

FROM THE ARCHIVES (1)

WHY NIGERIANS CONTINUE TO FLEE THEIR FATHERLAND IN SPITE OF THE AMAZING ODDS: HOW THEY REACT

QUOTABLE QUOTES: WHITHER NIGERIA? -THE BITTER TRUTH

- (1) 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. (*Nigeria: A New Paradigm: KWENU, Spring 1998*)
- (2) The present is pregnant with meaning for the future. The present thickly cloudy and uncertain terrain has infinitely positive possibilities if the opportunity is firmly grasped. Nigeria can begin again, on the basis of equity and justice, because there will never be peace without these two 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. (*Dr. Ibiyinka O. Solarin, Political Science Professor, Texas, USA, in article "Nigeria and the hour of decision: The bell tolls")*
- (3) A country of one hundred and more teeming millions of black humanity, with abundant natural and human resources, yet to date seems unable to establish a stable working democracy. There is no field of academic and professional endeavor you will not find a Nigerian worldwide. In many of the finest teaching and research institutions worldwide, will be found Nigerians as scientific inventors, researchers, deans, vice-presidents, presidents, department chairs, faculty members. Also as attorneys, engineers, medical doctors with highly lucrative private practices as well as professionals in specialized fields in both the private and public sectors. [*Ibidem*]
- (4) The motive for power shift is not to put it in the same irresponsible and reprobate use it has been put in the past. I'll not be part of it. Those of us who have been in the trenches since 1990 for power shift KNOW why we want it to shift. So, if we are looking for a Southern candidate, he must be one who understands the need to put power to use for the benefit of All Nigerians, not a conniving leadership that preserves the status quo. (*Pini Jason - writer, analyst*)

- (5) Nigerians who are very patriotic and sincere about moving the nation forward want to democratically elect their leader, and not to have such leader imposed upon them by either the military or the civilian political class. This is one of the major political problems, which the present military government wants to put to rest so that Nigeria can move forward for the benefit of all Nigerians. (*Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar, in an interview - "Why I must quit" - with the Hausa Service of the Voice of America (VOA)*)
- (6) This is why the idea of a sovereign national conference resonates so powerfully with reflecting Nigerians at home and abroad. This conference which must be made up of accredited representatives of the people of Nigeria is the venue to confront and address the issue of the national question and political legitimacy exhaustively. The general theme for the conference ought to be Nigerians Federalism in Theory and Practice. All other issues are subsumed under this broad theme. The operating idea of the sovereignty of this conference means that its decisions will constitute core principles and canon of the basic existence of Nigeria, once they have been ratified in a national referendum. A sovereign national conference of the accredited representatives of the people is the best venue to discuss the basis on which Nigeria and its federating units will enter the 21st century. (*Dr. Ibiyinka O. Solarin ["Nigeria and the hour of decision." Op. Cit.]*)
- (7) A situation where we are embarking on a series of elections without the enabling legislation does not only send wrong signals; it is apolitical and is open to questions. It also defeats the purpose of establishing credibility for such an exercise. It is not in accordance with what can be regarded as keeping fate with procedures of democracy. (*Ayo Opadokun, General Secretary of the National Democratic Coalition, NADECO*)
- (8) We have always been unlucky that our country itself is governed on an 'ad hoc' basis. We never prepare for anything and at the last hour, we begin to rush. That's why we cannot produce a standard football team in spite of all the talents we have - no winning formula for our national team. While others begin to prepare for a tournament immediately one is concluded, we don't start preparing until the last minute and then we start shouting. That's not the way to do things. (*Ibidem*)
- (9) Obasanjo for president! It is of great concern that the North has already selected for the South a candidate, and are vigorously campaigning for that hand-picked-General Olusegun Obasanjo. It boils down to the old conservative Northern position that any Southerner, who must be president, must be one anointed by the North. So, when they tout general Obasanjo as a man who will not rock the boat, and a man who can protect the interest of

the North as well as the military, it arouses the suspicion that the vendors of Obasanjo could be hawking a bad product, a status quo man, a quisling,(a person who helps an enemy that has taken control of his country) willing to fill a space, advance the interest of a minority cabal at the expense of the majority. We have had enough of this nonsense. General Obasanjo should do himself and Nigeria a great favor by retiring quietly to his Ota farm to recover from the trauma of his recent close shave with death. (*Pini Jason - writer analyst*)

