peace missions in troubled regions of the world. To pass all the tough screening exercises those days to get recruited into the Nigerian Police Force used to be a hard nut to crack. This is not the situation today in Nigeria. Nigeria has a bad police force

By their fruits you shall know them. They set road blocks at major and minor roads of the cities and villages, cause traffic jams and confusion and collect ‘tithes’. Woe betide any motorist who fails to pay. They don’t save lives any more, but destroy. They are no more friends but enemies of the oppressed peoples of Nigeria.

There is nothing one can say about Nigeria and would be proved wrong. You can say anything about the country called Nigeria and entertain no fear of contradiction. If ‘good’ her people may not care to know. Those who care may even be amused, and never enthused; if ‘bad’ almost everyone would agree with you. They will concur; see eye to eye with you. The matter is a far drawn

conclusion. No one will take you to court for insulting their leaders and fatherland. No one may frown at your idiosyncrasy and lack of patriotism. And in this case you may assert without any fear of contradiction that Nigerians, from the smallest toddler to the most highly placed and educated officials, are ‘honest’ people, ‘straightforward’, ‘liberal’ to a fault and don’t usually care to know whose horse is gored!

### **Fair is foul and foul is fair – A litany of contradictions**

There are a lot of agonizing contradictions in their actions and words. There are lots of consoling statements about Nigeria and there are too, a lot of discomfoting remarks about the nation, Nigeria. What does one make of the statement by *Aljazeera* newscaster about Nigeria while reviewing or assessing the country the Late Ya-Adua ruled before his death? “He (the Late Nigerian president) was said to be an honest man, **but the country he governed is said to be the most corrupt nation on earth!**” No one has ever challenged that foreign news media and showed any concern about that scorching statement. Who knows if the statement is a *fait accompli*? We need to examine more of these “allegations” against our fatherland, Nigeria. It may not be easy to dispute the fact that Nigeria is full of amazing contradictions and rude surprises.

### **The most religious people on earth & the most vagrant and eclectic religious bigots**

One renowned African writer and clergy man had in his book on religious practices among the people of Nigeria told students of religion that religion is embedded in the African blood, and psyche, citing examples with the Igbo people of Nigeria. He wrote: “When the Igbo eats, he prays, when he works, he is at the same time praying, when he sings, he is at the same time praying. In other words their entire life and humanity is completely permeated with ‘the godly, the spiritual’ and what have you!

True! The writer’s assertion may look honest in theory but in practice; Nigerians cannot be taken as deeply religious people. Those who claim to be Christians in theory and practice belong to other religious denominations, including traditional religion and occult organizations that satisfy their earthly yearnings, especially wealth and security. One African writer and poet summarizes African’s and Nigerian’s religious life style:

**“Oh unhappy Christian, mass in the morning, witch doctor in the evening, amulet in pocket, scapular around the neck!”**

Other titles and write-ups on '*African Christianity*' speak volumes about their eclectic mentality and life style: "*Christianity in Africa: to save or to enslave?*" "*Post mortem for Christianity in Africa*" "*Post Christianity in Africa*"; "*Disfigured Christianity in Africa*". "*Not the Christian Religion!*" These titles and their authors insist that the so-called 'very religious African Christians (especially Nigerians) have derailed. The proliferation of Churches and the incredible number of founders and prophets truly go to prove that Nigerians' religiosity has not much to do with the "here after" than 'here and now. Much of it is based on the material benefits of the individual.

Among the large Christian population of Southern Nigeria most leaders of the new church groups and Pentecostal assemblies see their churches as money-yielding ventures and enterprise. Behold how they advertise their 'products' in the news media and the number of hours they air their brand of 'evangelism' everyday. There is no doubt that advertisements and radio/television programs have become huge sources of revenue for both public and private news media in Nigeria today.

Not a few of the founders of these new Christian assemblies promise miracles and wonders on earth and Nigerians who consult them in the hour of need are many. The evangelist and pastors heal. They make the blind see, the lame walk. They even raise the dead. If you have been a poor man, go to the pastor who will pray for you and change your life. He can 'see' the secrets of man's heart, tell you who your enemies are, the enemies that had used charms to destroy and put you in perpetual bondage of poverty and ill-health.

The day you attend any of the grand crusades and miracle assemblies your fortunes will change. Your eyes will open and your life will never be the same again. But watch out! Most of the pastors are occult men and women. For them and their clients every disease or ailment is 'man-made', poison. Of course no one dies a natural death. Some enemy has been responsible. The Man of God smells out witches and destroys bad medicine. In the midst of his oppressed people (oppressed by enemies, poverty and ill-health) stands a liberator the promised 'messiah'.

No one doubts that most of the peoples of Southern Nigeria are mostly Christians. But behold their new brand of Christianity! Anybody can become a member and break away and found his or her own Church at any time. Their 'Ministers', 'Pastors' and 'Evangelists' are not usually 'ordained' or rather they 'ordain' themselves and take titles of bishops, priests, preachers and prophets. Like their Muslim counterparts these Nigerian Christians are the **most 'devout'** Christians in the whole world. Why? Because they perform pilgrimages to the Holy Land, Rome and perhaps Lourdes and Fatima!

While some of the Christians truly undertake this 'holy journey' to mend their broken and sinful lives, others enroll to travel out for business. Many, who actually reach their "Promised Land", don't usually return to Nigeria again. In search of greener pastures, they find new homes overseas, in Europe, America

or Asia. It has been a wonderful opportunity to take leave of the country called Nigeria!

These wonderful Christians, especially the Igbos of Nigeria, don't fail to shock their admirers when it comes to 'Christianity in practice'. They don't practice what they profess. Large majority of Igbos still cling tenaciously to the old superstitious practices of their forebears. They still practice to the core the discriminatory caste system of their pagan ancestors that divided families into "sons of the land" and "slaves" (*'osu'*). No one, not even the most exalted traditional ruler or the most renowned professor would agree to join a crusade to discard this shameful practice. The Christian religion they claim to profess does not influence their decisions. Hypocrisy pervades their way of life.

**In the Muslim world of Nigerians**, the story cannot be different. Morally and spiritually Nigerian Muslims cannot be trusted no matter the number of times they visit Mecca in the year or pray daily. Nigerian Muslims and Christians are among the most corrupt politicians in the world. Morally there is little to write home about the Muslims. They commit all sorts of 'atrocities' in the name of 'Islamic practice'. How can an ex-governor of a state marry a 13-year old girl and pay a dowry of \$100,000 to purchase this pearl, his grand-grand daughter? Who will doubt it! Islamic religion permits the acquisition of wives and one can purchase as many as one wants!

It is about Nigeria and you will 'jam' a lot of confusing and amazing realities: "Nigerians are the most religious people in the world!" Why? Over 75 million of its citizens (mostly from the North) are 'devout' Muslims. Why 'devout?' That is 'pious', 'dedicated', 'committed', 'staunch', 'sincere,' because they perform their *hajj* every year. They squander millions of public money on pilgrimage to Mecca. There in Saudi Arabia, some of the 'devout' Muslims may never return with others. Having been caught in fraudulent acts and businesses, these may languish in jail or even be executed. There are many other reasons why these people should be revered as the '*most religious people in the world*'.

The Litany may be long: They don't take alcohol '*publicly*'. They cut off the limbs of poor village sinners, who steal goats and fowls or sit together in bus with women. But those highly paid officials who steal millions and billions of naira from government coffers go free! Not only that. They organize '*jihad*' and cut off heads and limbs of "infidels", non-believers, mostly Christians. They organize attacks, raid villages, set houses on fire when Christians and their other enemies are asleep. The larger the number of infidels you are able to destroy in the most dastardly, shameful, agonizing, excruciating manner, the greater your reward in paradise. And by their fruits you shall know them, devout, and most religious people in the world!

The "**most religious nation in the whole world**", and in a twinkling of an eye, the nation becomes the worst and most corrupt on earth! The nation, Nigeria enters the list of 'terrorist' nations that may not be visited by decent and right-thinking people of the civilized world. Because her people are members of

terrorist organizations, suicide-bombers, and notorious traders in hard drugs, the religion they practice becomes bankrupt. It is a misnomer, therefore, (wrong use of word), to say that Nigeria is the most religious nation in the world. What a contradiction!

Being listed among the worst terrorist nations in the modern world is very distasteful. The citizens of such nations are subjected to every type of humiliation when they try to visit other parts of the world. No one likes to sit near them in the plane or bus. They can never be trusted and be given a responsible job in their land of sojourn. Has religion changed the lives of the citizens of the most populous nation in Africa?

### **The most democratic nation where dictatorship reigns supreme and unchallenged**

In Nigeria ‘**democracy**’ means ‘**no rule of law**’. It is easy to practice. There is no doubt about it. Nigeria is the most ‘democratic’ nation under the planet. United States, Britain, France, Russia and their allies are making false claims. They should come to Nigeria and learn what democracy is all about. In Nigeria you see democracy in action!

If America’s brand of democracy is said to be best, why does it take them so long a time to pass a simple bill on, for example, ‘Health Care’, ‘Tax reforms’ or ‘Immigration’. They should come to Nigeria and learn from Nigerian law-makers.

In Nigeria a bill is not passed on the basis of its ‘usefulness’ either to the nation or her people. No! The simple ground for initiating and passing a bill in Nigeria is on the number of law-makers that can benefit from it. Secondly the bill’s easy passage may depend largely on the alignment of the law-makers. If it will serve the interest of Muslims of the North for example, political ideologies and manifestoes play no role. The interest of the Northern Elders and Cabals is final. So the passage of bills in Nigeria does not need too much debate and scrutiny. Why waste a lot of time, money and energy when simple ‘rule’, as in Nigeria can do the work? There are many other examples. But take note of Nigeria’s brand of democracy. It is peculiar to Nigeria. People take little or no interest in the affairs of their country. Law-makers can do whatever they like since the people never voted them in. Many did not even cast any votes. In most places no voting is ever conducted, in local, state or federal levels. So why not go about your business and let them do their thing as they like? So we arrive at very sad conclusions:

- **It is only in Nigeria** that political leaders are ‘appointed’ by self-styled grandmasters and not ‘elected’ by the people. One ‘king-maker’ can order

every ambitious Nigerian aspiring to any high office to withdraw from the race and bury his ambition.

- **It is only in Nigeria** that local government elections are rarely organized. The king-maker selects his team and changes the players whenever he wishes. Is it not democracy?
- **It is only in Nigeria** that ‘king-makers’ receive the largest portion of allocated revenues and the people suffer in abject poverty. Their ‘salaries’ ‘remunerations’ are automatically deducted monthly and safely paid into their foreign and local accounts.
- **It is only in Nigeria** that elections for political offices are replaced by a system called ‘*zoning*’. The presidency is *zoned* to the North East Nigeria for 8 years; the senate leadership is *zoned* to South West Nigeria for 12 years; the post of deputy senate leader is for *Federal capital territory* for the next 8 years; the office of house of Reps leader is the prerogative of the *minority states*. What of the INEC (Independent National Electoral Commission) leadership? An oil-producing state must keep the post as long as they want. Minister of petroleum and oil resources is *zoned* to Muslim states. Oil is the most important revenue for the survival of the nation and a loyal and committed Muslim Iman or Alhaji can handle the office better than any Christian from the south of the country. What of Minister of information? It can be *zoned* to Igbo people of Nigeria to keep them quiet. After all, that office is not an important one in Nigerian system of democracy. So, there we are. Nigeria’s brand of democracy is special and unparalleled, unmatched anywhere the so-called democracy is practiced!

### **Most patient and tolerant & most impatient and disorderly people on earth.**

Who says Nigerians don’t live ‘double lives’, the **best** and the **worst**. They are very **patient** and **tolerant** people you will get on this planet. Government can treat them anyhow and they remain calm. They rarely demonstrate against injustice metted to them. They are forced to pay electric power bills monthly when most of Nigerian towns and villages have never enjoyed electricity for months, even years. Those who enjoy any **NEPA/PHC** (as the power generating company or authority in Nigeria is known), are always ready to change or switch over to their generators immediately power failure is encountered. The disappointed people rarely complain because they are used to failures, disappointments and failed promises. Most Nigerians are forced to pay taxes when no one cares to offer them any job opportunity.

Check, for example what an average Nigerian motorist has to put up with on their village and city roads. How many police (also called security) check-

points one must contend with when roads are blocked from all sides by a multitude of uniformed police and military personnel and with any available dangerous missiles and debris, name them, tree trunks, heavy iron bars, parts of broken vehicles, broken bottles and sand bags and all sorts of dangerous ‘weapons of war?’ Often one meets the same scenario at the next ‘check-point’ barely a few yards away! One must stop and show one’s vehicle and personal identity cards, including voter’s cards, national identity card, **ATM** card and all vehicle emblems, local, state and national. If you are driving a jeep or any other vehicle bearing tinted glasses, you must produce a document signed by the Inspector General of Police at Abuja authorizing you to ride in such a vehicle.

That may even be the beginning of your ordeal with the police at one check-point (there are many others in front). If you prove stubborn and impatient and refuse to “settle” the matter with a few naira, be ready to produce all the receipts of whatever you are carrying in the vehicle. If you have members of your family in your car, they all must produce documents showing who they are. This check is important. Who knows whether your ‘passengers’ are not armed robbers and kidnappers? And there are many of them these days.

As one security officer takes his time to do the checking with just one driver of a vehicle other motorists must **patiently** wait in line. And when it is your turn make sure you smile and give out some tip after sweating for several minutes and hours at one check-point on the Nigerian road.

Is it at a **Nigerian bank**? Customers (Nigerians) must wait for hours **patiently**, often standing for hours to pay in or cash a simple check. Unconcerned bank managers and their officers do their trivial private business when customers wait for hours to receive any attention! Some days, banks may not even open, and no apologies to waiting customers who arrive so early to transact business. Reason(s)? No business because information received confirmed armed robbers were on their way to rob banks.

Sorry! Another reason could be that the computers were not working and so data could not be transferred from headquarters to local branches. No! There are many other reasons to try the patience of the oppressed Nigerian bank customers. There isn’t money in the bank safe. Some supplies are being waited. Their van may arrive the next day! There is of course no money in the **ATM** machine for those who could use the automated machine to collect little sums of money. Out of the 4 or 5 **ATM** machines installed, only one is working and the queue before the functioning machine may extend to infinity! Customers wait patiently under the scorching sun or pounding rain. There are no waiting rooms or benches where even the elderly can rest a while.

No. The bank’s power supply could be a reason to close business for a whole day, thus sending the patient and tolerant Nigerians away without apologies. The generators may not be working because the contractor who supplies gas failed to do his job. There are too many reasons why Nigerians must be subjected to all sorts of suffering and disappointments.

Who says Nigerians are not the most patient people on earth? Where else under the sun can one behold such scenarios, and catastrophic situations one has to put up with in Nigeria? Please doff your caps for Nigerians. They have the nerves to tolerate injustice meted on them by public officers and authorities who are supposed to be serving the people.

But alas! Nigerians are also known to be the **most disorderly** and **most impatient** people under the sun. You don't need to travel far to be convinced. At the so called road check-points or crossroads in the villages and cities come and see for yourself what 'a chaotic situation' means. In a twinkling of an eye a tiny one-way-road is converted to a four-way! The most **patient** people turn into the most **disorderly** mob. There is no rule of law and everyone is caught up in the web! Like a tied and locked up slave, who sees a little loophole for freedom, confused and frustrated Nigerians break loose from their dungeons and clamor for liberty. In a hurry to attain their goals and get to their destinations, they unleash untold hardship on their fellow harassed citizens. Some truly impatient and out of frustration vent their anger on fellow oppressed brothers and sisters. They fight for every bit of space and opportunity offered to them. It is a very deplorable situation.

A hold-up generated by an unruly mob can delay traffic and business for many hours, indeed. Nigerian travelers tell horrific tales of traffic hold-ups that last days at inter-state highways. Often hold-ups are caused by accidents, light and deadly which take lousy traffic officials days to clear. There are no ambulances, tow-trucks and even responsible traffic personnel and many accident victims die daily on Nigerian roads as a result of light injuries sustained on chests, ankles and legs.

### **Most critical of their leaders & most accommodating citizens**

When the Nigerian economy and political institution finally collapsed in the hands of the corrupt politicians led by leaders in military uniform, truly began the final exodus of masses of Nigerian from the bedeviled nation. Their best brains migrated to other countries. They could not tolerate the political and frivolous antics of politicians in army uniform. The injured Nigerians, very critical of their leaders, poured abuses on their leaders and fled the fatherland. Some continued their campaign against bad leadership from abroad and vowed never to return to Nigeria again. Truly many have nationalized in their new-found-homelands.

Who will believe it that these same Nigerians, living at home or abroad would turn round to crown their once-discredited political leaders kings in a new political dispensation? They are ready to nominate and vote for them at elections or even return some 'unopposed!'

Naturally wealth is power. Having accumulated more than they will ever need in life's time, they look for power too, and political power for that matter!

This is where they easily draw poor Nigerians into their nets. Crazy Nigerians, also in search of wealth or oftentimes of ‘survival’ are ready to crown the criminal their king, as long as he has the money! Nigerians attend their feasts and their campaign rallies where they are usually rewarded with some crumbs that fall from the master’s table.

Any attempt to discredit the budding and rising billionaire by his ‘enemies’ is usually met with stiff resistance from his supports. Demonstration rallies and carnivals are organized and songs of praise to restore the sagging dignity of the known 419er can surprise those who know the victim thoroughly well. His praise singers maintain he is their hero. Wherever he is heading to his supporters are ready to follow. They are ready to swim and sink with him. He is their king, their hero, whatever the realities of his life. This is the inconsistent and confusing attitude of Nigerians towards those leaders, who elsewhere, out of shame for their criminal activities should never be allowed to smell any public office anywhere and at any time in the history of a nation. Nigerians forget easily and blow hot and cold at the same time. It is a tragedy.

### **Very kind to foreigners – can hate their kith and kin**

There is no doubt that Nigerians show extraordinary love and acceptance to foreigners (white and black) they find in their midst. They harbor illegal aliens and refugees from neighboring countries like Chad, Niger and citizens of other countries (India, Pakistan, and Lebanon) that come to seek fortune in Nigeria. They trust these foreigners more than their own countrymen. You don’t blame Nigerians for their acts of charity. Maybe their religious sentiments have a part to play here.

In the eighties when Nigeria was enjoying relative peace and prosperity accruing from the oil boom, it was widely known that Nigerians welcomed and accepted Ghanaians who fled their fatherland those days in search of Greener Pastures in Nigeria. Even when government ordered the repatriation of the illegal aliens, most Nigeria families offered refuge to the desperate Ghanaians. Surely when the ‘visitors’ decided finally to leave, Nigerians gave them gifts and escorted them to the borders to escape the wrath of the immigration officers. You just cannot beat Nigerians when they have to deal with ‘friends’ from other nations.

Unfortunately these same Nigerians, young and old, can hate and fight their kinsmen, countrymen, and their very neighbors and go to any extent to win court cases. In some communities and among some ethnic groups, the first son of a family is ever ready to chase his very brothers and sisters out of their natural homes and make these perpetual refugees, simply because an obsolete community law maintains that the first son of a family takes all that belongs to the family, house, land and economic trees after the death of the father of a family.

These loving and kindhearted Nigerians who would never marry a so-called “*Osu*” (Igbo word for ‘untouchables’) from a neighboring community will be ready to take a wife, slave or free-born from any other part of the world, except from his own community. For them ‘untouchables’ don’t exist anywhere except in their very communities.

### **The most patriotic – the most resentful of a united Nigeria**

When the once Libyan powerful president, Muammur Gaddafi suggested that Nigeria, the giant of Africa should be divided into two regions to make way for peace in one of the most turbulent, ungovernable and variegated nations in Africa, some “**patriotic**” Nigerians, mostly politicians poured all sorts of abuses on the Libyan leader and called him all sorts of dirty names they could think about. These politicians and legislators (none of them chiefs, emirs, obongs, obas or genuine community leaders), would not like to hear any such “catastrophe” befall Nigeria, their beloved fatherland. They cherished a united Nigeria more than anything else!

Are they sincere? Don’t listen to those ‘patriotic’ Nigerians. Not up to 20% of Nigerians love their fatherland. They hate the national anthem and flag. They don’t believe Nigeria is a ‘united country’. If these folks love a strong, peaceful and united Nigeria, why the agitation for more and more states? Is the state of California in United States of America not bigger than most European countries? Why have the Americans not opted for more states in their fatherland?

I have not heard any Nigerian who said or wrote the words “**I love Nigeria!**” or “**I am proud of my country**”. There are no ‘**T-shirts**’ bearing such symbols. I have not heard any Nigerian political leader who ended his speech or address to Nigerian people with the refrain “**God bless Nigeria!**” American politicians and leaders usually end their addresses with “**God bless America!**” Americans love their America and fight for its survival and unity. They spend every dime and energy to protect lives and property of American citizens (White, Black, Red and Brown), within and outside their fatherland. Religion, color of skin and ethnicism cannot divide them.

Not Nigerian leaders! If any opinion survey could be organized, there is no doubt that the result would be stunning. More than 80% of Nigerians wish that Nigeria should be broken up to more than 36 countries. They would wish that the ‘realignment’ of the entity called Nigeria be effected today! A united Nigeria is a far cry from most Nigerian citizens. Nigerian political systems, parties and manifestoes point to fragmentation of the nation.

One of the past presidents of Nigeria had said it and it is part of the Nigeria history today: “There is no basis for unity!” Why then the attack on Gaddafi’s proposal for break up the Nigerian nation, at least for the interest of peace and freedom of religion. Those communities and states that want

complete freedom of religious practices like Islam and sharia can have their way without infringing on other people's religious sentiments. Relative peace may reign.

Many Nigerians describe their fatherland as an enigma, a country of puzzling or contradictory characteristics. Like a performer, a character in a drama, a mystery, one minute completely insensitive, the next moment moved to tears, Nigeria's survival as a 'united nation' so far looks to many inexplicable.

When it looks like Nigeria would collapse or disintegrate, some politicians and disillusioned agitators call for a sovereign national conference for a quick intervention before the worst happens. What triggers the panic and call for a national forum for a serious look at Nigeria's future are issues relating to injustice, state of anarchy and of course massive corruption that ravages the Nigerian economy.

But after all the hues and cries, Nigeria often emerges from her comatose state and continues to trudge on. And one Nigerian statesman dismisses our apprehensions with a wave of the hand. Listen to a 'moderate' Nigerian leader in an interview with **THE SUN NEWSPAPER** editor discuss the unity and possible disintegration of Nigeria:

**What do you mean by disunity? That people have been discussing the possible disintegration of Nigeria...My dear, let me tell you. Please, as far as this country is concerned, nothing is going to happen to its unity. The people, who are talking about disintegration of Nigeria, are just a few cowboys in the media. They don't represent anybody. They represent themselves and they probably are on the wrong end of the fence. But the fact of the matter is, don't let anybody deceive you. This country is going nowhere. This country will grow stronger and stronger. I do not take it that 99 per cent of ordinary Igbo people feel the way that those who claim to represent them talk about. Or that 95 per cent of Yoruba feel the way that people want to make us believe or that 99 per cent of ordinary people in Northern Nigeria feel the way that some cowboys want to make everybody believe. I think we have had our difficulties but let me tell you that, perhaps, the saddest thing with Nigeria is that we have not been able to have the leadership that can inspire confidence and literally mesmerize us because every country requires a leadership that has charisma. When you have a charismatic leader, even your hunger goes away. (Catholic Bishop of Sokoto, Matthew Kukah)**

**Nigerian youths, most respectful and submissive as well most abusive and nasty**

The old tribal and traditional respect for the elder in almost all Nigerian ethnic groups has defied the insinuations of the western democracy and secularism to follow the dictates of self respect, independence, equality, liberation and so on. These dictates affirm the dignity of man and equality and shuns any ideology of 'primitive' allegiance to authority and in our case here to an elder, especially a far-distant 'senior' or elder.

Among Nigerian ethnic groups today, the Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba and the smaller ethnic groups, we still find respect for seniors and elders a revered tradition. Young people greet the elders, known to one or not, offer seats or sitting positions to 'superiors' in age and dignity. In some ethnic groups in Nigeria it is rare to find youths of closer relations address their seniors by the proper names. As sign of respect for the seniors (brothers, sisters, uncles and aunts), the young call their elders not by names but by pseudonyms. Among the Igbo people, the elder is '*dede*', '*dada*'; every woman, known and unknown is '*mama*', '*nne*'. A more elderly man is '*papa*' '*papa nke ukwu*'. The elderly woman is '*mama*' or '*mama nke ukwu*'.

Still to avoid any sign of disrespect, among very close relatives, families and extended families some 'pet' names are coined or invented. Names like, '*Oga*', '*Kunku*', '*Nkwa Nkwa*', '*Tenta*' are employed. While the younger generation may no more use these older words and names, they have come to apply names like '*Brother*', '*Sister*', '*Anti*', '*Uncle*' etc. This is still another way of expressing respect and even affection towards one's elder or senior. The use of first names will not only show disrespect, but may uncover a state of suppressed aggression. In this case the elder is not only abused but may also be warned to beware. The younger person is not happy. He is aggrieved

Since this type of behavior and respect for elders is commendable virtue among all peoples of the world, we are happy to note that Nigerian youths possess the virtue in abundance. While the influence of 'secularism' or 'modernity' may lead to some adaptations or even the abandonment of this tradition, any Nigerian may still assert without contradiction that this tradition is a cherished one in our communities, ancient and modern.

### **Most Abusive youth**

The most respectful and admirable youth may without warning turn to an abusive and aggressive fellow on earth. He throws all virtues of decency away and is ready to confront the elder, known to him or not, no matter the elder's dignity and position in community, with the most abusive and shocking language one can imagine! The '*Oga*' becomes an '*idiot*'. The former '*papa*' becomes '*an old pa-pa, a feeble-worthless fellow*' that must get out of the way!' The abusive language will no doubt include rhetorical questions like "Who are you?" "Do you give me food" etc'

The traditional respect for the elder is thrown to the winds as Nigeria's radicalized youth disgrace their elders in the families and in communities. At public gatherings the younger ones take front seats while elders may stand or find accommodation elsewhere, as their sons and daughters don't take notice of their presence any more. At communal meals elders have to serve themselves or go hungry as younger ones grab best seats, serve themselves with the best food and drinks. Days are gone when elders should sit and their food and drinks are served them by their sons and daughters.

Even when some cultured person often reminds the youth to vacate a seat for the elder or to serve the elder first such 'commands' or 'reminders' are greeted with derision, that is with contempt or ridicule. The young ones seem to ask for explanation. "Is this fellow looking for honor and respect not crazy?" Doesn't he know we are in modern times where a new culture of equality, autonomy and individualism is in vogue and should replace the old fashioned and primitive tradition of respect for elders? Who is an elder by the way?

In closer communities and societies the "dede" or "dada" or "mama" and the other old pseudonyms have given way to western nomenclature. "Anti" or "uncle" is in vogue and there would be nothing wrong in addressing an elder – chief, pastor, elder brother or sister by the first name. The younger one feels no qualms in even asking the elder to vacate a seat for the person who got it first no matter the age or status.

In the past, during the glorious reign of respect and obeisance or curtsy to the elder, it used to be an unfamiliar sight to see the elder join the queue at bus stations, fuel stations or in the markets, and banks. The young people used to be ever-ready to give way to the elder and in some cases personally serve the elder who is quietly persuaded to stay aside while his needs were taken care of. Unfortunately today the elders may no more expect such services from the youths and it is quite regrettable.