- (10) Obasanjo-for-president is a Greek gift. It is a ploy to cause confusion in the Southwest Zone. I can only say as follows: The general himself should be wary of this seeming Greek Gift. I would advise that he should remember his recent past. The Yoruba people have never really come to terms with him as to the negative role he played in the 1979 elections. Neither can they readily forget the role he played negatively in respect of Abiola's June 12 victory. Having regard for this position, if he were to get himself persuaded to enter into this race, he should appreciate that he has opened himself to too many questions and once he has entered into the murky waters of Nigeria's politics, he cannot pretend that it would be business as usual. (*Ayo Opadokun, NADACO Scribe*)
- (11) Islam is no longer a major threat to Christianity in Nigeria. Moslem fanatics have been quite vicious. In 1993 the Muslims were attacking Christians and burning Churches. That did not go on for very long because the Christians in Nigeria made a declaration: "For every Church burned by Muslims, the Christians will burn two mosques." (*The Anglican Archbishop of Nigeria, Joseph Adetiloye to All Africa News Agency (AANA) - "Nigerian Christians resist Islamic onslaught."*)
- (12) The fact of the matter, as many well meaning Nigerians have made it clear, is that the Nigerian Armed Forces, Police, and other Federal agencies of law enforcement must be reformed. This is sine qua non for the continued peaceful existence of this country. If we find the idea of regional army attractive, then, let's have it for each Region. Let's not have a regional army posturing as a national army. If, on the other hand, we want One, United, Federal Army, Air Force, Navy, Police, Security agencies and other law enforcement agencies, there must be reforms to properly reflect our diversity. The grave situation in the country is already due to the sectional control of the armed forces and law enforcement agencies! (*Ocherome Nnanna, writer and political analyst in "What is a regional army!"*)
- (13) Nigeria cannot ignore the iniquities of Yakubu Gowon's junta and the postwar political persecution, economic emasculation and social strangulation of the Igbo nation. From the pogrom to the starvation of the

children as weapon of war to the unresolved "abandoned properties" and confiscation of people's savings; these crimes cry for atonement, or Nigeria will not know peace. (*MO Ene, writer and political analyst on "Gowon's repentance and apology."*)

- (14) The so-called Southerners - an undisciplined and disparate mix of ethnically-driven and cowardly politicians have finally realized what Biafra's former leader - Emeka Ojukwu and the Igbos had called for in 1966: a loose federation where the center is not too powerful for any ethnic-religious-geopolitical-ideological bloc to force its whims and agenda on other federating parts of Nigeria. (*Chido Nwangwu, writer and political analyst*)
- (15) "We will support the restoration of democracy, and ensure nobody again disturbs the democratic process in the country. I hope that military without exception will renew their loyalty in your government so that every Nigerian will join hands in building on democratic principles." (*General Yakubu Gowon (who ruled Nigeria from 1966-1975) responding on behalf of former heads of state, defense and service chiefs and police inspectors-general at a private luncheon hosted by General Abdulsalami Abubakar to consult his colleagues on how to confine the military to the barracks after the May 29, 1999 hand over to a civilian government.*)
- (16) "The military is not my constituency. My constituency is Nigeria and the international community." (*General Obasanjo, on whether he would consult the military before deciding to run for the presidency.*)
- (17) "When I was leaving government there were three things I promised myself that I will not do. I won't operate a brothel. I won't gun run. And I won't join a political party. But in your life, you cannot know what can be in front of you. I will react after the process of deliberation, consulting, and praying. But never cease praying for our country." (*Gen. Obasanjo, in response to the "pressure" from some politicians of the Peoples Democratic Movement on him to run in the presidential election.*)
- (18) "The Nigerian Presidency is not for sale to the highest bidder." (*Umaru Dikko to Mooshod Abiola, 1993*)
- (19) Nigerian Presidency is Not for Sale. Membership of PDP should not be with the clog of wheels, or encumbrance, or inducement of political office without strict adherence to the party constitution and political ethics." (*People's Democratic Party (PDP) to General Olusegun Obasanjo, Chief S.M. Afolabi - Deputy National Chairman of PDP and a few other members who took it upon themselves to present Obasanjo the party's membership form NO. 099.*)
- (20) "Any attempt at this formative stage to confine presidential aspiration to a particular personality will not only drive away good materials for any