During the modern times of kidnapping and violent robberies not a few elders irrespective of age and status had been violently manhandled, detained, abused, tortured and disgraced by the youth. Some kidnapped elders who ventured talking to their capturers by way of counseling had met with brutal treatments, including terrible beatings, punishments, abuses and even death threats if the elder dared preach repentance, conversion and good morals to the spoilt and aggressive youths.

Is it possible to reverse the trend of events? Can order be restored where traditional and moral values such as respect for the elder should receive proper attention which they have enjoyed in the past in the Nigerian society?

### **The happiest people, the most miserable people on earth**

Nigerians, at home and in the Diaspora take pride in asserting that they are the '*happiest people on earth*'. During an opening speech marking the 52<sup>nd</sup> Nigerian

independence anniversary in Bakersfield, California, USA, the guest speaker, who incidentally was the (MC), Master of the ceremonies at the occasion, a Nigerian, gave the guests, Nigerians and their friends reasons why Nigerians cling to this surprising claim that they are the happiest humans on earth. While Nigerians in the crowd giggled boisterously at the antics of the speaker, the whites and other foreign guests watched the speaker agape as he made his declarations solemnly.

“First, let us go through the old Nigerian national anthem”, he announced and read it out calmly. This anthem was adopted as our official national anthem from October 1, 1960, when Nigeria obtained its independence from Great Britain. Lillian Jean Williams, a British expatriate that lived in Nigeria at the time, wrote the words and the music was composed by one Frances Berda.”

**Nigeria we hail thee/ Our own dear native land/ Though tribe and tongue may differ In brotherhood we stand; Nigerians all and proud to serve/ Our sovereign motherland//. Our flag shall be a symbol/ That truth and justice reign/ In peace or battle honor/ And this we count as gain/ To pass unto our children/ A banner without stain//. O God of all creation/ Grant this our one request/ Help us to build a nation/ Where no man is oppressed/ And so with peace and plenty/ Nigeria may be blessed//**

Then followed the current national anthem, which Nigerian kids at the gathering, sang as beautifully as they could. All stood up as they did when ‘**American national anthem**’ was played. “Adopted in 1978, the Nigerian national anthem is one whose words are the amalgamation of the work of five winning contestants, John A. Ikechukwu, Eme Etim Akpan, Babatunde A. Ogunnaike, Sotu Omoigui and P. O. Aderogbu in a national competition held for the purpose. Benedict Odiase, then the Director of Music Nigeria Police Band, composed the music.”

**Arise, O Compatriots, Nigeria's call obey/ To serve our Fatherland/ With love and strength and faith/ The labor of our heroes past/ Shall never be in vain/ To serve with heart and might/ One nation bound in freedom, Peace and unity.// Oh God of creation direct our noble cause/ Guide our leaders right/ Help our youth the truth to know/ In love and honesty to grow/ And living just and true/ Great lofty heights attain/ To build a nation where peace and justice shall reign//**

Then began the speaker’s eulogy of Nigeria and Nigerians:

**“The happiest and most blessed nation and people on earth!”**

Nigerians are the happiest people on earth and love peace and unity. Both the old and the new National Anthems confirm this. Nigerians are the happiest people on earth because Nigeria is the 5<sup>th</sup> largest producer of oil in the world, and the first in Africa. Without Nigeria's finest quality crude oil the United States, European and Asian nations would not survive. Their industries would have closed down. If any war erupts in the Middle East today, Nigeria would gain hundred-fold, and so her citizens would enjoy paradise on earth. Nigerians are the happiest people on earth because they worry about anything (except hunger and unemployment). They don't care if their leaders ship out cartons of money to foreign banks. Nigerians are the best dressed people on earth. Their women, men and children know what modern fashion means. You can look around, but most of them you see here are moderately dressed. Go to Nigeria and see for yourself. You can't beat them. Watch what will happen today in this hall during our *'Independence fashion show parade!'*

**He continued:**

Nigeria has food and Nigerians eat well. Take a close look at Nigerian menu today when we get to 'Item 7', free food for all. You choose from our delicious collection, *foo foo, garri, eba, semolina, semovita, ofe ogbono, ofe onugbu, ofe utazi, ofe nsala, ofe akwu, name them. You find moi moi, fried plantains, fried fish, friend chicken, fried yams, roasted yam and roasted plantains, pepper soup, white rice, fried rice, jaloof rice, beans* and what have you! You can take some home if you wish. Nigerian women can cook well. In fact any Nigerian woman who cannot cook well is seen to be a failure in life. Nigerians live long, because they don't worry about so much illegal activities and corrupt practices of their leaders. Nigerians don't want to suffer from heart attack! Nigerians are the happiest people on earth because they are found everywhere on this planet. That's why they flee their fatherland in search of greener pastures, when those at home rot away untapped.

**The speaker/MC continued:**

Nigerians are the happiest people on earth because they are very religious (you can overlook most of their superstitious beliefs and practice of witchcraft). There is no type of Church or religious organization you don't find in Nigeria (ignore their syncretistic tendencies). Most warehouses in the big cities are daily converted to Church apartments, and most football fields and stadiums are used as crusade centers for teeming followers. Proliferation of Churches in Nigeria is unparalleled in the history of modern religious movements. There is no denomination or sect that is not represented and doesn't find adherents. The number of pastors and men of God is bewildering. But the most perplexing

problem about their number and growth is that they have failed woefully to convert the wayward and evil men in the country. Nigeria is the most populous nation in Africa, with over 150 million inhabitants and more than 300 ethnic groups. Nigerians are happy people and live in peace with their neighbors (in spite of the activities of a terrorist Islamic group called Boko Haram). Nigeria is the most pleasant nation on earth to live in. The amount of wealth accruing from the oil revenue is inexhaustible (don't take a look at wastage, mismanagement and corruption)...

### **Among the most miserable nations and people on earth**

Unfortunately our speaker did not supply this second part of his story about Nigeria and her people. It was nice he didn't. That would have embarrassed some patriotic Nigerians as well as our august visitors invited to the 52nd anniversary of Nigerian independence in Bakersfield, California.

However in a 'close-door' chat, like among groups in an amusement park, some concerned Nigerians filled up the rest of the gaps in the story. They are obviously not impressed by the performance of their leaders at home, nor with the situation of things on ground. Reports in newspapers and stories from loved ones back in Nigeria make those in the Diaspora harden their hearts and keep to their resolutions never to go back to their fatherland. Hear them! As far as they are concerned Nigerians are the most unfortunate and most miserable human beings on earth:

How can Nigerians be the happiest people on earth? Anathema! No! They are among the most miserable and unhappiest human beings because they have little or nothing to enjoy in their fatherland:

There is no power supply, absolutely none, in most villages and cities. For some who 'enjoy' power supply, the behavior is 'epileptic' and does not endure for a couple of hours in a week. That's why foreign generator manufacturing companies have a field day selling their products in Nigeria. Clean potable water is a luxury in Nigeria. Many Nigerian children still descend steep hills into swampy jungles everyday in search of water. Public means of transportation is a luxury in Nigeria. In villages and townships people struggle to board buses to work, to school, to business. Many get injured in the free-for-all-fight to secure a seat in a bus. The cheapest means of transportation, tricycle, locally called '*Keke*', (a product of India), has replaced the '*Okada*' motor cycle or Taxi in most big cities in Nigeria. Even where available, it is still a luxury to find one that can meander through the teeming crowds and roads filled with potholes, and get to the desired destination in time. Good medical treatment is a luxury, even though Nigerian doctors and nurses are among the best in the world. Why do Nigerians travel to India in search of health care?

## **The Nigerian factor**

### **“This is Nigeria”. “You are in Nigeria”**

“**This is Nigeria**” is common expression Nigerians use to inform anyone who cares that ‘truth’, ‘honesty’, and ‘sincerity’, has little or no place in the matter at hand. The Machiavellian principle is applicable, namely ‘the action (result) justifies the means’. **Machiavelli**, the Italian politician and statesman (1469 – 1527) advocated putting expediency (convenience or pragmatism) above political morality and the use of deceit in statecraft. In other words one should not have any scruples (sense of right and wrong, conscience, principles or ethics) in gaining what one wants. With the statement “*This is Nigeria*” or “*You are in Nigeria*” tells you right away that with regard to the matter at hand “international law” or “rule of law” does not apply. You are in a different world altogether, the “Nigerian World”, where correct rules of the game rarely apply.

“**This is Nigeria**” or “**You are in Nigeria**” is an ominous sign of danger, which may be lurking at a corner, and warns you to beware, take a close look at the person you are discussing with or the situation in which you find yourself. The expression is synonymous with contradictions and insincerity. The way they do their things are different and it works for them! Do not be worried. Don’t be embarrassed. Do not complain. Just try to understand and accommodate the strange things you see and encounter.

“*Nigeria Today*” – *The Best – The Worst*”, takes its course from the type of negative moral values which Nigerians cherish and adore today at the detriment of what should be consistently and without any qualification, truly the best. Do Nigerians always mean what they repeatedly say and maintain in everyday speeches and actions? We can hardly vouch for Nigerians. A few examples may clarify our stand.

Nearly every Nigerian political leader and aspirant to any political office, like their counterparts all over the world would normally insist on “free, fair and credible’ elections.” Everyone abhors any fraudulent activities that might jeopardize the chances of any aspirant. They condemn election rigging in all its ramifications. In asserting what would look like a “vow” demonstrating their sincerity and commitment to truth and honesty, Nigerians exercise no qualms in asking God or Allah to take their life away if they ever lied or had any intention to cheat anybody! No. Do not be deceived; Nigerians generally don’t mean what they say.

Behold, as they condemn an evil, they at the same time plan seriously how to beat the gun. Their plans include of course the ways and means of gaining advantages over other aspirants and competitors. What are their reason? “This is Nigeria. You have to fight to win the race no matter the actions taken to win.”

As political aspirants climb the mountain tops and trees to condemn election rigging, even pointing accusing fingers at named opponents and

political parties, no one will be surprised to be told that the accusers had already perfected and marshaled out their plans to rig the so-called forthcoming elections. The plans must include multiple voting, stuffing of ballot boxes with the desired votes, sneaking in illegal ballot boxes and stealing those of their opponents. Do not count out plans to bribe security officers, opponents' agents and of course electoral officials, including the **INEC**.

Their 'sayings' and 'doings' are full of contradictions. At least we are sure of Nigeria's political leaders. They claim to be 'democrats' to the core. They claim they believe in the freedom of speech and movement. But if you don't agree with them in politics your career in politics is doomed. Democrats today are ever-ready to turn into dictators tomorrow and stifle (strangle to death) any form of opposition, as they seek to realize their political goals. Democrats in name who form hundreds of political parties today in a twinkling of an eye compromise their integrity by dismantling all their newly formed parties' emblems to join the winning party where they feel they have more chances of grabbing a political post. If Nigerians are true democrats why do they decamp from one party and join the winning party?

The so-called democrats who claim they cherish democratic principles gradually send mixed signals to the Nigerian electorate as they model a political system which eventually becomes one-party-system! Hence the slogan: "*If you can't beat them, join them!*" If Nigerians through the contradictory and dubious lifestyle of their political leaders eventually, either by omission or commission, end up embracing one-party-system of government how comes the need for organized elections? Why do we need to spend billions of naira in elections where one candidate is a credible competitor?

Even though they find themselves under one umbrella of 'one party', quarrels between winners and losers used to be many and bitter. No wonder then the contestants who fail to outmaneuver their opponents and so lose the election are the first to cry '*foul!*' and even go to court to seek redress. It is not a question of who is cheating the other, who is playing according to the laid down rules. No! It is a question of 'who outsmarts the other party!'

### **Most resourceful – the most wasteful people and nation**

Before 'fast business', including '419' and drug-pushing gained ground in Nigeria, Nigerians used to cross mountains and rivers in search of wealth. They used to undertake all sorts of mini and dirty jobs to get money to feed their families and keep life going. In some ethnic groups and communities family ties are so strong that one head of a family may be forced to cater for many extended family members. Some rich Igbos today do not fail to recount how they started with nothing but honestly ended up wealthy merchants. Some had to travel from house to house picking empty bottles and cans to sell to manufacturers of fake products just to make a few pennies or kobo.

Many wealthy Nigerians from various ethnic groups do not fail to recount their humble, painful and miserable beginning. Life was never rosy for them as some of them could not even finish up their primary and secondary education as a result of poverty. Parents and families could not afford school fees, school sandals, school bags and books. Some dropped out of school because the burden was too much for the mother who had to go it alone as the husband died when the kids were yet toddlers.

Many wealthy Nigerians who had it rough in life served so many masters and ladies in all sorts of trade and domestic chores. Some, who were not so lucky, were dismissed by their masters and mistresses on trumped-up charges of stealing or bad behavior. The discharged “unfaithful” servant had to find new masters who could employ them and so give them a fair trial.

All said and done, it must be clear to all and sundry seeking for fame and greatness that it can never be so rosy to attain such status and statures in life. One has to suffer to attain great heights. Servants who were lucky with their masters and mistresses and received help and support must still be careful on how to begin their own trade. In other words one has to be **resourceful**. One has to be creative and ingenious. One has to be imaginative and capable of managing the little he has received from benefactors. The converse is **wastefulness**. The wasteful servant will not be able to make it in life. He will become poor having lavished the little he received from those who wished him well and success in life.

Perhaps the scenario we are painting here may not apply in reality to the Nigerian modern society. Days have truly gone when the majority of Nigerians embraced servitude and lowliness to rise to prosperity. No! Today suffering and long days of service under a master or mistress may not suit an average Nigerian youth as they seek to rise to highest rungs of the ladder to achieve wealth and greatness. There are so many easy ways to get to the same height without pains and even licking the dust. These other easy ways include robbery, drug-pushing, kidnapping, ‘419’, prostitution and many others. Immediately one succeeds in grabbing immense wealth, one rises to the top. Literacy may not have any role to play if you have money.

Whatever the case may be, whether he acquires his or her wealth by sheer benevolence of people, through service, hard work and suffering or by dubious and questionable means one thing is certain about the spending character of Nigerians. They are *wasteful* to the core. This is clearly manifested in their flamboyant lifestyle, which is demonstrable in the type of personal houses and homes they build for themselves. As long as the means, the money is there, one is free to build family estates in each Nigerian state capital. One can purchase any type of car and as many as possible.

Since governments are run by the same true Nigerians, one can see the same wasteful spending disease manifested in the type of projects they undertake. As long as the money is in the coffers of the state treasury and

having stowed away the much he needs for extra personal needs, one could undertake the mounting of billboards advertising government projects and achievements in office. No! That is yet nothing to show that there is enough money to spend, than to waste. Why not begin a project like the manufacture of aircraft and cars even though there are no airfields and roads? There is money in government coffers and political leaders must spend as they like to show that something is being done for the people.

Why not begin a nuclear plant project? After all third world nations like India, Pakistan and Iran are nuclear powers! Nigeria is the most populous and richest nation in Africa. Why not begin multi-billion projects like hotels, universities and polytechnics in each local government of the state even though government may not have any intention of completing any or even going half-way? The projects can be abandoned at any time, especially when there is a drop in oil revenue which surely affects federal government allocations to state and local governments. No wonder there are so many abandoned projects in Nigeria. Multi-billions of naira are wasted in ill-conceived, useless, unpopular and unplanned projects. "This is Nigeria". You can't beat them in wasteful and reckless spending.

### **Wasteful "free, fair, and credible elections?"**

"Why do they **waste** such fantastic amounts of money on unviable projects?" one may ask. Nigerian political leaders as well as every electorate know right from the start of an electoral process that the exercise is doomed to failure, yet everyone insists on carrying out all the programs and requirements which would lead to fair, free and credible election! These include formation of new parties, revision of voters' register, creation of new and more voting centers and booths to accommodate the teeming numbers of voters who would troop out to vote for national leaders of their choice (even though their votes will never be counted!) Other measures that would help make the elections **free, fair and credible** include the appointment of federal, state and local government electoral commissioners, agents and security officers. Thousands, if not millions of ballot boxes must of course be provided. To ensure **free, fair and credible elections** there may even be need to introduce the latest electoral gadgets and systems yet to be practiced in developed nations like United States of America, Britain and France. Often obsolete voting machines are imported from India, Pakistan and South Africa. During the actual voting process, most of these machines do not function. There may not be any power available to operate them, and they are not built to use dry batteries. Most of the times inexperienced electoral officers who have not operated any computer are employed at the last minute to put these gadgets into operation. What a mess!

Why do we go all the length spending billions of naira in such wasteful exercises? Political pundits and experts may supply the answer thus: "*It is all*

*necessary in a democratic process.*” No! That is a lie. The truth is authorities in power must diversify spending routes and avenues so that more operators of the system, local and foreign may gain from the booty! This is typical a Nigerian factor, *squander mania*, an idiosyncrasy and eccentricity, a detestable unconventional behavior, a system of wasteful spending in Nigeria, where the privileged and the rich continue to grow richer and the poor, poorer.

To eliminate such wasteful spending in the Nigerian system of governance, especially in their electoral system, perhaps one **mad man** could have offered a way out of the mess, a ridiculous solution to the nightmare. When the Igbo people want to say the truth, they *put the words’ into the mouth of a mad man.*’ So the tale-teller becomes a wise counselor. In this case the **mad man** addresses, confused Nigerians thus:

Dear countrymen why do you waste such amount of money every time on such useless projects, like elections and voting? Why do you involve the so-called electorate and people who don’t know and care about what you do? You blind leaders, have you not heard about ‘grassroots democracy?’ Let each community or local government send a representative to Abuja or Lagos and there you people can select and appoint your political leaders. That will truly be free, fair and credible ‘election!’

Will they listen to the advice of the ‘mad man?’ Perhaps, no. Nigeria runs American system of government and like America must follow step by step all the processes that must go with democratic principles. If America can afford billions of dollars to conduct elections, why not Nigeria, too?

## CHAPTER 7

### BIG NAMES SYNDROME: CRAZE FOR “SUPERLATIVE QUALITIES”

Both leaders and followers are culprits, terrible offenders in their craze for underserved ‘first place and first class’ values. This is why it is not easy to separate wheat from the chaff. Everyone thinks they qualify to lead.

Nigerians love big names, but rarely succeed in matching their self-proclaimed-greatness with laudable achievements. For them ‘there is nothing in name’. Nigerians take the rest of the world for a ride and thus deride, ridicule the universally accepted maxim that *‘there is something in name.’* They forget that adjectives are created to add meaning to given words and expressions, thus reinforcing their importance and position among other words and expressions. Look at how they employ such words and expressions rascally just to sound “big”, “adorable”, and “magnificent!”

**“Great”, “Super”, “International”, “Ultra modern”!** In comparative adjective, the superlative degree usually connotes the ‘highest’, ‘the biggest’, in both positive and negative senses. In its positive and most admirable connotation, it points to striking appearance, excellence, majesty and splendor. The German translation (*“prima” or “klasse”*), simply means “superb”, “magnificent”, first class”. The Latin rendering is “optima”, the best, “pessima”, the worst

The *“Super Eagles of Nigeria”, The “Super Eaglets of Nigeria”, The “Super Falcons of Nigeria”*, are the names of Nigerian national teams, men and women. The most world-class football teams and clubs don’t attach ‘super’ to their names. They use meaningful accolades to denote their groups and teams; in fact what they can do and achieve. Most often they live up to expectations. They don’t claim to be the greatest just with one victory or a trophy, even on a global scene and competition. Many countries of Europe and America have won the world cup several times, but never claimed to be the greatest. Even Muhammad Ali, the renowned boxer only claimed to be the greatest after it was clear that he had beaten many serious challengers.

The renowned European soccer clubs, Manchester United, Manchester City, Arsenal, Chelsea, Real Madrid, Inter Milan, and many others only prove their superiority over other teams and their opponents, not just in words but in action. Why do some choose names like “Elephants”, “Tigers”, and Dolphins? There must be something in name! But this does not sound well with Nigerians. Nigerian teams become the greatest and ‘super’ after one minor victory and

soon crash and take a miserable, if not the last position in world events. Christ would advise his followers never to take up a first seat when invited to a feast. Let those who invited you take the honor to promote you to an exalted position.

“Rangers *International*”, “Enyimba *International*”; are the names of premier football clubs among others in Nigeria. Some local Nigerian markets are rated ‘*international*’ by Nigerian standard: *Orie Ugwu* International Market, *Afor Ogidi* International Market. All located at remote shanty villages in Nigeria. *Orie* and *Afor* are market days in Igbo community of Nigeria.

Some institutions of learning, high and low, are rated ‘international’ by Nigerians and not world or global bodies: International Nursery, Primary, Secondary Schools, International Day-Care Center, International School for the Lamé and Blind, International Acquisition Center, *International* Computer Center.

Some hospitals and health-care clinics are of ‘international’ standard in Nigeria and are known by their names: International orthopedic hospital, International teaching hospital; International school of optometry. Even some lame-duck and dilapidated industries and corporations go by the name ‘super and international’ in Nigeria; name them: Ajaokuta *international* steal industry, international paper industry Itimbuzo in Kakawa State of Nigeria, international cashew industry, oil palm, cocoa and cotton wool, shoe, soap, cardboard and weaving industries, all located in various states of Nigeria!

What really makes these structures in Nigeria special among others located all over the world? Perhaps the quantity and quality of products they turn out and are exported to many foreign countries? Or the numbers of employers of all races and languages, who work, study or teach in these places? The answer may really not be ‘any of the above!’ It is a Nigerian ‘factor’, what Nigeria is known for, their style of doing things, a well-known syndrome, and accepted way of life, misplacement of values!

### **Big election promises! Big billboards! Big heads! Big faces! Fresh and colorful!**

During elections in the most populous nation of Africa there is always need to advertise loud, clear and big, and here is one of the Nigerians’ styles of showing how big their political parties and aspirants to the highest offices in the land can be: “Ultra-modern” and expensive billboards, some huge ones, they say, costing over one million naira each to install. And there are too many of them positioned at all street corners and cross-roads in big towns and villages! Whose billboards and big faces would outshine or cover the others? The search for space at strategic positions in the townships is ever intensive. It is equally costly to pay millions of jobless youths who keep guard over the billboards; otherwise some opponents and their supporters may pull some down or ruin the big heads and faces with graffiti!

Nigerian billboards have little or nothing to tell about political power and achievement. There is usually not much to write home about the advertisers and their products. Indeed Nigerians like adverts placed on big billboards and posters. Whether for the dead or the living, the adverts are best built with strong and costly materials that can withstand adverse weather conditions and must be placed majestically at strategic positions and squares where all passers-by must see and admire them. The cost of each bill board is immaterial as long as the advertiser and the image are well decorated!

The Bible tells us that after they had crucified Jesus, the soldiers positioned the cross at a place where passers-by would see it well. The story did not end there. They also wrote his offence in bold letters and in both Greek and Hebrew, the most important languages of the time. But Nigerians woefully fail to print their achievements and great records in bold and indelible letters. The color may be attractive. The portrait as well may be truly imposing. But there is nothing more to communicate. It is all empty shows, simple practical demonstration of their concept of ‘greatness’.

Most Nigerian politicians, young and old have little or no significant actions to back up their big names and especially their electoral promises. What are they saying to the passers-by who ‘enjoy’ and ‘admire’ their beautiful colors? Should Nigerian politicians who ‘litter’ our roads and street corners with their images mounted on large and expensive billboards be taken seriously with whatever they intend to communicate to the passers-by? What are they saying? What reasons have they for coming up for the first, second, third and even the fourth tenure? Have they fulfilled the promises they made initially when they received the first mandate? Have they succeeded in tarring even a kilometer of road within their communities? What of water? What of schools and hospitals? What of the promised scholarship for the poor pupils and students? What is new in their party’s manifestoes? What are they going to offer that had not been named?

### **Bigger billboards, greater chances of victory!**

Don’t be too fast to think that Nigerian political office-seekers don’t know what they are doing, when they mount costly billboards asking the people to vote for them. They are not spending so much for nothing. They know the people so well, for Nigerians admire ‘big’ things. They think ‘big’. They like ‘big’ names. Perhaps, the bigger the billboards, the better chances of success at the polls! You may believe it or not.

It works in Nigeria. The bigger and longer the political leaders’ entourage, the louder the sirens, the more admirable are the politicians and their followers. The bigger the cloud of dust raised or floods, pools of water splashed on passers-by, the more respect the politician attracts; the bigger his fame grows, at least as a powerful politician and dictator who can punish ‘offenders’

who fail to stop or clear the road for the master's entourage. Nigerian road users have none of the fundamental human rights their counterparts all over the world have. So, the police or army escort, leading the master's convoy can stop any motorist or pedestrian who fails to clear the road in time, and give him a thorough beating at the road side. Many such road users have received heavy punishments for their 'disrespect' for the great man, passing-by! Few Nigerians get mad at flamboyant politicians who abuse their political 'privileges' and look down on the people who voted and placed them on such high positions in society.

But times are changing. Some Nigerian politicians may in the future be in for big disappointments as voters seem to be coming out of their slumber. Many today wish to know why certain politicians, especially those that have been there for some time and have not shown any accomplishments should continue to put up billboards and ask the people to vote for them. Some common people are asking to know why the one should be voted for. Big billboards, long and big entourages, big and expensive flashy cars, big political rallies, expensive political emblems, and big promises may no more count as criteria for choosing future political leaders in Nigeria.

### **“Great” political parties, ‘great’ political leaders**

Not only football clubs, markets and institutions of learning or industries are of super and international standard in Nigeria, political parties are great, amiable as well as enviable. You will hear Nigerian politicians and power-seekers address political rallies and supporters, and describe their parties as 'great!' Not even the 'once-popular and all-embracing 'Winners Peoples Democratic Party' (**WPDP**) has anything reasonable to offer as a 'great party' to be adored, admired and respected, embraced by all Nigerians and their political leaders!

Not a few Nigerians and foreigners wonder why respected Nigerians, especially aspirants to political offices abandon their original parties to join **WPDP**. The answer is not far-fetched. Those who fail to make it while bearing any other party's' flag are usually advised to cross over to **WPDP**. It is only there you are sure to win an election to any local, state and national office. If you join them you win; the party is sure to clinch all offices, at all local and state levels! If you try any other party you are doomed to failure. So one can understand why Nigeria is becoming a one-party-state and we all know where our nation is heading to! Consequently every doubting 'Thomas' must understand why 'our party is great!'

If we examine the implications of this 'greatness marker', many true patriots and lovers of our country must weep. A party can assume the status and stature of 'greatness' when it is in the position to use all sinister political tools to intimidate opponents and push the opposition to surrender even before the contests begin. Since the majority of the contestants are truly 'incumbents,' who

will dare to unseat them? The chairman and top members of the so-called **INEC** (Independent National Electoral Commission), the Supreme Court judges and all important officials of what make politics tick in any nation are all adherents of the ruling party, and owe allegiance to the grand master or president.

**“International”** should truly point to an embrasive nature of interests, systems or commodities being expressed. Many nations of the world are involved. If a market is of an international standard, there must be international airports, and seaports around to make transportation and movement easy. Every available product and goods must be found in the international market. Really the area covered by this international market must be awesome. Not only that; most racial groups of mankind, Americans, Asians and Europeans must frequent this market. Some of these scenarios and peoples would really point to the nature and international status of the market.