office but will also destabilize the party and disintegrate the entire system."
(PDP: *ibidem*)

- (21) **Where, O death is your sting?** "Concerning times and seasons, brothers, you have no need for anything to be written to you. For yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief at night. When people are saying, "Peace and security," then sudden disaster comes upon them, like labor pains upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape." [1 Thessalonians: 5:1-3]
- (22) "Abacha is dead. How he died is irrelevant now. He entangled himself in a network of political mess and had sleepless nights trying to figure out an escape. This had its consequences. His death was the escape. For the events of the past 3 years in Nigeria, only a man without a heart would survive such deeds. We all have a heart. Abacha is gone, it was easy to predict." (*Tanko E., London*)
- (23) Abacha's and Abiola's death should serve as a lesson to those who assume to be immortal. We must always temper justice with mercy in our deliberations. I have a prediction for members of the Abacha's gang. All the scavengers who have squandered our oil wealth and left our children to die of hunger, poverty and disease, and deposit millions in foreign banks to help the developed countries progress and punish us economically will reap the fruit of their deeds." (*Audu S., London*)
- (24) "Dead or alive, Abacha is gone forever. We await others in his gang to follow. May their soul never rest, as their deeds have deprived millions of Nigerians the blessings of the natural wealth they are endowed with. Their deeds have brought so much pain and tears and hardship to so many homes as child mortality escalated and our hospitals are daily filled with kwashiorkor babies in midst of plenty. May their children never see the happiness as they 'enjoy' the wealth of the nation. No escape, there is only one outlet - death." (*Garba Garki, London*)
- (25) With more than 100 million people and \$30 million per day from oil which constitutes virtually 100% of our GNP, Nigeria is an oil-rich country, but not a rich country, certainly not at 30 cents per person per day, even assuming 100% use of the oil income. (*Mobalaji E. Aluko*)
- (26) Until we elevate merit as the sole criterion for promotion to high office and distinguishing between opportunity and favoritism, dissatisfaction and resentment will seize the day in Nigeria. (*Ibid.*)
- (27) Deep down, the Western powers care little for how well developing countries are governed, provided there is ready access to the wealth of those nations. *Ibid.*

- (28) **The military versus the civilian:** If the military ventures into governance again in Nigeria by toppling a democratically elected government, such a government has the constitutional and moral rights to invite any foreign power to intervene and flush the military out of office.
- (29) External forces could be invited to restore democracy in Nigeria any time the military tries to mess up.
- (30) The conditions that would warrant any military take-over in Nigeria may no more be there since the politicians who always encourage the military have realized the stupidity of their actions.
- (31) The next civilian administration must be run by people of high integrity who will not be in office because of the spoils and what they get for themselves and their families.
- (32) Once the nation discards the bread and butter politicians and those who are always prepared to collaborate with the military in order to continue to perpetuate injustice against the people for their selfish interests, the military will be permanently blocked from taking over power.
- (33) What Nigeria needs is a leadership which has a vision of what and how they want the society to be by formulating and implementing policies and programs that will transform the society into an enviable one. (*Lt. Col. Joseph Akaagerger, Katsina State administrator.*)
- (34) Nigeria remains an arbitrary collection of squabbling ethnic groups living in regions thrown together by colonialism, rather than a unified nation whose inhabitants share a sense of collective destiny. Under the greedy leadership of the generals, the old clannishness has revived.
- (35) Billions upon billions of dollars in oil revenue that provide Nigeria's principal sources of foreign exchange have been siphoned off by the military bosses.
- (36) The per capita income of Nigerians, the 33rd highest in the world two decades ago, has plummeted to the 13th lowest, below even Haiti's.
- (37) Many years of kleptocratic military dictatorship and irresponsible political leaders have produced a generation of civilian politicians more accustomed to doing business with tyrants than challenging them.
- (38) Millions of well-educated Nigerians who once formed an ambitious middle class have fled the country in total frustration. The deep sense of pride some Nigerians once felt has been replaced by a deep sense of shame as their country earned an ugly reputation as a font of intricate financial scams and a haven for international drug smuggling where hypocrisy rules.
- (39) During the eight-year reign of General Ibrahim Babangida, from 1985 to 1993, Abiola himself often operated as a bagman, showering large sums