Unfortunately, as far as Nigerians are concerned there is no need to consider qualities and standard while giving names to our local institutions.

### **“Ochi na Nwata” – A Toddler leads the way!**

Nigerians’ love for mediocrity and their concept of “greatness” can be seen in the “appellation” *“Ochi na Nwata”*, in Igbo language, creating the impression, that though he, ‘a leader’, and yet too young to lead, in fact a toddler, is performing wonders at his age! Far from the truth and reality! They tell the world that their young and inexperienced fellow had even been chosen from the mothers’ womb and made leader of the people, in government and church.

While the rest of the world select their leaders from among the most experienced, Nigerians prefer young inexperienced fellows and crown them “kings” and “queens”. No wonder Nigeria’s problems had always been that of leadership. Their criteria for choosing, electing or appointing leaders of their nation and institutions are always different from those of other peoples and nations.

If what one finds on the ground really matches with truth and reality, the rest of the world would have learnt to borrow from the Nigerian style and so elect **‘kids’** to the highest offices of their land. Alas! It is a way Nigerians seek to console themselves when they find themselves in messy situations their young and immature leaders lead them into.

*“Ochi na Nwata”* is a real “baby” in power who finds himself in an unexpected and unmerited position of leadership. Ill prepared for the “awarded” post, no one may blame the leader since it wasn’t his or her own making! So, supporters and friends find reasons to insist that their revered young and inexperienced leaders are performing well and as the case may be must be given further chances to “complete their good work”. Such praise-singers really mean that the baby they placed on the throne should be given further chances to improve! He had all along been learning to crawl and speak!

**Many leaders – few followers  
In Nigeria everyone wants to lead**

In Nigeria everyone wants to be a distinguished leader and a ‘*Number One Citizen*’, with many distinguished titles for that matter. No one wants to ‘follow.’ No one will therefore be surprised at the scandalous proliferation of political parties and churches in our fatherland. Where one fails in a bid to grab the leadership position of an old or a new church or party, a usual option is to decamp and found a new one. Here the new ambitious leader has the sky as his limit in the practice of leading his or her frustrated people.

Who should be surprised that Nigerian policy makers are “wiser” than the leaders of the developed nations of the world, including the United States of America, France, Germany, Britain and others who operate basically two political parties, namely the Democratic and Republican parties or simply, the Progressives and the Conservatives. Not so in Nigeria! Room must be made for all who want to lead to have their field day. It would not matter if more than 100 political parties are formed in Nigeria! When they expel you from one party, take refuge in another and there vie for leadership position.

In Nigeria many unworthy and unqualified candidates get elected as lawmakers. Consequently, they go to the legislature not to make laws but business. These elected lawmakers render insignificant service attached to their high offices to their nation and the electorate. They spend months and years in trifles like impeachment of any official they didn't like. Elsewhere, in developed nations law-making is a serious matter. Lawmakers are revered politicians, whose work truly determines the future of their nation.

Why should more states, local government areas, and autonomous communities not be created in Nigeria to satisfy emerging politicians, chiefs and traditional rulers? They need well-defined boundaries where they alone should exercise their authority and lord it over a depressed people. There are leaders everywhere, but none who can lead well!

Nigerians are people who thrive in disunity. With a national population of about one hundred and fifty million or more, there are apparently 36 states and the number continues to increase each year. Each new administration endeavors to please the people and agitators by creating new states, local governments, and autonomous communities. Contrast this with the United States, for example, with a population of nearly three hundred and fourteen million in 2012, yet has only 50 states and has not contemplated on the creation of more states in many years.

Divisions in Nigeria underline the extent of disunity in the nation. It started long ago. The 1885 Berlin Conference, which heralded the partition of African nations among Europeans, secured Nigeria for Britain. Britain first

administered Nigeria as two separate units: the Protectorate of Northern Nigerian, and the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria, including Lagos Colony.

Nigeria became a single unit in 1914 when the two protectorates were amalgamated. Nigeria went through a number of Constitutional Conferences, both in Lagos and in London, and achieved political independence on October 1, 1960, with three regions – East, West, and North. On October 1, 1963 Nigeria became a Republic with four regions – North, West, Mid-West, and East.

The army began the disruption of the inherited Westminster arrangement in 1966. Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon emerged to lead the country after the assassination of General Ironsi, and further divided Nigeria into **twelve states** in 1967, in the midst of uncertainty over the Biafra political threat to secede.

Murtala Mohammed who took over from Gowon created additional **seven states** in 1975. Babangida added **two** more States in 1987, and made it **thirty states** in 1991. Sani Abacha who succeeded Babaginda made the number of States **thirty-six**. No one is sure of the number of new states any successive administrations would add to the existing number. There is an incredible proliferation of local government areas and autonomous communities in the various states of Nigeria.

Nigerians want their local governments to be turned into states overnight and the electoral wards and constituencies turned into local government areas. The rationale behind their wish is that such arrangements would bring about rapid grassroots development. Yet there is little or no evidence to substantiate such economic-political theory. The only plausible explanation is that emerging leaders want to carve out individual hamlets, enclaves or kingdoms where they reign as kings.

Power intoxicates. One man grabs it and holds tightly to it. Generally Nigerians who rise to power cling to it tenaciously. They don't easily hand over power to successors and rarely concede defeat in elections. Losers file lawsuits mainly to destabilize the incoming administration.

The same phenomenon is also found in the **church** circles. People and clerics who clamor for the creation of new parishes and new dioceses believe such institutions would accommodate emerging leaders and possibly their own "**sons of the soil**". Those who support the proliferation of dioceses in Nigeria may have selfish motives. Ethnic interests contribute nothing to the growth and unity of the church. Yet the farce, the ridiculous situation persists.

The agitation for new ecclesiastical entities and particularly dioceses in Nigeria is evenly matched by the number of clerics who contest the **office of the bishop**. The passionate desire of many priests to grab this office is matched by the number of imaginary new dioceses being "created" by such leaders of the people and priests they want to lead. At the rate the agitation for new dioceses continues to mount in Nigeria, many people think that in the next ten to twenty years each viable parish – Catholic or Anglican - will attain a diocesan status.

A perplexing situation in the Nigerian (Catholic) Church makes some honest members ask questions when, for example a diocese becomes vacant as a result of death or retirement of the incumbent bishop. “Why has Rome or the Pope not appointed a new bishop? Why the long delay? Why is it taking so long taking a decision?”

No one may yet blame Rome or the Pope or other ecclesiastical authorities involved in the task of appointing a new bishop. A possible cause of delay is usually the agitation against or for a named successor or preferred candidate. Sometimes to resolve the impasse authorities may impose its own candidate and ignore protests by the people or the ambitious aspirants. But agitators are not easily pacified in Nigeria. They often head to law courts, ecclesiastical and civil!

Contenders who lose the battle for the contentious bishopric office in Nigeria often take other drastic actions to protest their defeat. They write calumnious protest letters to Rome to discredit the winner. But most of their frivolous antics have little impact on the Rome’s decisions, *"for the Lord does not look on the appearance or on the height of his stature, the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."* (I Samuel: 16.6-13)

When losers discover they have lost the battle some take to their heels to distant lands in search of more accommodating status or greener pastures. After the loss of such a terrific battle it would be time to take a leave of absence. They need a period of cooling-off and time to count their losses. They could also analyze why the fierce campaigns mounted to secure the high office did not succeed. The defeated candidate often despises or rejects any appointment by the new bishop. Nothing, except the office of the bishop is his rightful status. It is a ‘do and die’ affair in Nigeria; behold the struggle for leadership!

Nigerians do not usually pursue elusive dreams. They pursue high ideals. So the revered office of the bishop is a hotly contested one. The power invested in this office is tremendous. Church history confirms that once bishops and emperors were powerful political as well as ecclesiastical leaders in Europe. Not much has changed today as far as their authority is concerned.

Not a few Nigerians and foreigners interested in the future of the nation maintain that the numerous problems which the nation has faced since independence have their roots in **leadership** crisis. As Nigerian patriots were singing freedom songs before 1960 most adults did not fail to express their skepticism on the ability of the black man to lead as a politician and even as a pastor of souls. The older generation had always preferred the white man's administration than that of the native political elite.

No wonder more than 50 years of independence, one still finds among the people a great majority that would be ready to welcome back the white administrators – the British, the French, Italian, Belgians, and the Dutch – the erstwhile colonial masters, if they would agree to take back the reign of

government from the natives. Nigerians have lost hope in the leadership of the nation. There is frustration everywhere. Expressions such as the following point to the heart of the problem: "If our leaders had the right intention." "*If they would think about tomorrow.*" "*If they could lead by example.*" "*If they had the fear of God.*" "*If they had believed in after-life.*" "*If they could realize the type of questions God would ask them at the judgement day..!*"

The wish for God-fearing, unselfish, patriotic leadership seems to be everybody's greatest concern. "If we had good leaders in government...there would be electricity everywhere – 24 hours a day – 7 days a week as one finds in most developed and developing countries. There would be potable water everywhere and people would not suffer from water-borne diseases. Our roads would not be filled with potholes. Perhaps accidents that claim hundreds of innocent lives in Nigeria could have been curtailed. Surely food would be abundant as transportation would be cheap." In Nigeria criminals rarely receive heavy jail sentences, which in other countries serve as deterrents.

No! In Nigeria convicted criminals, money launderers and terrorists often go free after judgments for very ridiculous reasons. They escape from prison custody, or a prison guard just releases the 'suspect' after receiving a bribe from family and friends. It happens in Nigeria. How many politicians and business men, convicted by **EFCC** had spent even a day in a jail? Don't arrested and convicted **Boko Haram** terrorists that bomb churches and government buildings in Nigeria usually escape from custody the next day? Strange things happen in the country.

If Nigeria can be described as one of the most disorderly nations in the world, one of the most corrupt, insensitive, inefficient places under the sun, one of the most expensive countries under the sun, dirty, callous, noisy, ostentatious, dishonest and vulgar and in short, among the most unpleasant places on earth, there is no doubt the masses, the followers have their own contributions. Truly it can be very frustrating leading a chaotic crowd. There is little or no discipline and few are ready to obey and keep laws.

Because they love first-class positions, few Nigerians like to take a second position even where it is clear that someone else around had been honored with "*Agu na eche mba 1*" (of Igboland). (Lion that guards the community). No one comes second or takes the rear position, name them: "*Ogbu Agu 1*", (Lion killer), "*Ogbu ehi 1*"(cow killer), "*Ochiri Ozuo 1*"(One who feeds the hungry and the homeless), "*Omere oha 1*". (Man of the people)

Often what worries most Nigerians who don't admire this way of life and thinking is that it is all a misnomer (wrong use of name or word). It is in fact a misnomer to name a shanty, (a poorly made hut, shed or cabin), a first-class hotel. What may be truly misleading in this 'Nigerian factor', is often what the names and titles portray may actually be the opposite of what is meant! In fact the "*Agu na eche mba*" may be the most dreaded man in society, one who must never be trusted and in fact should be avoided! *The "Omere oha 1" or "Ochiri*

*ozuo 1*”, is never known to be a cheerful giver, never a philanthropist in any sense. No! He even removes from the poor and enriches himself from what belongs to the community. The names and titles are imposed on holders as signs of greatness. But by their fruits you shall know them!

Christ's exhortation on humility and 'common sense' has a perennial relevance in the civilized world, in every society and for every people. "If you are invited to a feast, do not sit down in a place of honor....(Lk 14.8)". But the reverse is true in Nigeria: "If you are invited to a feast, go straight to the high table; occupy the front seat and first position...." In Nigeria, at parties and marriage feasts, every guest craves for the high table. Often the number of high table guests exceeds the number of “floor members”. Everyone wants to be recognized.

Surely Nigeria as a nation has arrived at the hour of decision. The bell tolls. The present is pregnant with meaning for the future. The present thickly cloudy and uncertain terrain has infinitely positive possibilities if the opportunity for change and sanity is not firmly grasped. Nigeria can begin again, on the basis of equity, justice and security because there will never be peace without these attributes in this land. If this African experiment in fashioning a modern powerful nation-state fails, it will constitute a colossal loss to people of African descent everywhere.

### **Electoral litigations: winners and losers**

The ambition to stay on top, the ‘number one’ among fellow contestants brings about the often endless electoral litigations after declaration of results by the Independent Electoral Commission. Since all contestants enter the arena prepared only to win, it is usually difficult for Nigerian politicians to accept defeat at the polls. The battle to succeed must be won and to concede a defeat is an anomaly in Nigerian politics. All roads must lead to the court, from the local to the supreme, no matter the number of years it takes the ‘complainant’ to turn the table and be declared the winner!

Some Nigerian con politicians, knowing fully well they have no chances clinching any political office through the ballot box boast they would make the impossible happen, if only the court could accept to mediate! Money can solve all problems no matter how difficult in Nigeria.

The stubborn unwillingness of Nigerian political office contenders to accept defeat at the polls and congratulate their opponents who win simply lies in the ‘Nigerian factor’, a phenomenon notably peculiar to Nigeria, where no one, practically no one accepts the second place in society . Nigerian courts play the tune for the ‘survival of the fittest.’

**If you can't beat them, decamp, join them!**

The ambition always to secure the first position in Nigerian political leadership tussles is largely responsible for the formation of new political parties in Nigeria. The disappointed political aspirant to the highest political office in Nigeria has every reason to form his own party after his former party had rejected his bid to contest in the mother party. He founds and forms his own political party where he becomes the sole candidate for the office he seeks. He is equally sure he would emerge victorious.