on prominent African Americans who would have been embarrassed to take money directly from a military dictator

- (40) An effort by Jesse Jackson to strengthen ties between African and African-American businessmen benefited from Abiola's largesse, as did the congressional Black Caucus Foundation: each reportedly received a \$250,000 donation. Few people asked where the money came from; even fewer returned it.
- (41) The currying of favor continued under the brutal reign of Abacha. During that time, all manner of prominent African Americans from Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan to delegations of clergymen, newspaper publishers and businessmen accepted government-sponsored tours of Nigeria, then sang the dictator's praises.
- (42) I am one of the millions of well-educated Nigerians described in your article "who once formed an ambitious middle class and have fled the country in total frustration." But ethnic division, poverty and mass ignorance have made it virtually impossible for an honest, intelligent and well-meaning leadership to emerge. While I am saddened by the recent events in Nigeria, I 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. (*Onyekwere Ogan, Los Angeles*)
- (43) The statement that Nigeria is a country where "everything but misery is in short supply" is an insult. Nigeria is not as bad as the Western press portrays it. I hold America partly responsible for Nigeria's problems. If the U.S. had placed an embargo on Nigeria's oil, the billions of dollars in revenues siphoned off by the military bosses would not have been available. And the much-talked-about Nigerian financial scams are done with the active connivance of greedy and selfish Americans. (*Otiocha E. Eleazar, San Francisco*)
- (44) Thanks for the accurate portrait of Nigeria's political tragedy [World, July 20]. We should observe a moment of silence for both General Sani Abacha and Chief Moshood Abiola, for they were my fellow Nigerians. The 18th century English writer Alexander Pope wrote, "For forms of government, let fools contest; whatever is best administered is the best..." The fault lies not so much in Nigeria's form of government as in our selfish nature as Nigerians. (*Anthony A. Aiya-oba, Boston*)
- (45) Look at the statement! Nothing has changed! "Your postings must not be viewed as access to goldmine where easy financial fortunes are to be made. Your assignments should not be used as spring boards for launch into criminal affluence" (*General Abdulsalam Abubakar of Nigeria cautioning*)

his newly appointed ministers against indulging in illicit acquisition of wealth)

- (46) "Nigeria 20 years ago was ranked in the world's top 30 nations, blessed with abundant oil and mineral resources, a growing agricultural sector, a booming internal market, and a standard of living on par with that in Taiwan...Currently, we are the world's 13th poorest nation." (*General Abubakar of Nigeria, in a broadcast to the nation*)
- (47) Take a look! Nothing will ever change in Nigeria! **And God wept!** (*Among the Nigerian community in South Africa a joke went round for some time. Nasty?*)
- (48) "As part of the conclusion of a world economic summit during the 1980s, each head of state paid homage to God and asked Him when their respective countries would be self-sufficient. The Almighty boomed to each of them in turn that it would happen, but not in their lifetime. Crestfallen and much in tears the delegates returned home. When it came to the turn of Nigerian head of state to ask when his country would be self-sufficient, it was God who wept, replying: "It won't happen in my lifetime."
- (49) Take a look! How strange! "Under General Abacha's regime, the parties all voted for him. Now upon his death, none of them has a candidate." (*Jesse Jackson of the United States*)
- (50) ***Tragic death of an immigrant::Mma Agbagha reflects on the death of Semira Adamu - a 20-year-old Nigerian girl who died under tragic circumstances in Belgium. Semira Adamu, like 2 or 3 other Nigerians died of suffocation in the hands of the the Belgian security officers who were bent on bundling the lady back to Nigeria against her will. The tragedy throws light to the fate of Nigerians in Diaspora - in search of the greener pastures. Re- Post Express October 15th 1998.***
- (51) The story of Miss Adamu is the story of all of us - the story of a young woman who fled home in search of greener pastures. She was born in Nigeria during what is 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?
- (52) Like every Nigerian fugitive, she 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 an unusually hostile and insensitive hosts. The laws she ran into were rigid and inflexible.