Elsewhere, a party member may decamp or even vote against his mother party in an important bill or referendum purely on ideological reasons. His mother party is not fulfilling some political promises or is actually not living up to expectations. That is true democracy. Where a Nigerian politician decides to join any political party, he is not being guided by the party's manifestoes and stance on rule of law. No! Nigerian political parties are not guided by ideological differences. Their guiding star or attraction is the political office he can possibly grab. If the political office of the governor or its deputy eludes him, he can contest the office of senator, house representative or even Local Government chairman! The driving force is not the services he can render to citizens of the land but the amount of money, cash that would come under his supervision!

### **“Modern”, “The ultra modern”, “The complex” mania:**

The Nigerian ‘factor’ is not limited to claims to unmerited goals and achievements. Their achievements and records attract not only accolades or compliments like ‘super’ and ‘international’. Nigerians love to describe their structures, especially hospitals, health-care centers, industries, and even living quarters as complex, and ultra modern. In a good sense which they seem to employ the adjective, ‘complex’ or ‘ultra modern’ would imply multifaceted, multipart, compounded, multifarious. In short, as far as beauty or modernity is concerned, the sight of the structure, either on drawing board, or already completed is awesome and beyond imagination!

The opposite should be ‘simple’. You will hear expressions like “hospital complex”. “The newly created *Umuduru* autonomous community has embarked on the building of a hospital complex, among other projects to improve the health of the people.” Some local governments embark on regional ultra modern water scheme. So you have, many modern and ultra modern industries and factories located here and there; name them, modern shoe factory, soap industry, cardboard industry, oil mill, palm kernel, sugar, cotton and what have you!

For any curious inquirer, it may not be surprising to find out that the modern shoe factory had closed down a long time ago and the premises has been take over by weeds, rodents and dangerous snakes. The ‘modern’ cardboard industry closed down about six months after commissioning by the

Commissioner for industry and commerce. The industry was lacking raw materials, water and electricity!

The management was equally poor right from the beginning. The failed ultra modern water scheme did not supply water after the commissioning ceremonies. In fact the water that ran from the taps was supplied from a roving water tanker! The modern shoe factory, which was to offer jobs to about 1000 people, was shut down after a short time for lack of leather and other raw materials. In fact the management could not lay hands on the promised modern shoe-machines! You see how Nigerians count their chicks before they are hatched!

Even the best broadcasting radio and television station in Africa is most often off the air for lack of modern broadcasting gadgets. As a result of the epileptic supply of power by the ‘Power Holders’, TV and Radio broadcasts must be interrupted or completely stopped for minutes and even hours to effect a change in power supply!

Do Nigerians understand what they claim to achieve? “Complex”, “Modern”, in the Nigerian context should actually mean “difficult, complicated, thorny, involved, dense, archaic, out of use, obsolete! In other words, the project at hand or the one still on the drawing board will be a difficult one to accomplish. It is of a complicated nature and few expert engineers will understand what the builders mean. It is a thorny project that must cost a lot of sweat, blood as well as frustrations. It will involve a lot of financial and material resources! The end will be a failure, abandonment and dilapidation.

The complicated nature of Nigerian-conceived structures makes such structures impossible to complete in a life time. Those who begin them actually don’t live to witness the ‘commissioning ceremonies’ of landmark and ill-conceived projects they started. These include water schemes, cathedrals and churches.

Often Nigerians take ‘complex’ to mean that all ‘facilities’ must be as well situated within the main structure, say, a church. Name them, toilet facilities, church hall, Sunday school classrooms, lounge, bookshops, car garages, and even restaurants. What of water for the toilets? No wonder after a short while the ‘complex’ structures are abandoned. The question of restructuring or re-drawing the plan is ruled out because the structure right from the beginning was ‘complex’, complicated if not *bizarre*, in other words, strange, odd, weird, fantastic and out of the ordinary!

### **“International”, “Specialist”, “Teaching Hospitals”: a Misnomer**

When Nigerians talk about the “Hospital or Health-Care Complex”, no one should take them seriously, even when a clinic had been completed and ‘commissioned’. Taking a close look at the miserable structures, one would easily find out that the clinic has no decent wards, consulting rooms,

laboratories and out-patient department. What they may refer to as an “Operating theatre” is nothing comparable to what one sees elsewhere in any part of the world. What of the laboratories, one of the busiest departments of any hospital worthy of the name? The doctor or medical consultant usually sends patients to the lab for tests which help to diagnose what the sick fellow is suffering from.

Most Nigerian hospitals have no good labs. Even where the labs are found, they are not well equipped. Why? The X-Ray equipment had stopped working for the past one year or more. The needy patients are referred usually to private “Para-medical experts” whose X-Ray, **ECG** equipment are functioning. The public and government-owned hospitals have little or nothing to offer to hundreds and thousands of sick Nigerians who visit them. When the doctors are not on strike; the nurses must be until the entire hospital services are grounded to a halt!

There are usually no running taps in Nigeria’s ‘hospital complexes’. Patients on admission in such hospitals must fetch or buy water for their needs. Regular power supply is a rare commodity in Nigeria’s government and teaching hospital complexes. Patients must bring along their bush lamps and candles when night falls! Patients in most Nigerians’ “hospital complexes” can never receive clean potable water unless they buy from hawkers. Those who bring along rechargeable lanterns can never re-charge them for lack of power supplies. So the woes of patients that find themselves in Nigerian hospitals continue to multiply every day.

Whether they attach ‘international’ or not to their names, teaching hospitals all over the world seriously engage in the training of future medical personnel of the nation. The hospitals where medical students train, are among the best equipped institutions of higher learning. No nation can toy with its medical services and personnel and therefore the best ‘brains’ among young men and women who aspire to medical profession are granted admission into the medical schools.

How does Nigeria’s typical Medical School or “Teaching Hospital” compare with its counterpart elsewhere in other nations? There is not much to write home about. The truth is that a typical Nigerian “Teaching Hospital Complex” is so just in name. In the first place the learning or the teaching environment is abysmally poor. For all practical purposes a teaching hospital must possess most of the modern medical gadgets for experiments and research. These are ‘manned’ by experts in the various medical fields and young and future medical doctors and personnel learn to handle sophisticated gadgets for detecting, diagnosing and eradicating diseases that menace lives of people.

What of Nigeria’s medical students? These are usually ill-equipped for the job they aspire to. The “teachers” are usually not there for the serious job of training the enthusiastic students. The medical programs in most cases have been crippled by incessant series of strikes by medical staff of teaching

hospitals. With such regularly organized strikes one can guess how ill-prepared our future medical doctors can be to exercise their profession in the long unforeseen future. As a result of strikes, most young medical aspirants opt for other professions, as graduation from medical schools takes many years than necessary to accomplish. Those students who find admissions easily abroad after graduation never return to Nigeria again. What Nigeria loses, other nations grab!

### **“Big Family Houses” or “Big City Hotels?”**

Nigerians’ concept of ‘greatness’ can also be seen in the extraordinary sizes of family houses they build for themselves and their children. Nigerians who have made it; in other words, those who have become extraordinarily opulent, publicly show-off their massive wealth by building family houses that are often described by jesters and comedians as “Holiday Inn” (because the structure is as massive and magnificent as real international hotel). Such massive family homes are also called “White House”, (because it is as big and really ‘complex’ as the residence of the United States President!

Get inside the rooms - they are lavishly equipped with all sorts of communication gadgets, televisions of all sizes and makes. There are beer parlours on each floor. There may be up to 5 or 6 floors or stories in the massive structure. Visitors’ apartments must really be described as ‘hotel rooms’. “Boys’ quarters” may look like a village of its own. This is where maid servants and security men and vigilantes recreate themselves!

“What is the purpose of embarking on such structures, one may ask when in fact the family house is rarely occupied or visited by the owners and families? They live in the big cities and perhaps have such family houses in most states of the federation! Only guards, house boys and house girls are seen around the locked white house. Soon, rats and other rodents take their share of the family house!

Will the landlord even ‘rent’ parts of the ‘boys’ quarters’ to the poor relatives who are living in shanties and also dying of hunger? Will the landlord allow the poor villagers to collect water from the borehole? The answer may be in the negative. Whatever the case, the windfall, an unexpected fortune, in this case, money has been invested in a multi-million dollar project, a family house. The windfall could be part of the excess money realized from shady or dubious business transactions. The big family house stands out there as a sign of affluence, a ‘superlative marker!’

**Houses of Excellence, Cities of Excellence, States of Excellence, Nation of excellence!**

For some very ‘patriotic’ Nigerians, their nation is not only a ‘super-power nation, it is as well ‘a nation of excellence’. Its big and small cities and states are identified with the “excellence superlative marker”. Nigeria’s Lower and Upper Houses of assembly are known by their ‘excellent’ legislations, ‘excellent’ and ‘responsible’ behavior of members of the legislature!

How and in what sense have Nigerian cities and states achieved ‘excellent’ status, one must ask! The Bible of course identifies the most important criterion, when it asserts that “By their fruits you shall know them!” In most cities of ‘excellence’ in Nigeria, does one find ‘excellent’ multi-lane-roads and streets? Of course not! There are usually no traffic jams as traffic, like in most developed and developing nations, are controlled by numerous street lights which perpetually shine, day and night. ‘Excellent’ Nigerians cities are as well the ‘cleanest’ you find anywhere. Often one finds in these very attractive cities large street television screens that are used to advertise government products and achievements.

No! Nigerian cities can never be described as ‘excellent’ in any way. Most are slums and stinking open gutters attract vultures to the so-called cities. There are often more potholes in the city streets and roads than you find in the village roads. Some of the city roads are impassable in the rainy season and in some situations pedestrians may need canoes to cross the floods in Nigeria’s cities of ‘excellence!’ Most Nigerian motorists living in the villages and cities have not seen traffic lights and don’t know how they function.

The problems of city dwellers in Nigeria are compounded not only by lack of usual city amenities found all over the world; a lot of problems are created by the uncontrollable influx of migrants into the cities. They have come to search for means of livelihood. The cheapest job in Nigeria is found in the private sector. The popular ‘taxi’ or ‘okada’ has become a menacing business in Nigeria that some city and state authorities and governments have banned the ‘okada’ people from entering the already overcrowded cities and their roads. Most Nigerians find okada useful and the only option for short-distant travelers. A city of excellence must be able to provide shuttle-bus-services for city dwellers. Metro-services (underground railway system) as found in cities like Paris, London, Frankfurt, and New York help to ease traffic congestion in the big cities. What is Nigeria’s Ministry of Transport up to?

Nigerian city dwellers suffer untold hardship as many trek long distances to work. Those who unavoidably must take ‘okada’ must be prepared for the worst. Fatal road accident cases are ugly scenarios people must put up with everyday in Nigeria. Most accident victims die from injuries of multi-fractured limbs before they are brought to the hospital.

What of ambulance services? Cities of ‘excellence’ are known also by the prompt services they render to the sick and accident victims. The number ‘911’ is virtually an international ‘code’, even toddlers can dial ‘911’ to summon emergency services for victims of road accidents, flood and fire disasters.

Hospital ambulances and fire service vehicles command attention of road users, especially in crowded cities. By their sirens, you shall know them!

Not in Nigeria! There are no ambulances in Nigeria's 'cities of excellence'. Often mangled bodies of accident victims are conveyed to hospitals and mortuaries by 'okada' people! Accident victims, who are fortunate to remain alive to the hospital, are usually conveyed to their destination by pick-up trucks. Villagers, who fail to get okada or pick-up people don't mind trying bicycles or even barrows!

No! In Nigeria's 'cities of excellence', only politicians and the rich, in fact those people whose lives are very precious to Nigeria, enjoy emergency service vehicles. Such vehicles are usually deployed by their security men and body guards, when politicians are on campaign rallies or when they are visiting places and peoples, even close relatives. By their sirens, you know they are passing by! The common people in Nigeria do not deserve such services. It is enough to let them know that the status of 'excellence', by which their cities and states is known, exists only in name.

Where then does Nigerians' claim for 'excellence' lie? Perhaps in the painting of round-about-roads, street corners, and hedges. Sometimes big houses found at street corners are repainted to add to the cities' 'splendor'. Most often streets leading to government headquarters are painted in variegated colors to reflect the 'excellence' status of the state capitals!

### **Big Churches: scanty membership, little spirituality**

Nigerian Christians and Muslims no doubt like big places of worship, churches, cathedrals and mosques. They engage their best architects, from far and wide in architectural drawings and designs, building constructions, most of which take life-time to complete. Some are usually colossal in size and compare well with the ancient **Roman amphitheatre or Coliseum**. Little do the people reckon with cost and time when they first draw their budget for the building of a befitting village or station church of a monumental size. They take little note of membership which normally should square up with size of the edifice.

What of cost and possible fluctuation in prices of building materials? Perhaps, initially planned to cost a few thousand naira to complete, whoever thought it would now cost tens of millions of naira! Nigerian Christians even take pride in announcing that their village church which may take many decades to complete was started by one man, a philanthropist! Once buoyant in mind and with extensive human and material resources at his command, no one cares to ask whether "the man of the people" would be able to complete the gigantic project and single-handedly!

Most often the Bible recounts the inevitable tell-tale as the "great stadium church" of an Olympic stature fails to serve its purposes. "Does one who want to build a house not sit down first and calculate the cost?" Nigerians like autonomy and big things, surely. Even if eventually completed, the stadium

Church, or pro-cathedral may become old-fashioned and obsolete in size, design, and usage. The building initially planned to take about 10,000 worshippers may eventually become empty as new parishes and stations spring up here and there and gain autonomy. The 10,000 sinner-church is left with less than 1,000 members. Only few scattered spectators watch the performance in the grand stadium! Not only does the membership continue to dwindle; the big church may equally fail to provoke the expected devotion and spirituality among members. What a great shock for the ‘living members?’ Everyone has been pushed so far by the ambition to be great and the chronic love for great and big things ultimately fails to achieve the desired goals.

### “Express Roads”, “Express Highways”! Death Traps!

Having been starved by their political leaders of most ‘goodies’ of life and social services people all over the world enjoy, Nigerians get hysterical when any small ‘crumb’ falls from the master’s table and they are allowed to pick and lick their fingers with joy! If this is not the right picture of the situation, how then do Nigerians describe some neglected, abandoned, dilapidated, pot-holed roads that pass through their communities as “*Express Highway?*” Surely most Nigerians have not seen or enjoyed an “*Express Highway*” or “*Road*” in Europe, America or even in African nations like Ghana, Kenya or Ethiopia.

Since maintenance culture is a dead matter in Nigeria, the once-multi-billion-naira roads, constructed by foreign contractors are soon reduced to ‘death-trap-jungle-roads’ for motorists who risk their lives taking the “*Express Highway!*” Destroyed by erosion and rendered useless and dangerous by gullies, users who have no option than to continue plying the ‘Nigerian Express Roads’, create their own alternative “*Express Highways*” through bushes and thick forests to gain access to much-better village roads in order to get to their destinations. What a horrendous experience to ply Nigerians “*Express Highways!*”

Most Nigerians who have not really enjoyed real express roads are surprised to be told that **true Express Highways** exist elsewhere, in Europe and America, Asia and some parts of the African continent. Such roads are known by some of the following features:

At the beginning of construction, such roads are decked with heavy iron rods, metals, and special stones that withstand severe weather conditions (especially flooding and heavy snow fall). Real express roads may have up to 6 lanes or more in either direction. Maintenance of such roads is a non-stop project as all sources of danger that might disrupt traffic are removed within minutes, if not seconds. Heavier vehicles have their special lanes much strongly built to last.

These are true *Super Highways* as users enjoy their journey, every motorist observing and keeping to rules of safe-driving.

Not in Nigeria! Both the so-called Express Roads and local ones are not maintained by the authorities who should be in-charge. Ministries responsible for Federal, State and Local Government roads exist only in name. Perhaps they are heard of when huge road contracts are advertised and awarded. They take their percentage contract-profit and face the other way as con men, dupes, swindlers and interloper-contractors continue the nasty and often unfinished job! Since there is no supervision by the authorities, road contractors may under one pretext or the other abandon their job. The quality of materials used is usually of most inferior nature. Who should be surprised when within months of *commissioning of a multi-billion-naira Express Way* gullies had been dug by erosion and bridges had fallen apart!

### **Big and Wasteful Celebrations**

Nigerians find their own unique reasons and occasions to celebrate, and often lavishly. Is it a tragic death of a young man or woman in ghastly motor accident, or that of an elderly person in his or her nineties, Nigerians must find reasons to celebrate *'life' or 'death?'* Posters of both the young and old dead relatives are printed in bold colors and placed on strategic positions in towns and villages, announcing their death as well as extending invitations to all and sundry to funeral ceremonies. At such celebrations "mourners", young and elderly dress up in gorgeous and expensive attires to celebrate *'befitting' burials* of their loved ones.

In fact, visitors or foreigners in Nigeria may really find it difficult to distinguish Nigerians in joyful mood from those who should actually be in mournful mood. Should they be expected to express sympathy or really *'rejoice'* with those on whose shoulders a great misfortune has fallen? Most often, after such expensive celebrations many families go bankrupt. You find statements like this: *"Since the burial of my son, brother, mother or father, I have not been able to pay my children's school fees."* *"It will take me some time to recover from huge expenses I incurred after the burial of a relative?"*

Here, some important note must be taken by those who care. The "complainant" is not actually seeking for sympathy from his listeners. No! He wants to show how big the celebration was! Yes. Nigerians who spend lavishly earn great admiration from friends and many foolishly copy from those who celebrate big.

They don't only spend big and lavishly; Nigerians like also to duplicate such celebrations, for the obvious reasons. Take for instance, the celebration of marriage in Igboland. Most of the initial traditional ceremonies and rites are usually celebrated months before the actual thing. The initial rites may include *'information'* that a family or a suitor is interested in the daughter of another family. Each occasion or time this information is released to the father of the

girl, the mother, an uncle or brother, cartons of wine, kegs of palm wine, kola nuts and other well-known delicacies must be presented. Then at a 4th or 5th visit a list of other traditional requirements is released on paper. And here is a picture, the scenario, a typical wedding day, painted by an *amateur poet*.

Oh, poor Nigerians; why complicate matters for yourselves: Beginning at sunrise, Church service in the morning (**aka, 'White Wedding'**); group photographs thereafter. Grand reception in a church hall (for far-distant and close friends and visitors.) Another 'short' and 'expensive feasting' at the groom's compound, to close around 2.00 p.m. Re-assembly of friends and well-wishers at the Bride's family at 4.00 p.m. This is "**Igba Nkwu**" (**Traditional weeding**): "White Wedding" is re-enacted, as the wedding cake is cut. Bride and bridegroom must be in their white wedding gowns and suits. Eating, drinking, dancing and speech making. The real Traditional wedding begins really at sunset. The Bride and Groom change their 'uniform' two or three times, to reflect the mood of the occasion! The flower girls and bridesmaids change also. All in native attire. More important guests arrive. Eating and drinking till dawn!

### **Reckless Shopaholics**

Nigerians as a people as well as a nation are compulsive shoppers, lovers of shopping. Economically the nation has gone down. No industry is working. We are in an era of *Tukunbo* (used-material) trade. Importation of everything possible into the country is the flourishing trade and they come from every part of the world. These include used cars, clothing, cooking utensils, cutlery, shoes, computers, electronic gadgets, and accessories. They are all old, used and throw-away materials. They come from Asia, Europe and America. Of late, a lot of used things are arriving from some African countries which used to be poorer than Nigeria and actually have depended on Nigerian products.

Nigerian young business adventurers import all sorts of materials from Gabon, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Cameroon and Senegal. While all sorts of fruit trees grow in Nigeria, Nigerian importers flood our markets and streets with fruits and juices of every kind from all over the world. These products come in plastic, and paper packages, in cans and bottles. Nigerians have appetite for foreign drinks and juices while our mangoes, oranges, guava, pawpaw, banana, cashew, pears and others with which Mother Nature has blessed Nigeria rot away in the bushes. No one thinks that any meaningful fruit business could flourish in our land.

### **Most distrustful of their leaders**

*“To be forewarned is to be forearmed”*. *“A stitch in time saves nine”*. These are adages that drive home, right into the hearts and minds of the wise and unwise, a simple message or lesson requiring caution. Any type of mistakes can never be condoned or tolerated. It is best to foresee dangers and nip possible troubles right in the bud and stop them from happening. Try and destroy all chances of ugly events before great harm is done.

Weary Nigerians, disappointed and frustrated by the activities of their political leaders, are no more in the mood of tolerating reckless leaders, especially those who have rigged elections and grabbed political power through fraudulent activities. “Tampering with election results”, for example has become a detestable phenomenon most Nigerians so much abhor. To ‘tamper with’ means to meddle with, to make unauthorized changes in submitted results, especially in figures. ‘Tinkering’, is another word meaning *‘to try to mend,’* especially figures in a document in amateurish and inexperienced way. Nigerians, for example are never ready to forgive the **INEC** and anyone said to be tampering or tinkering with the election results to favor even their own privately preferred candidates. Nigerians want nothing but free, fair and credible elections. They have no more sympathy with election fraudsters.

During the 2011 elections in Nigeria, in one polling station I visited during the Federal House elections, I saw two elderly persons challenging the presumed *age* of a young fellow. The young person, they maintained, was not yet even 14. Why should he show up at the polling station? Who got him registered at all? The elderly persons threatened to report the matter to security agents. What a welcome development!

Nigerians may be disappointed and sad to hear that their favored candidate did not after all win. He has been beaten by a more popular candidate. No problem! That may be the will of God; after all, not everyone must win. Some will win and others lose. They may find other reasons to console their loser, his closest family and party members. But these politically educated and awakened Nigerians of today will not take it lightly when someone makes them understand that in one of their polling stations with exactly 300 registered voters, someone or a party swept the polls in that area with over 1,500 votes! Damn it! Impossible! They have come again! Nigerians will not like to hear that. That will be a piece of disturbing news! The right thing must be: *500 registered voters; number of valid votes cast 350*. That’s okay. After all, some people may not have turned up to vote!

*Let My Vote Count*: While most Nigerians would want their preferred candidates to sweep the polls, they will surely be sad to hear that the so-called winner after all **rigged** the elections or got a helping hand from **INEC** or their agents. The slogan, the chorus, the refrain of their songs usually reads *“All we are saying...let our votes count!!!”* The **INEC** and political aspirants should never ignore the wishes of the Nigerian masses. Any tampering with election results will no doubt stir up the hornets’ nests. These large stinging insects of

the wasp family usually fight whoever or whatever disturbs their peace. Any tinkering by electoral officers with election results will no doubt cause an outburst of angry feelings among Nigerian voters. In grave circumstances, they may take to the streets. Nigerians look forward to great change in the ways our leaders do their work.

In a country where good media reporting is still at its nascent stage, no reliable public opinion polls are possible, the people are not, however, entirely ignorant of the possible outcome of election results. They know among the noisy contestants who would eventually emerge an indisputable winner, in a free, fair and credible elections! They protest truly when they sense some foul play at the end.

### **Always skeptical and suspicious:**

*“Once beaten, twice shy”*: When you have had an unpleasant experience you are much more careful to avoid similar experiences in the future. No one may blame Nigerians! Having been deceived with huge lies and false promises, Nigerians, young and old don’t trust anyone (especially politicians) any more. Those they suspect and distrust are legion!

(1) **They are suspicious**, for example, of any movement by electoral officers who delay the publication or announcement of election results.

(2) **They are suspicious** of the activities of electoral officers who arrive late at the polling booths. These may be planning a delay to carry out fraudulent activities late in the night! Who can deny this?

(3) **Nigerians don’t even trust** the so-called Party Agents, employed to protect their Masters’ interests with the last drop of blood. No! These can be bought over by other party agents who may be offering more rewards and money to these *‘traitors’*. These traitors, who prefer money and never honor, stab their masters at the back for mere thirty pieces of silver!

(4) **Nigerians don’t trust** electoral officers who work at the collation centers. These can do a lot of funny things at the collation centers; things that can change the voters’ verdict.

(5) **Nigerians don’t trust** the **INEC** scribes either. These, they believe or maintain, (offering facts and figures, real and mythical), can use their pens and pencils to alter the overall results of the multi-billion dollar election exercise. Only the ‘favored’ candidates win! The people’s verdict had been dashed to the walls! What a calamity! These **INEC** guys had done it in the previous elections, since Nigeria got independence in 1960. They did it in 2003, and again in 2007. In 2011! Who knows what will happen in the future elections?

(6) **Nigerians are always suspicious** of security agents. Is it possible that the **INEC** or one political juggernaut or god father must have bought over the nation’s entire security machinery, the army, the navy, air force, the SSS,

including the regional vigilante groups to use every available force and means to suppress any uprising, and thus ensure the success of a particular party at the polls? The electoral agents and their god fathers had done it in the past and succeeded. At least many Nigerian adults remember the **Abiola saga**. Didn't the nation's security agents endorse a cancellation of the results of elections believed to have been the most credible in Nigeria's election history? Who will convince the people, armed with facts and figures that such may after all not be possible in a nation called Nigeria today?

(7) **Nigerians don't trust** a very important arm of the security agency, namely the *judiciary*. In fact, in a lawless country like Nigeria, mobile courts should be erected during these turbulent elections exercises, precisely to prosecute, try and jail law-breakers. But electoral offenders are not usually prosecuted in Nigeria. Names of big politicians who commit all sorts of electoral atrocities are never publicized or prosecuted for breaking the laws of the land. These big politicians and their god fathers recruit, train and sponsor hoodlums and bandits who snatch ballot boxes and electoral materials, intimidate electoral officers, sponsor under age voters. Many traditional rulers are known to have participated in and sponsored many electoral malpractices. All said and done, Nigerians get disillusioned with the agencies empowered to punish convicted offenders. Crimes continue to thrive in Nigeria. Offenders are caught, but never prosecuted and sent to jail, at least to serve as a deterrent to future and hardened criminals.

(8) **Nigerians don't trust** even their political candidates and leaders, whom they strongly believe have no political ideologies, policies or principles. They don't trust these politicians who decamp from their 'former parties' and join 'the winning parties', thus abandoning their 'former supporters' in the cold. They change camps when they see no chances of grabbing power if they stood firm in their former positions.

(9) **Nigerians keep wary eye** on politicians who try to bribe the people with material gifts and money. Material gifts include bags of rice, bags of fertilizer, cloths, raw and cooked food during campaign rallies. Many villagers and city dwellers, who flock political campaign grounds, gather really to collect cash and materials gifts from these wealthy and flamboyant politicians. Not in a few gatherings have many young Nigerians lost their lives in stampedes. As uncountable bundles of clean naira notes are sprayed from open vehicles many on-lookers rush for the manna from heaven. Many are trampled underfoot and die or are seriously maimed and so suffer from deadly injuries! The motives of politicians that distribute money and materials to possible voters can be worrisome and many questions are bound to arise. Supposing they lose in these elections? What are their sources of income? What if people collect the money and gifts and at last refuse to support the candidate? Of course, many Nigerians can no more be deceived with money and material gifts. Some reject such 'Greek gifts' out rightly. They instruct the corrupt politicians and agents to go

with their money. “You are a con man. We will not vote for you. You are the type that should be avoided.” While others may collect money and gifts from corrupt politicians, these voters go their way and vote for politicians they trust.

(10) **Nigerians are weary** of unfulfilled and false promises. It is obvious to recall that some political leaders have most of times disappointed the electorate *who have voted them into office!* Only but a tiny few winners of the political trophies remember to fulfill, even 20% of their electoral promises. What of the promised free education from Primary school to the University? Then, free medical care for all and sundry? What of the 24 hour, non-stop electrical power? What of the express roads that should run from the cities to the remote villages? What of the job opportunities that should be as countless as the sand on the seashore? What of security, and end to armed robbery and kidnapping? Empty and unfulfilled promises abound and the people continue to feel disappointed and as well frustrated.