- (53) 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.
- (54) As long as the conditions at home remain hostile to citizens, Nigerians will continue to defy odd to seek what they erroneously see as greener pastures abroad.
- (55) The gruesome and tragic end of Semira Adamu would have proved 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 has brought a flood of exiles back to the country.
- (56) As long as the present armed forces in Nigeria remain as it is, then democratization is out of the question. Rotation is a non-issue, power sharing is a non-issue. If we want to share power, first of all, share the armed forces. That is really the power. That is the powerhouse in Nigeria today. It is not the Central Bank. It is not in the NNPC. It is in the armed forces. The military is the hidden power, the real power. If we want rotation of, let's rotate the military first (*Professor Omo Omoruyi - former lecturer of political science and former deputy vice-chancellor, academics, at the University of Benin- former director-general of the Center for Democratic Studies - CDS - during General Babangida administration - on THE SECRET PACT BETWEEN BABAGINDA AND ABACHA LEADING TO THE ANNULMENT OF THE JUNE 12 ELECTIONS.*)
- (57) The original design of the British was to put a Northerner permanently in charge of Nigeria. You must tell your friend (IBB) that the elections must not hold. We have no candidate. Tofa - although is Kanuri and committed to the precepts of Islam, is not our candidate. The Northern elders had pushed for two candidates - my chairman (of CDS) Yusuf Maitama Sule or General Yakubu Gowon. These were the candidates sanctioned by the Northern Elders Council. But they have been frustrated at the ward level. We have no candidates in these elections. (*Dasuki to Omo Omoruyi on the June 1993) elections*
- (58) Lest we forget, it is shameful that out of 36 Police State Commissioners only ONE is an Igbo. It is painful that of the two Deputy Inspectors-General and 18 Assistant Inspectors-General of Police, NOT ONE is an Igbo. It is provocative that out of over 70 federal permanent secretaries only ONE is an Igbo. (*Chuba Okadigbo - veteran politician - on the marginalization of the Igbo*)

- (59) The spinelessness of the FCC - Federal Character Commission - apart, the military, their apologists and the hegemonists have insisted that federal character cannot and will not apply to the armed forces and the police. This fraudulent position has been sustained by their monopoly of the State instrument of terror and the rewards doled out to anti-federalists! Yet, the point need to be made that efficiency, loyalty and command ability are not exclusive preserves of northern Nigerians. (*Okadigbo - "The Nation, zoning the armed forces - The armed forces must reflect ethnic nationalities."*)
- (60) Zoning takes the steam out of the argument for confederation and the agitation for secession. It also takes care of the demand for rotational presidency in that the man at the top is checked by public officers and institutions, which will not allow him run away with the ball, to the disadvantage of other sections. The zoning principle should apply *mutatis mutandi* to the states (*ibidem*)
- (61) The situation in Nigeria has driven most of her brains abroad and into exile. 99% of people seeking refugee status in the United States today are from the South. Does that not shock you? You go to British High Commission or the American Embassy in Lagos, the people seeking visas to check out, 99% are from the South. Today, there are 15,000 Nigerian professors in American universities; 99% if not 100% are from the South. Does that shock you? (*Omo Omoruyi on Brain drain in Nigeria*)
- (62) Africa has many open wounds. Any change of government in the military dominated African political landscape often leads to movement of people, and many die in crossfire or become refugees. An ethnic violence can also precipitate untold suffering and disaster. Images of poverty, hunger, and disease on the television screens remind the rest of the world that the black continent is once again in turmoil. The consequences of political and economic instability are great. In most cases top opposition politicians, academics, and critics of military or other types of dictatorial governments are forced to flee their fatherland into exile in Europe and America. Many other Africans - young and old - escape the shores of their countries in search of greener pastures in other parts of the world.
- (63) Africa's checkered history has often been attributed to various factors; among them are colonialism and slavery. Colonialism is widely believed to be responsible for the desperate political, social, and economic situations in most African states. Slavery was the culmination of the degradation and exploitation of Africa and her people by the Western world. At the end of the 20th century, however, it cannot be said that colonialism and slavery are things of the past. And not a few Africans think