### **Law makers in a lawless nation: most highly paid**

The business of law-making has recently become a contentious issue in Nigeria. In the past few Nigerians really cared about the *legislature* (the law-making body), often referred to as the second arm of government. The first arm being the *executive* (the body that really runs the affairs of government) and the third, the *judiciary* (the body that actually runs the law courts and delivers judgments). Today, however most Nigerians, young and old, literate and uneducated, are becoming ‘politically conscious,’ and so ask questions about the lawmakers and the business of law making. Who are the lawmakers that ask us to vote for them? What do they actually accomplish? What are the differences between the so-called “*Lower House*” and “*Upper House*” of the legislature? They are said to wield a lot of power in the success of any government in power! Where does this power actually lie?

For those who care to know experts seriously assert that any government in power that loses the support of the legislature could crumble at any moment. This can happen if the Honorable Members refuse to approve the government’s budget, especially if they are not happy with the government’s spending formula. They can stifle government programs and projects. Lawmakers can impeach the president and force new elections. Experts in Political Science confirm that the above ‘propositions’ are ‘realities’ and not ‘myths’ as most Nigerians think. They cite America and European countries whose systems of government Nigeria tries to copy or mimic. In those countries (mostly in the first world), the business of Lawmaking is a serious matter. Legislators are as *honorable* and *knowledgeable* as the president of the country.

What of Nigeria? When will our political scientists and those who took courses in International Strategist Studies educate Nigerians who are so skeptical about the functions and activities of lawmakers in their country? A lot

of questions are asked: “If our system of government works like that of the Americans and the British, why are coups d’états (violent and unconstitutional change of government rampant in Nigeria and in some other countries that operate like Nigeria?) No one hears about coups in America or Britain. Why do legislators decamp or abandon their original parties and join opposition or other parties at the least word of provocation? This is rare in America or Britain! When it comes to policies, and principles there are no clear cut distinguishing marks, in terms of policies, principles, ideologies and manifestoes between Nigerian legislators of the ruling party and those of the Opposition.. In America and Britain, for example, it is easy to distinguish *Democratic Party* legislators from the *Republicans*; a *Labor Party* man from the *Conservative*. In Nigeria the dividing lines are very thin! Why? In fact there are too many other worrying questions

The above assertion has been made by many highly placed and respected Nigerians, including writers and journalists. As usual the same reason has been given to justify the stance taken by contestants to win elections and make it in fact a ‘do and die’ affair! How much does a Nigerian legislator earn monthly? Who can tell Nigerians? Or have Nigerians, like their counterparts in other democratic countries no right to know what their political leaders earn? Or is it a confidential and highly classified matter? Why should the principles of the so-called democracy not apply here?

### **Reckless Lawmakers in a Lawless Nation! Double Tragedy!**

There is no doubt that most Nigerians today are asking questions about how their country is being run and by whom. They like to know their lawmakers, right to the door steps of their family homes, their qualifications and of course their integrity. For long Nigerians have heard about a Senator or Honorable Member who used to represent their constituency in the Federal or State levels. Few older Nigerians can truly claim to have known or have met such ‘Representatives’ in life. Many young Nigerians don’t know who their representatives at Abuja or at the state capital are. But today they like to know who they are and why these men and women should be voted into office.

We know where the flaws lie. The Bible makes it clear that a banana tree cannot produce an orange fruit, nor can one pick palm nuts under a mango tree. No one can give what he does not possess (*Nemo dat quod non habet*). Truly, the same Bible states that “By their fruits you shall know them.” In a well known and internationally recognized lawless nation like Nigeria, some sort of serious soul searching reflection must be carried out to identify the ills of the nation. Perhaps a simple examination of lawmaking business can lead to some stunning revelations and thus point to some causes of the anomaly.

Many Nigerians may not in fact be kidding when they question the usefulness of law making in a nation like Nigeria where the rule of law does not

exist. Why in the first place should the serious job of lawmaking be placed in the hands of politicians who don't even believe in the **rule of law**? No doubt, many lawmakers in Nigeria grab this job through fraudulent means, namely election rigging and other election malpractices.

It is in fact a double tragedy when reckless breakers of the law are appointed as law makers; and worse still are paid highly for such a job. It is high time Nigerian tax payers are told what their leaders earn. These figures must be officially published and the truth known by everybody. If they have nothing to hide, the truth must be known. Perhaps the time has come for bitter truth to be told and may be the problem has to be settled by a referendum.

### **The question of integrity**

Integrity is an underlining virtue when character of an individual plays a vital role in his performance in an office. It has to do with honor, truth and uprightness. One who makes a law that must be kept, obeyed and cherished must be an impeccable law-abiding citizen. He plays according to the rules of the game, and does not employ any deceitful or fraudulent tools in the realization of his dreams or goals. His guiding principle is the rule of law.

Most Nigerians do not trust their lawmakers, the presumed flag bearers of the constitution that guides the nation, the leaders and the people they lead. In Nigeria, most lawmakers are seen and known to be the first breakers of the law. In their bid to win elections and grab power, they indulge in all sorts of electoral malpractices, including rigging, use of armed bandits and thugs. They are usually the first to break electoral laws meant to forestall breach of peace. As they practice their so-called lawmaking business, many Nigerians lawmakers are easily bought over with money and do not vote according to their consciences.

### **The Question of Qualification**

Are most Nigerian lawmakers qualified to handle the sophisticated business of lawmaking? Law is an important profession. Like in the other professional disciplines, (including medicine, engineering, education and religion) there are stringent rules and guidelines that dictate qualifications and qualities of membership of the profession or association.

Are Nigerian lawmakers *lawyers by profession*? It may not be necessary to apply stiff rules here. But it no doubt helps, where a lawmaker has graduated in law, economics, political science, ethics and even religion. He will have an edge on both his opponents and comrades. Surely he will have more commanding respect than "professional" contractors, business men and secondary school or college drop-outs who accidentally find themselves in the business of lawmaking in Nigeria.

Are Nigerian lawmakers gentle linguists (specialized in other languages including their local ones)? Do they speak average college English and French? Our neighbors, (citizens of Cameroon, Republic of Benin, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Chad, Niger and others) including their lawmakers speak fluent English and French languages. How many Nigerian lawmakers have even a smattering knowledge of the major Nigerian languages?

### **The Question of Representation**

Do Nigerian lawmakers truly *represent* their people in the Lower and Upper Houses of the legislature in our fatherland? With great cynicism most Nigerians will respond to such a question or opinion survey with an emphatic No! Never! Not at all! Some questioned Nigerians might add: “He does not represent us. He does not know whether we exist. He is after his private pockets and does not care about the needs of his constituency.

This is why running for the office of the lawmaker in Nigeria is a free-for-all affair. The people’s votes may not actually count, as all sorts of candidates, including 419-ers, fraudsters and con men are accommodated in the race!

**Quality, First Consideration:** Since no country can toy with the business of lawmaking and succeed in achieving good governance, peace and development, it is time Nigerians woke up from slumber and take their lawmakers to great task. The adage “Tell me who your friends are and I tell you the type of person you are”, come into limelight now. *Tell me the caliber of people who make your laws and I tell you the type of a nation you belong, and definitely, the type of people you are.*

### **The Application, Meaning of “Superlative Qualities”**

For the big African Brother and Daddy, Nigeria and Nigerians should endeavor to convert their present status of “*Greatness*”, “*Internationalism*” and “*Superman*” qualities into reality. Nigeria, in theory and practice should attract and command the attention, respect and admiration of world community, especially that of the brother African nations. The known ‘*Giant*’ of Africa must walk like a colossus and in all practical terms honorably earn her proper place among the true ‘super-power-nations whose greatness is never disputed in terms of military, political, and economic power. When the ‘Giant of Africa’ is mentioned, no one is left in doubt which nation of Africa is being referred to. That is an ‘axiom, a ‘truism’. Like the often unnamed ‘*Police Man of the World*’, Nigeria should be feared and respected by her neighbors, who must desist from troubles that would earn them punishment from the Big Brother. Such punishment may be imposed if the troublesome and small nations should be unjustly attacked by their neighbors; if someone should try to rig an election

and impose himself as a dictator, the Big Brother is expected to intervene in times of crises and restore order and tranquility.

As the most populous nation in Africa, Nigeria should use her size and human resources to help her neighbors. A military power to reckon with, Nigeria should always stand ready, in military combat and in the position to send peace-keeping force. As a powerful and truly the richest nation in Africa, the Big Brother stands to help the poorer nations of Africa in times of economic crises. So her “*Greatness*” shines out and no darkness can cover it! To be able to accomplish such continental and global tasks, Nigeria must of course be ready to supply all the needs of her own citizens! When the God-given wealth is evenly and equitably distributed among the people, behold it will be time to extend hands of friendship and love to the neighbors and poorer nations!

To be able to accomplish all the above tasks and many more, the *Big Brother* must, like Caesar’s wife be above suspicion! So, evils and crimes like military coup, civil war, election malpractice, bribery and corruption, fraudulent activities may never be found within Nigerian borders and among Nigerians everywhere. Transparent democratic principles must reign supreme in Nigeria.

In post electoral litigations, Nigerians political aspirants must be ready to concede victory to the winner and never go to war to grab victory. Losers at the polls must show maturity and accept defeat with dignity. Losers should congratulate their opponents who succeed in free, fair and credibly conducted elections. That is one important mark of ‘greatness’.

Nigerians should try to cut their cloths according to size and may be too, hang their clothes at places they can reach out to collect them. Humility is never a sign of weakness. Nigerians should learn to use “Superlative Markers” in their proper places and never exaggerate when there is no cause for it.

### **What greatness means**

Nigeria’s “Greatness Syndrome” may actually cease to be a misnomer if these “*superlative markers*” can really be measured in action and not merely in words or wishes. Periods of elections, when well organized, free and fair, are the times to identify “greatness” with individual leaders who prove their worth in action. If a politician contesting for an office for the second time can prove what he had been up to during the first tenure, he stands a good chance of being returned unopposed!

Here personalities, individuals (no more political parties) play a vital role in the selection of best leaders for a country. Although the face of this aspirant is new in politics, he can still be identified by his works elsewhere. Did the Bible not make it clear that faith is not enough to win salvation? “*Faith without good works is barren*”. “*Do you want to be shown, you foolish fellow, that faith apart from works is barren*” (James 2.20). For Nigerians seeking for political

offices, it may be necessary at this point in time to remind them to show 'signs' of their greatness if they have to succeed.

The educated Nigerian electorate of today has by experience learnt to pick and choose. Days are gone when party banners and slogans point to possible winners at elections. Having been deceived by big billboards, party slogans, and predestined-winner-party-emblems for years, most Nigerians have learnt their lessons at the polls. They ask questions and they take wise decisions. Then they vote for persons, individuals and not parties. It is therefore crucial to know who a politician is, his accomplishments in his local community before he can aspire to any office of importance on a national level. Greatness has come to be identified by "achievements" and not by the fame of the "father-sponsors", "god-fathers" and the amount of money one invests in the political business.

### **What greatness does not embrace.**

Greatness is not found in big and awesome loots! Nigerians, politicians, business men, contractors, when they decide to ransack government treasury, do it in billions these days. About few years ago, they used to plunder the nation in millions. Troubled citizens should understand and check their blood pressure. It can be frightening and unimaginable. They never allow any single opportunity to loot to pass without opening and establishing avenues to milk the people and nation dry!

It is no big news these days to hear that an 'officer' in the local government, state or federal level carted away a whooping sum of 120 billion naira and was being trailed by the **EFCC**. The sum could even be in dollars or euro. Perhaps he was caught by some vigilant guardsmen and was being investigated. He may be prosecuted. But no one hears about the results of the investigations! Greatness does not lie in the ability to steal and loot government treasuries!

Greatness is not found in big and awesome contract spending: Nigerians know how to spend and award contracts in billions and trillions! They take delight in investing in useless ventures. It could be in the supply of automatic voting machines that would bring to fulfillment the people's wish for free, fair and credible election in Nigeria! The amount spent on purchasing obsolete machines they claim are modern and ultra modern, may not worry the suppliers as long as they gain and the nation loses. It must be someone's opportunity to enrich himself and family. It does not matter whether the machines work or not. It does not matter whether the set goals are achieved or not. What would happen to the voting machines after use? Have they any second-hand value? Will they be simply discarded after the exercise? Squander mania! Suppliers and operators may not care to know.

Greatness is not found in big commissions and emoluments. There are no criteria for fixing salaries of workers and employers in the great country called

Nigeria. While top political leaders, including local government councilors, legislators of all grades and houses earn awesome salaries and emoluments monthly counted in millions, ordinary workers in the lowest rung of the ladder earn miserable sums measured only in 4 digits. This is precisely why people fight to grab positions in government where as lawmakers and brokers, are free to fix their salaries and entitlements as they like. Who can question their methods and styles?

**“No Place like Nigeria!” Incontestable Truth!**

What an irony! “Can the devil speak the truth”, questioned Banquo rhetorically in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* as the witches’ prophecies seemed to be coming to fruition. “No place like Nigeria” is a familiar radio and television advert, a promotional cliché, employed by officials to attract investors and tourists to Nigeria. These foreigners are requested to come and enjoy all the goodies Nigeria can provide in all sectors of life: The *most populous* nation in Africa, the *richest* nation in Africa; the *most peaceful, most friendly, most hardworking, most trustworthy and reliable, most lovely, most honest, most religious* and what have you? Could such assertions be true or self deception or a misnomer? Many concerned citizens and patriotic Nigerians would wish it was true and such accolades could be bestowed on our fatherland. Blessed will be the people and nation whose admirers would approach so closely and embrace without fear or doubt!