that new forms of colonialism and slavery exist in modern Africa and in the world at large, and are still responsible for most of Africa's predicament. It is challenging to investigate. There are many recent essays by Africans and non-Africans re-examining the role of slavery and colonialism in political and economic upheaval of the post-colonial Africa. Among these you may

SLAVERY, RACISM IN A NEW GARB

- (1) **"OUT OF AMERICA - a Black Man Confronts Africa,"** is an explosive book written by an African-American journalist Keith Richburg. Even though most of the things the author of "Out of America" was saying are true, most of his critics - Blacks and Whites - believe Richburg went to extremes. Richburg's audacity to express, without apology, that which many an American black and blacks everywhere will never like to hear further demonstrates the frustrations of many African sons and daughters, in Mother Africa as well as in Diaspora. Richburg was expressing his satisfaction with an ugly *status quo* - namely, that black Americans are lucky that a "quirk of fate" brought their ancestors to the shores of the New World; which means that American blacks by being made slaves in the New World have been saved from the never-ending problems of modern Africa!
- (2) One could see in Richburg's book elements of frustration, indeed the dilemma of most Africans of the Diaspora. There may be some Africans in the United States, Canada, and some parts of Europe who like Richburg believe that they are fortunate to be living outside Africa. Surely a little reflection would convince them that they are wrong. Richburg, no doubt is well informed about the supposed reasons for the ongoing chaos that still sweeps most of the African continent - about the consequences of white colonialism, unsuitable political systems, the time that is still required for all this to be overcome and so on - yet he maintained his extreme position on the black continent's tragedy. There is no doubt that Africans and Americans alike were angry with the author and not a few denounced him with venomous words.
- (3) Indeed not all critics - Africans and non-Africans - think that the entire chaotic political and economic situation in African nations should be attributed to the aftermath of colonialism or slavery. Some other reasons are advanced as the causes of the plight of the Africans and their governments. Blacks themselves are among critics who think that the root causes of Africa's present ills lie deeply within Africa.

- (4) Religion occupies an important spot in the lives of millions of people all over the world. In most cases it has never been easy to separate religion from politics. Religious beliefs influence the moral, political, social, and cultural lives of most people. It is common knowledge that most of Africa's past and present political and social problems have deep religious roots. Christianity and Islam - two major world religions in Africa - face many challenges if they are to remain relevant to millions of their adherents in this continent. If Africans are by nature truly and deeply religious - as the exponents of the African Traditional Religions [the most influential religion in Africa before the arrival of Christian missionaries and Islamic jihadists] claim, it is important to find out how the religious lives of the Africans influence their moral, political, and social decisions. Justice, peace, good government, moral uprightness must surely form the bedrock of true religious values. Should religious, moral, and spiritual beliefs not influence the leaders' and the people's political actions? There is need to investigate.
- (5) There is strong hope being expressed in many quarters that the year 2000 would usher in an era peace and prosperity for the long exploited, colonized, and enslaved Africans. Will colonialism, neo-colonialism, slavery, extreme racism and discrimination against a large section of humankind become a thing of the past in the new millennium? Africans - particularly those in Europe and America can never afford to remain aloof while their fatherland remains in deep crisis. All can help to salvage Africa.

